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CANDIDATES OR PARTIES?

Objects of Electoral Choice in Ireland

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ABSTRACT

Under many electoral systems, voters can choose between candidates, and, under some systems, between candidates of the same party – a situation that makes it possible for candidates to seek a personal vote. Studies of some countries have shown how personal voting is apparent in the success of particular types of candidates, notably incumbents, but there is little systematic study of personal motives among the electors themselves. The single transferable vote system (STV) used in Ireland certainly allows electors to choose between candidates as well as parties and therefore is seen as providing a strong incentive for candidates to seek personal votes. While aggregate evidence from election results has pointed to the primary importance of party, survey data have suggested that close to a majority of voters are primarily candidate-centred. In this article, an extensive set of instruments contained in the 2002 Irish election study is used to explore the extent to which voters decide on candidate-centred factors as opposed to party-centred factors. It is shown that a substantial minority decide on the basis of candidate factors, and typical models of Irish electoral behaviour have not accommodated the heterogeneity that results from this mix of motives. However, direct questions about motives probably underestimate the extent of party-centred voting.

KEY WORDS ■ electoral behaviour ■ electoral systems ■ Ireland ■ personal vote

Introduction

Studies of electoral behaviour tend to focus on party choice. When it comes to high-profile single-candidate elections, such as those for president in the United States, there is a recognition that the party label is not all that matters and that personal attributes of the candidates have an importance independent of party. Yet there is a significant and growing literature

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arguing that candidates themselves should be and are important sources of votes in many countries and in much less significant elections. Candidates may attract support for who they are, or what they have done, or what they might do, rather than simply because of the party to which they belong. There are good institutional reasons for this. Under certain electoral systems, individual candidates have a strong incentive to differentiate themselves from others in their party and to develop a personal following. In a widely cited article, Carey and Shugart (1995) explained how this stimulus would be higher where the vote was cast for a candidate and not a party and where that vote had a significant effect not just on which parties won seats but on which candidates did so (see also Katz, 1986; Marsh, 1985b). Many states use multi-member electoral systems that provide particularly strong incentives, including Finland, Switzerland and the Irish Republic,[1] while many others, including mixed-member systems such as New Zealand, and single-member plurality systems, including Britain, the US and Canada, provide some encouragement for candidates to seek personal support.

Despite the interest in how electoral systems may lead rational politicians to develop a personal following, there has been relatively little work designed to find out the extent to which they are able to do this, and much of that has been by inference – comparing votes won by different politicians – rather than by direct measurement using voter surveys. For example, Moser and Scheiner (2005) assess the extent of personal voting in several mixed-member systems by comparing list and candidate votes for the same party.[2] In single-member district electoral systems there is an extensive literature looking at how far incumbency seems to confer an advantage and seeing such effects as indicating a degree of personal voting (e.g. Bean, 1990; Cain et al., 1987; Gaines, 1998; Krashinsky and Milne, 1986; Wood and Norton, 1992). Swindle (2002) uses election results to compare levels of personal voting in Ireland and Japan. He examines the degree of variation in support for the several candidates of a party within a district and concludes, perhaps surprisingly, that there is more variation and hence more personal voting in Ireland. Of course, while such variation may well indicate that voters do discriminate between candidates from the same party it does not show whether the vote for the party increases in consequence. It could well be that personal voting is nested within, and so subsidiary to, party voting. Taking an even more indirect tack, Shugart et al. (2005) explore the hypothesis that personal voting is higher in some countries than in others by identifying symptoms of personal voting: the incidence of candidates born locally or with local representative experience. Karvonen (2004) also looks for aggregate symptoms of personal voting, such as higher legislative turnover and more electoral volatility.

