

Brokerage or Friendship? Politics and Networks in Ireland

LEE KOMITO*

University College, Dublin

Abstract: Studies of Irish politics have often emphasised clientelist relations between voters and politicians. A survey carried out in the 1970s indicates that the importance of politicians has been overstated. A significant percentage of people chose non-political figures as brokers between themselves and the state. Differences in urban and rural community social structures, which are not reflections of age, education, or socio-economic status, correlate with different brokerage choices. Such findings cast doubt on both modernization and dependency explanations of brokerage. Further research on social networks of friendship and exchange are necessary, since informal personal networks emerge as important links between individuals and the state.

I INTRODUCTION

AN integral part of most descriptions of Irish politics has been the personal exchange between politician and voter. Popular literature provides the best known example of a politician who uses, or seems to use, his influence to obtain state benefits for the constituent. John B. Keane's (1967, pp. 5-6) "successful TD",¹ Tull MacAdoo, writes to his son about having

pulled a nice one last week. I got word, from a friend working in the County Council, that work on the new road to Kilnavarna was to commence on July 1st. You probably know who the friend is. He wouldn't have his present job but for me. You'd never guess what I did! I got into

1. TD, an abbreviation for Teachta Dála, is a member of the Irish Parliament.

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my car and out with me to Kilnavarna on Monday morning. I went around to the one hundred and twenty five houses, and asked them if they would like to see the new road opened on July 1st....

... [The] new road opened as promised ... and they think I'm a small god now in Kilnavarna. There's eight hundred and fifty seven votes there and I could safely say that I'll get five hundred in the October elections.

Tull MacAdoo spends his time obtaining political support by using personal connections. In the above case, he claims an influence he does not possess. In other cases, Tull actually does have influence:

... A few fellows drawing stamps were caught working by an inspector in Tourmadeedy and that will take a bit of squaring. It all depends on the Inspector. Some inspectors are tricky enough but they learn the ropes quick enough when they think about promotion. (Keane, 1967, pp. 21-22).

The dual strategies of illusion and influence are central to discussions about Irish politics and clientelism within academic discourse. Since Chubb's (1963) description of politicians looking after their constituents' interests by "going about persecuting civil servants", it has been accepted that the Irish politician's task was to mediate between his local constituents and the state's administrative apparatus. In Chubb's view, voters believed, incorrectly, that the "intervention or good offices of a 'man in the know' (p. 273) was needed to obtain state services, and politicians exaggerated their influence to make themselves appear more instrumental or crucial than they actually were.

Later research by Bax (1976), Carty (1981), and Sacks (1976) emphasized the brokerage elements of Irish politics, in which the local community was linked to the national system through political brokers. The politicians used their access to state benefits as a means of building up groups of supporters or clienteles. These clienteles were used to secure re-election, to weaken rivals, and to gain respect and reward from superiors. Politics was seen as a pyramid of dyadic links, with rivalries between the "big men" at every level of the ascending hierarchy of power and influence. Studies might differ regarding the extent of illusion versus influence in brokerage, but they agreed on the importance of exchanges between voters and politicians.

Similar political descriptions have emerged from countries in Africa, Asia, South America, and the Mediterranean. In these countries, specific exchanges between citizens and élites have been observed: exchanges that were informal, voluntary, long-term, and asymmetrical (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984). These exchanges fulfilled crucial economic functions, but were overlaid with

imputed moral qualities such as friendship or kinship. These moral qualities disguised the inequality which created the need for such exchanges. It was, at its base, a relation of inequality, as one party was more dependent on the services offered by the other, than the reverse. Those in need of assistance were described as clients, while those offering assistance were patrons or brokers, depending on whether they controlled the resource themselves or provided access to others who controlled the resource (Paine, 1974; Boissevain, 1974). It was the client's vulnerability which gave the patron/broker the power to define the terms of the exchange (Paine, 1974), despite the appearance of free choice. This pattern of political activity has been termed "political clientelism".