Of Canadian respondents asked to judge the importance of candidates, leaders, issues and the local candidate in their vote decision, between 20 and 30 percent said the local candidate was the most important factor over the period 1965–79, which is fewer than chose parties or leaders (Irvine,

1982: 761). The personal qualities of candidates appear to weigh more heavily in the minds of Finnish voters. Voters were asked whether candidate was a more important factor in their voting decision than party. Only a small majority of the respondents said that party was more important (Raunio, 2004: 5).[3]

Karp et al. (2002) take a more indirect approach, still using survey data. They examine the weighting of candidate ratings within a multivariate model, including ratings of all candidates as well as measures of party attachments and other variables. They argue that much split-ticket voting in New Zealand's mixed-member system is largely the result of personal voting – a conclusion echoed by Moser and Scheiner (2005). Blais et al. (forthcoming) have taken this sort of analysis a stage further by simulating choices in which candidates do not matter and comparing them to actual ones. They first estimate the impact of candidate evaluations on the vote in Canada and then pose the counterfactual question: how many people would vote the same way if candidate evaluations were all the same? From their simulation, using a multivariate model with all candidate evaluations subsequently set to zero, they conclude that the impact of this would be small, with only 6 percent of Canadians voting differently. This is in striking contrast to earlier survey evidence and indicates a much lower level of personal voting in that country than is suggested by asking people directly (Irvine, 1982).

Much of this work consists of single country studies. Shugart argues that comparative work in this area has been limited by the unavailability of comparative data (2005: 49–50). While there are now extensive data available on parties and elections there are few on candidates, and hence limited resources to explore personal voting. Nor is it clear how this can be done in a way that provides equivalence across countries.[4] To suggest that we need more survey data begs the question of whether, and if so how, surveys can identify candidate-centred voters. What sort of items might be used to identify those who cast a personal vote? This article contributes to the wider literature by providing a detailed case study of possible measures using the Irish Republic, where elections are fought using a strong preferential voting system, the single transferable vote (STV) (see below). STV makes candidate-centred voting compatible with party voting to a degree that is unusual. It appears to provide a significant stimulant to politicians to develop and seek support on a personal basis but, as Bowler and Farrell point out, 'while it may make sense to assume that candidates spend time and effort on "pork-barrel" and "constituency service" politics, this is no guarantee that this is the basis for voting behaviour at the level of the electorate' (1991a, b: 317). In what follows I show that there is ample evidence that for many voters the candidate rather than the party is the key to their decision on Election Day.

There has been much discussion on the respective importance of parties and candidates in Irish elections. Conventional wisdom certainly sees the personal vote as extremely important. Candidates themselves pander to and

help to create a demand for personal service and they campaign strongly for their own personal preference votes, as a number of studies have demonstrated (see Gallagher and Komito, 2005). There has been less analysis of the voters themselves and the limited evidence does not tell a coherent story. Some candidates from a party are more successful than others – in many cases despite efforts by parties to ensure their support is distributed evenly (Marsh, 2000; Swindle, 2002). Opinion surveys and exit polls have asked people about the relative importance of party and candidate in their decision and the most important factor for up to half of all voters has been the candidate (King, 2000; Mair, 1987; Sinnott, 1995). This has been underlined in recent years by the growing success of non-party candidates in general elections. Even so, there is an obvious conflict between the opinion poll evidence, which suggests that candidate-centred reasons lie behind many first preference votes, and the hard data on election results, which testify to a considerable stability in party support (Mair and Marsh, 2004). One problem has been the ambiguity of the opinion poll evidence, not least because many voters may choose candidates from *within* a party (Mair, 1987: 92). Until recently, it was not possible to look beyond the evidence of scattered opinion polls; however, with the fielding of the first full election study in 2002 information is now available to explore the respective weight of party and candidate much more fully.[5]

The results of the exploration are significant in three ways. Firstly, an extensive examination using a variety of measures clarifies the extent to which personal voting is prevalent in Ireland, something that is indicated by theory but not confirmed satisfactorily by the evidence to date. The assessment of the various types of evidence and measures is also an important step towards comparative study, since it provides a basis for evaluating different possible approaches – which themselves may have been developed because of system variations. In particular, we compare the inferences that can be made from reported behaviour with assessments by respondents of their own motives.

Secondly, assessing the extent of personal voting is significant for our understanding of the process of electoral democracy. It is common to assume that the electorate makes parties responsible for government, but it makes little sense to look for reasons why a particular voter supported a party if that voter was rather supporting a particular candidate and would have done so whatever that candidate's party label. This article thus examines what (Irish) voters are doing when they vote. In general terms: are they selecting parties, or are they selecting candidates? If the former is the case, they could also be voting for a government, or a party leader, but either way they are behaving in a manner comparable to voters in most other countries.[6] If they are selecting candidates, then our interpretation of Irish voting behaviour will have to be rather different. This would not be to conclude that Irish voters are driven by personality. On the contrary, they could be motivated by concerns about issues and performance in just the same way that party-centred voters can be, but those concerns would have

to be linked by voters to candidates as individuals, not as representatives of parties.