Much has been written about political clientelism throughout the world (see Schmidt, 1977, for a useful introduction), and it is clear that clientelist politics exist in "modern" states as well as peasant societies (see Clapham, 1982). The state provides scarce resources, but access to those resources are monopolized by a restricted number of brokers. Links to brokers are vital for citizens, as it is only through these links that they obtain state resources. In return for help from brokers, citizens provide any assistance they can. In states where elections are important, the citizen's best bargaining chip is his or her vote. The exchange is thus between the politician providing state resources on the basis of his special influence, and the voter pledging his vote in return. This has been described as "electoral clientelism" (Clapham, 1982), and is characterised by state resources being allocated on the basis of personalistic rather than universalistic criteria, with both government and party policy based on personal commitments to supporters. It is a type of political clientelism because it is still, at its foundation, a dyadic exchange between two individuals and that exchange is ongoing (rather than once-off), moral in character (rather than a quasi-market-place transaction), and asymmetrical (rather than between equals).

In this context, while researchers describe Irish politics as simply clientelist, it is more accurately described as "electoral clientelism". That is, most research has focused on exchanges between voters and politicians, mediated by the electoral process. There have been debates about the utility, relevance, and even presence of clientelism in Irish politics (e.g., Gibbon and Higgins, 1974; Higgins, 1982; Komito, 1984, 1989; O'Connell, 1982, and Roche, R., 1982), as well as diverse explanations of clientelism. Sometimes it has been explained as an expression of rural values, in which people used to face-to-face interaction are afraid of bureaucracy and so seek assistance from politicians. Others have seen it as a relic of colonial domination: in order to deal with an unyielding and foreign administration, middle-men who might have special influence were sought. Clientelism has been variously blamed for

trivializing Irish politics, impeding industrial development, and perpetuating poverty. Perhaps the most common assertion is that economic decisions are made on the basis of political rather than economic criteria, to the detriment of the state as a whole.

Although studies in Ireland have emphasized exchanges between politicians and voters, politicians are not the only individuals who may perform brokerage functions. Descriptions have focused largely on the formal political system and the informal exchanges that may exist within that system, but clientelism (as opposed to "electoral clientelism") can exist in the wider society as well. Clientelist exchanges develop whenever access to a scarce resource is under the exclusive control of a small number of individuals. Thus, asymmetrical, long-term, and diffuse exchanges can exist whether the broker is a politician or shopkeeper and whether the resource being provided is a medical card or credit in the store. What then of the wider issue of brokerage throughout Irish life? Rather than discuss politicians, who might act as brokers, one should reverse the terms and talk about brokers — some of whom might be politicians, but might also include priests, shopkeepers, publicans, and so on. Indeed, these exchanges may not even be classified as clientelist at all. To what extent is brokerage a phenomenon of Irish society, and how and why do people choose who to approach for brokerage assistance?

There is, of course, some recognition that brokerage exists in social as well as political domains. One illustration of this comes from a political researcher who focused on "connections" in a more general sense:

There is no more effective means of accomplishing a task than by having a well-placed relative.... It is still true that having a relative in a position of influence greatly increases one's chances for success in almost any area of life. In the public bureaucracy this principle operates mainly on an other-things-being-equal basis, because there is little outright corruption in government. But ... other things are often nearly equal ...

Irish personalism is not limited to relatives. The next best source of assistance is a friend, or a "friend of a friend".... People think first of whom they know, even in the most routine circumstances. (Schmitt, 1973, p. 59).

However, rarely has research explored brokerage outside the formal political domain in Irish society (with the partial exception of Gibbon and Higgins, 1974). This is especially the case for political surveys. Survey questions address brokerage in terms of politicians, or perhaps also civil servants, but not other figures in Irish society (see, as examples, Radio Telefís Éireann, 1976; Sinnott, 1978). Pre-election surveys ask little more than an ambiguous question regarding reasons for voter choice ("service" versus "policy", usually).

These surveys are used as "proof" of the importance of clientelism in Irish politics, as they usually indicate strong preferences for brokerage. Yet, these high preferences are contradicted by a survey undertaken in Dublin in the early 1970s, which reported a relatively small level of actual brokerage activity (Komito, 1989). This finding was reaffirmed by a survey carried out by Irish Marketing Surveys in June 1991 which reported that 24 per cent of respondents had contacted a member of the Local Authority since the last local election. In Dublin, the frequency of contacts was 21 per cent, virtually the same as the 1971 survey in Dublin. Why this contradiction between belief and practice? Is it possible that politicians are, in fact, less important for brokerage than the surveys suggest? People want politicians to be available for brokerage, but, in practice, do not go to them. Do they go elsewhere?

One would not expect politicians to monopolize all brokerage positions: non-politicians (such as priests, teachers, businessmen, publicans) might also act as brokers with regard to state services. However, in requiring respondents to choose between politicians and civil servants, or choose between "policy making" and "constituency service", the surveys prejudge the issue. Surveys rarely permit respondents to freely indicate who they consider an important broker, whether politician, other community figure, or just friend. The high degree of political brokerage reported by surveys may result from respondents' inability to make any other choice. Any survey which permitted individuals to indicate their own brokerage preferences would have interesting implications regarding the overlap between political and social brokerage domains. At the very least, it would indicate how important politicians are, when compared with other figures in the community.

II "CIVIC CULTURE" SURVEY

Given the limitations characteristic of most surveys, a survey that did permit wider choice of potential brokers is of particular interest. One survey, carried out in the early 1970s, asked respondents to indicate brokerage preferences, and respondents could choose *any* individual as a possible broker. The survey was designed to compare Irish "civic culture" with other countries' civic culture, as studied by Almond and Verba (1965), and was jointly carried out by The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), and Stein Larsen, then at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Bergen (Raven and Whelan, 1976). Amongst other questions, the survey asked: "If you should have any problems with the authorities, which of the people here in the street (area) would you think of consulting? (We do not assume that you are personally acquainted with the person.)" Only one person could be named; those who indicated they did have someone in mind were then asked to name

the person's occupation. Although the researchers did not report on this question in any detail, the survey data was made available to the author by the ESRI for further analysis.² The survey is, at this point, almost twenty years old; however, it is the only survey that has permitted respondents to indicate who *they themselves* see as an important brokerage contact. Because it contrasts with all other surveys of political clientelism, it offers an important opportunity to see how important politicians actually are in the brokerage process.

The results of the survey are rather surprising. Of those who indicated a preference (about 70 per cent of respondents), politicians were, as one would expect, a popular brokerage choice. Forty-five per cent opted for a national-level politician, while 9 per cent opted for a local politician. Only 4 per cent chose a local or national bureaucrat (including social workers and district nurses). Thus, politicians are indeed an important brokerage resource. Yet, this accounts for only 58 per cent of respondents. The remaining 42 per cent chose individuals who were neither politicians nor public servants. This is a rather startling result; despite the fact that respondents were asked to choose someone who would help intercede with "the authorities", 4 out of 10 people chose someone outside the political and administrative domains.

Many of the expectations regarding political clientelism need to be reconsidered, if politicians do not actually monopolize brokerage links. This lack of a monopoly is significant, since exclusivity is the basis for brokers' power to "charge" for their services. The ability of citizens to go elsewhere decreases politicians' power as brokers. If nearly one half of the respondents would go to non-political figures for state services, one must presume even more would go to non-politicians for the non-state resources that people also need (e.g., jobs, personal assistance). Thus, brokerage in Ireland is a social, rather than strictly political, phenomenon.

The specific non-political choices provide insight into the structure of Irish society. The most frequent choices were individuals with high social status and power; lawyer (8.3%), priest (7.1%), farmer (4.7%), businessman (2.9%), and shopkeeper (2.1%). There were a variety of other occupations chosen, including teacher, guard, and publican, but all were under 2 per cent. Thus, the pattern of political brokerage parallels the picture of social structure and personal networks that would emerge in an ethnographic study of Irish communities.

Having provided an overall view, are there particular segments of Irish

2. The sample size was 1,226, and 371 did not answer the question, leaving 855 valid cases for analysis. In all tables, those who did not respond are excluded. There were no significant differences between those who responded and those who did not.

society in which brokerage seems more firmly embedded in a social versus political framework? In discussions of brokerage and clientelism, differences between urban and rural are presumed to be significant. Rural dwellers, it is often thought, are less able to deal with "modern" society and so depend on brokerage to a greater extent than their urban counterparts. While the survey does not address the frequency of clientelist exchanges (see Komito, 1989, on this issue), the survey does indicate brokerage preferences according to area of residence, as indicated in Table 1. The "politician" category includes Councillors, Senators, and TDs; the category "official" includes employees of the state (e.g., bureaucrat, local official, social worker, and district nurse); and "community figure" includes all other occupations. The number of respondents within each category are indicated in the last column of the table. While there is some variation within the urban categories, the main feature is an urban/rural distinction. If area of residence is dichotomized into rural (areas 5 through 7) and urban (all remaining areas), 62 per cent of rural respondents chose politicians, as compared with 42 per cent of urban respondents. This difference is significant, in that it supports previous suggestions of an urban/rural division.

Table 1: *Percentage Distribution of Respondents, by Brokerage Preferences and Area of Residence*

<i>Area of Residence</i>	<i>Politician</i>	<i>Official</i>	<i>Community Figure</i>	<i>N</i>
1. Residential Area in City Centre	37.5	7.8	54.7	64
2. Main Industrial Area in Town	53.8	0.0	46.2	13
3. Mixed Residential and Industrial/ Business Area in Town	49.0	9.8	41.2	102
4. Suburban Area/ Council Estate in Large Town	38.8	4.5	56.7	178
5. Large Village (500+) in Rural Area	60.0	8.0	32.0	75
6. Small Village	56.8	2.7	40.5	74
7. Sparsely Populated Area	63.5	1.2	35.4	342
				N=848

In comparing urban with rural preferences, one sees an important broadening of the brokerage resource base in the urban context (Table 2). There is a marked increase, for urban respondents, in preferences for solicitors, and an even more marked increase in preferences for other community figures, such as businessman, shopkeeper, housewife, guard and publican. The decrease in preference for politicians in urban areas is matched by a significant "widening" of the brokerage net.

Table 2: *Rural Versus Urban Brokerage Preferences*

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>
	%	%
National Politician	48.9	38.1
Local Politician	13.0	3.9
Solicitors	6.5	10.9
Priest	6.9	7.3
Farmer	6.7	2.0
Official	2.4	6.4
Businessman	2.0	4.2
Shopkeeper	1.6	2.8
Teacher	2.2	1.4
Guard	1.2	2.5
Housewife	0.4	3.4
Publican	0.8	1.4
Auctioneer	1.0	0.6
Engineer	1.2	0.3
Printer	0.0	2.0
Chairman of Residents' Association	0.0	2.0

The foundation of clientelism is the client's inability to go elsewhere. The decrease in the monopoly of brokerage rôles means that urban brokers would be less able to exert political or social domination over clients. When clients can exercise more choice, they can bargain with brokers, shift from one broker to another, and, generally, decrease the extent to which the broker can determine the form and content of the exchange. At the most basic level, it means that brokers are less likely to benefit significantly from their activities, as competition and market forces lessen the value of their services.

It is the increase in brokerage options which is important, rather than the specific occupations chosen. Personal preferences in occupational labels varied from respondent to respondent, and the same jobs may be labelled differently by differing respondents. For example, many chose "businessman", but a smaller number chose "merchant"; some chose "tradesman", while others chose "builder". However, regardless of the specific labels, the most important feature of this rural/urban comparison is the greater diversity of choice in urban areas.

In suggesting reasons for this difference in the structure of brokerage choices, one must first consider political differences between urban and rural communities. The ratio of politician to voter is higher in rural areas than urban areas, especially at the level of county councillor (Roche, D., 1982). In urban areas, there are fewer politicians per head of population, so fewer respondents will have, within their own personal network, connections to a politician. The move towards non-political brokers may result from the

reduced availability of politicians "on the ground" in urban areas. Even if this is a partial reason for different brokerage choices, however, it still indicates important differences between the nature of urban and rural communities in Ireland.

The decrease in politicians as brokers, and the widening of brokerage choices, corresponds with "modernization" theories of brokerage. In a modernization perspective, the number of brokers increases and the dependence of voters on a small cadre of patron/brokers decreases, as economic and social development proceeds (e.g., Silverman, 1965). Since urban areas are presumed to be more modern than rural ones, differences between the urban and rural brokerage choices would be seen as the result of different levels of modernization. It should be noted, however, that a number of other explanations of this rural/urban shift could also be proposed, and this will be more fully elaborated later.

In addition to geographical differences, there are also educational and occupational differences amongst respondents. As Table 3 indicates, when respondents are classified in terms of education, those with less education are more likely to choose politicians as brokers. It might be expected that age would also be relevant, if only because older respondents would also have received less education, given the lack of free education. Interestingly, there was little variation in terms of age.

Table 3: *Percentage Distribution of Respondents, by Brokerage Preference and Educational Level*

<i>Education</i>	<i>Politician</i>	<i>Official</i>	<i>Community Figure</i>	<i>N</i>
Primary, Incomplete	61.9	2.4	35.7	84
Primary, Complete	56.3	3.4	40.3	471
Some Secondary, including Intermediate	50.3	4.2	45.5	143
Secondary, Leaving	44.3	10.1	45.6	79
Secretarial, Technical, or Nursing Training	47.2	2.8	50.0	36
University or National Teacher Training	34.4	6.3	59.4	32
				N=845

Social class is another variable which would be expected to predict brokerage preferences. In this survey, occupation was used to categorize respondents into social classes, based on the Hall-Jones Classification (Raven and Whelan, 1976, p. 20). Preferences for politicians ranged from as high as 64.4 per cent for some non-manual workers to as low as 45.6 per cent for

employers and managers, but, as Table 4 indicates, the distribution of responses does not reveal a consistent pattern.

Table 4: *Percentage Distribution of Respondents, by Brokerage Preferences and Social Class*

<i>Social Class</i>	<i>Politician</i>	<i>Official</i>	<i>Community Figure</i>	<i>N</i>
Higher and Lower Professional	55.0	20.0	25.0	20
Employers and Managers	45.6	3.5	50.9	57
Salaried Employees	59.1	1.9	38.9	257
Intermediate Non-Manual Workers	64.4	2.7	32.9	73
Other Non-Manual Workers	51.8	5.4	42.9	56
Skilled Manual	47.4	7.2	45.4	97
Semi-Skilled Manual	46.2	3.8	50.0	106
Unskilled	51.7	5.8	42.5	120
				N=786

It is surprising that there is so little correlation between social class and brokerage choices; on the other hand, both education and area of residence are good predictors of brokerage preferences. Can casual priority be assigned to these variables, to determine which is the most significant? Discriminant analysis can indicate the relative significance of independent variables, as long as the variables are also independent of each other. It does so by testing which independent variables best predict, singly or in combination, the group into which the respondent will belong. The variables social class, age, residence, and education, were correlated with one another to determine if they were independent of each other. The correlation coefficients were low; even for social class and educational level, the correlation coefficient was under .30. Having determined that they could be treated as independent variables, the next step was to ascertain the relative significance of the variables. Respondents' answers to the question of whom to contact were categorized as choosing either politician or community figure. Local and national bureaucrats were excluded from both categories, as they constituted only 4 per cent of responses. The results of the discriminant analysis (Table 5) indicate which variables best predicted whether respondents chose a politician or a community figure as a preferred broker.

The relative significance of the variables is interesting. In many discussions of clientelism, it is often expected that socio-economic factors, such as occupation or education, are important determinants of brokerage strategies. Yet, the results show that such factors are less important than the urban/rural distinction. Based on the standardized canonical discriminant function

Table 5: *Stepwise Discriminant Analysis: Choice of Politician Versus Community Figure*

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Step Entered (entry criterion .05)</i>	<i>Standardized Discrimination Coefficients</i>
Area of Residence	1	.70470
Education	2	.46544
Social Class	3	.32787
Group Means		
Politicians	-0.17539	
Community Figures	0.22089	
Canonical Correlation	0.1934	
Chi-Square = 27.423, df 3, p<.01		
Per cent correctly classified	59.76	
Politicians	65.2	
Community Figures	52.9	
Number of Cases (sample size)	723	
Politicians	403	
Community Figures	320	

coefficients, three variables were significant, and, of those three, area of residence was the best predictor of brokerage preferences. The relative unimportance of social class, at least when choosing between political versus non-political figures, is striking. Economic explanations of clientelism would have predicted that regional variations were masking social and economic variables; the data suggest otherwise.

It is important to note that using all the variables, only 60 per cent of cases were correctly assigned to the category of preferring politician versus preferring community figure. With 40 per cent of cases predicted incorrectly, there must be other relevant independent variables which were not measured. Even though the survey sheds light on the relative significance of some variables, these cannot be considered to be the only determinants of clientelist choices.

III POLITICAL CLIENTELISM VERSUS SOCIAL NETWORKS

What are the implications of this survey data for clientelism in Ireland? It is clear that politicians are only one brokerage option, and, rather than focusing on voters and politicians, one needs to focus on the more general issue of brokerage in Irish society. Brokerage is embedded in social, rather than solely political, relations. There may be specific reasons for electoral clientelism in Ireland (multi-seat constituencies, proportional representation, strength of party loyalty, bureaucratic secrecy), but this only explains why

politicians may desire to participate in, or be forced to participate in, exchanges with voters. Such explanations do not address the existence of brokerage in Irish society generally, and it is this wider issue which needs investigation.

The term "clientelism", often used as a blanket description of Irish politics, may be inappropriate. Clientelism presumes long-term and diffuse exchanges between unequals; given the range of brokerage choices revealed in this survey, there is good reason to doubt that politicians have such exchanges with "clients". Furthermore, political clientelism is often perceived as immoral, illegal, or, at the very least, irregular; such emotional baggage makes analysis and discussion more difficult. Brokerage, defined as individuals who mediate between other groups or individuals, does not carry the same moralistic tag. In contrast, brokerage is seen as little more than advocacy; an advocacy, however, that is personal and informal. Brokerage focuses attention on people circumventing formal structures in order to gain access to the information or resources which they need, and the kinds of networks that they utilize in this process. So what can we tell from this survey about the nature of brokerage in Ireland?

The survey shows that socio-economic status of respondents, whether measured by occupation or education, is not as significant as region when choosing a broker. This implies that "modernization" theory is not an adequate explanation of brokerage. In modernization theory, those with more education and higher socio-economic status, should not depend on brokerage; they should approach civil servants directly. However, in the event of difficulties, only about 4 per cent of Irish respondents thought of going to any representative of local or national administration. There is an overwhelming lack of trust regarding the state bureaucracy, regardless of social, occupation, educational, or regional background. Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984, p. 211) identify this lack of trust as characteristic of the "clientelist mode of exchange": people are unable to extend trust beyond primordial loyalties, and, at the same time, are unconvinced of their ability to affect their environment. People trust only those with whom they have personal connections, and seek the assistance of others rather than trying to alter circumstances themselves. This state of mind has often been explained, in Ireland, as a result of colonial domination. However, this state of mind exists in societies with no similar colonial experience (e.g., Greece, southern Italy, Spain). The one thing Ireland does share with these other societies is a sense of non-participation by citizens in the formal institutions of the state, no doubt accentuated by a centralized and rather closed bureaucracy.

By the same token, there remains a crucial distinction between the clientelist "state of mind" in Ireland versus elsewhere. Elsewhere, this state of

mind is manifest in long-term, diffuse relations between individuals and it is through these relations that access to public resources is facilitated. In Ireland, the evidence suggests that a relatively small percentage of state resources are allocated through political brokerage. Also, long-term and diffuse clientelist exchanges exist only within political parties; levels of clientelist activity in the population, as a whole, are low. For these reasons, assertions of clientelism in Ireland, and comparisons with clientelism elsewhere are misleading; despite lack of trust and dependency, clientelist relations of the type described elsewhere are not the dominant mode of exchange in Ireland.

There is a move from politicians to non-political figures as educational levels increase, which seems to offer some support for the modernization thesis. However, this factor is less important than rural/urban distinctions, and equating rural with "traditional", or urban with "modern" is inappropriate, given that other factors commonly associated with modernization, such as education, socio-economic status, and age, are not closely linked with changing brokerage choices. Following modernization premises, rural versus urban divisions should have masked social, economic, or educational distinctions. On the contrary, the reverse seems to be the case. One must look at differences in the structure of urban and rural communities, rather than differences in traditional versus modern mentalities.

How can different brokerage choices in rural versus urban communities be explained? It was already noted that there are more politicians "on the ground" in rural areas than urban areas. Moreover, one should consider the low mobility rates associated with rural communities. It is not so much that rural dwellers do not leave, but that it is less likely that new people come into rural areas. Thus, networks of kinship and friendship will, inevitably, be more widespread in rural communities than urban ones. In social network terms, rural communities tend to have dense and overlapping links (described, in anecdotal terms, as "everyone knowing everyone else"). Politicians are available not only because they are politicians, but because they are friends, neighbours, or relations of the respondents (or friends of relations, relations of friends, and so on). Furthermore, a politician may be a brokerage contact not because of his political activities, but because of his activities in other social and economic spheres. The politician may also be a businessman, publican, doctor, or some other professional which brings him into contact with a wide variety of people. In all these ways, politicians are well integrated into rural community life; a large percentage of rural dwellers would know a politician personally. Thus, brokerage preferences may be a consequence of the "friend of friends" phenomenon characteristic of small-scale communities.

In the more differentiated and mobile urban community, politicians are more remote. They are less likely to fulfil multiple rôles (e.g., neighbour or local shopkeeper, rather than neighbour *and* local shopkeeper). People have more widely dispersed networks and there are actually fewer politicians per head of population. Thus, it is less likely that individuals will have a pre-existing personal connection with a politician. This may explain the tendency for urban respondents to cast their brokerage net more widely.

In the early 1970s, Ireland was a society in which there was limited social and geographical mobility; networks of kinship and friendship permeated the formal structure. It is hardly surprising that researchers commented on the "tendency to operate through personal contacts rather than through organizational procedures" (Pyne, 1974, p. 34). This, combined with a centralized and relatively inaccessible bureaucracy (Barrington, 1980), may account for an apparent dependence on personal networks. What researchers have called "clientelism" may simply have been the special case of those who were unable to find alternative personal links and so resorted to politicians. In rural communities, traditional authority figures mediated between individuals and the outside world: politicians, priests, solicitors, large farmers, and, to a lesser extent, publicans, shopkeepers, businessmen, and teachers. By contrast, in urban Ireland, politicians had less control of brokerage; traditional authority figures were undermined by the large number of new brokerage rôles. In all cases, non-political figures were an important resource for individuals in their attempts to deal with the state. This survey is now twenty years old; in the last twenty years, social and demographic change in Ireland has accelerated. How have networks changed? Who would individuals now go to for assistance, and why? This survey suggests fundamental changes in Irish society were taking place twenty years ago; with an increase in social and geographical mobility in the last twenty years, how has the pattern changed?

This survey also suggests that ideas about the basis for brokerage exchanges need examination. In discussions of political clientelism, the promise of political support is the coin with which the client "buys" the assistance of the politician. With what coin is the assistance of the other community figures to be bought? What kinds of relationships form the basis for brokerage assistance? The survey provides only a few hints on this issue. For instance, it appears that the basis of the exchange is not kinship; all but 6 per cent of respondents said the person they would choose was not a relation. Some choices suggest an economic relationship, but this is not true for all choices. Especially in the urban context, a number of the occupations chosen (e.g., printer or housewife) offer little scope for commercial benefit in exchange for brokerage assistance.

If brokerage links are not based on kinship, economic, or political reci-

procity, we are left with the residual category of "friendship". The respondent is choosing a friend that is "better connected", but a friend none the less. We see a web of social brokerage or, what may amount to the same thing, an extensive friendship network. If respondents are choosing friends that are in a position to be helpful, should such exchanges be termed brokerage at all? What is the basis for the exchange, what is the social and moral content of the exchange? Are these exchanges embedded within a pre-existing social framework, or are they the beginnings of new relationships? All this remains to be discovered, but it is clearly important — because it is an important aspect of social life, and also an important medium by which individuals interact with the state.

Thus, one returns to brokerage and networks of trust. The development of such networks does not mark out Ireland as unique or unusual. Such networks exist in industrialized societies, such as the United States, what was the Soviet Union, and Japan, as well as in industrializing societies like India, Mexico, and Indonesia (for a comprehensive summary, see Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984). Nor are such networks restricted to the poor and dependent; élites such as the London banking community can be similarly described (Cohen, 1974). It is not the existence of such networks, then, that is at issue, but rather the differing ways such networks develop and extend through, and in parallel with, formal institutions of society. The Irish evidence supports intuitive expectations that urban and rural networks differ significantly. It also suggests that, even in urban contexts, many people tap into personal networks rather than deal directly with the bureaucracy. The very fact that 70 per cent of survey respondents had some personal contact in mind suggests the significance of the informal dimension in Irish life.

The significance of informal networks in formal institutional structures is well accepted; the existence and efficacy of those networks is often a vital ingredient for any understanding of any organisation or institution. This survey points out the need for much more research on social networks of friendships and exchange, and perhaps less on the special case of political brokerage. Debates about political clientelism and "messenger boy" politicians have much popular appeal, but they are less significant than previously thought. Perhaps the old phrase "a friend of a friend" needs to return to the research agenda; not as a code word for patronage and clientelism (the "nod and wink" view of Irish society), but as description of the informal and personal dimension of social life that underpins the formal structure of organizations and groups. It is a dimension that is more difficult to study, since it is not easily amenable to survey instruments, but it provides a crucial contribution to any description of Irish society and politics.

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