Thirdly, identifying the object of electoral choice is important for the ways in which we explain electoral behaviour. Our explanations normally assume that voters are thinking about and choosing between parties but, as we have seen, there is good reason to believe that at least some of them are thinking about candidates. It is possible that one of the reasons why electoral behaviour in Ireland is hard to explain using the models developed elsewhere is that many voters ignore 'party'. In an often-cited article, Rivers (1990) warned those exploring electoral behaviour using multivariate models about the assumption of homogeneity that underlies such models. When heterogeneity is ignored, the resulting coefficients may well be seriously biased. While one set of solutions to this heterogeneity has been primarily methodological, using more appropriate statistical techniques to cope with invalid assumptions, the main, more substantive, issue raised by Rivers is to identify the various sources of heterogeneity.

We examine several types of evidence on the relative importance of candidates and parties in this article using data from the 2002 election study, the first of its kind in the Republic. Firstly, we describe the Irish electoral system and explain how it promotes candidate-centred voting. Secondly, we examine how voters actually fill in their ballots. Does the manner in which they do this suggest that party is the main organizing principle for most voters? Thirdly, we examine what the voters themselves say about their motivations, using an open-ended question about their first preference vote. Fourthly, we examine the evidence provided by closed-ended questions about motivations. Fifthly, using more indirect methods, we examine respondents' thermometer ratings of candidates and parties and see how they differ. Who ranks most highly, the party or the candidate? Each of these methods gives us a different answer to the question of how extensive candidate-centred voting is in Ireland. While some differences are small, others are quite dramatic. In the sixth section of the article, we move beyond simple categorization and examine the basis for a more nuanced measure of candidate-centredness based on the various alternatives presented. Finally, we illustrate the value of this measure by showing that candidate-centredness is an important source of heterogeneity in Irish voting behaviour.

The main objective here is to assess how far voters focus more on candidates than on parties, not to explain why they do so. The latter question, too, is an important one, as the discussion above explains. It is also one that must be answered if we are to understand political competition, and not just in Ireland. However, we must first ascertain the extent to which people vote for candidates rather than for parties and compare and evaluate methods of assessing how important parties and candidates are to each individual voter. This is the central task of this article. We will also see how conventional explanations of voting behaviour work much better for voters who appear to be party-centred than for those who appear more candidate-centred.

The Irish Electoral System

Application of the single transferable vote (STV) in multi-member constituencies gives an unusual degree of freedom to the voter to choose between candidates. The ballot lists the candidates in alphabetical order, indicating the party of each. To cast a valid vote, the voter must indicate his first choice by placing a '1' next to a candidate's name. That is sufficient for a valid vote, but the voter may go on to indicate second, third and later preferences using the numbers 2, 3 and so on up to the number of candidates on the ballot. Seats are allocated to candidates who achieve a quota, defined as one more than the valid vote divided by seats at stake +1. If seats remain unfilled once the first preferences have been counted, then there is a further count. This takes the form either of distributing the 'surplus' votes of an elected candidate or of eliminating the candidate with the fewest votes and distributing the votes for that candidate over the remaining candidates according to the next marked preference (Sinnott, 2005).[7]

Supporters of the STV system point with approval to the fact that voters may decide on the basis of whatever attributes of the candidates are most important to them. A voter may be influenced by party but also by considerations such as where a candidate lives, that candidate's gender, or their age or experience. These are not necessarily exclusive: voters may vote on locality, for instance, but do so within parties, picking the candidates of a preferred party according to how close their base is to the voter's own area. All this requires information. Voters need to know something about the candidates, and only party, gender, locality and occupation are sometimes apparent from the ballot paper.[8]

The ballot itself does not provide as much help as it might to those who want to vote on party lines. Certainly it would facilitate, or even encourage, party voting if it were structured in a series of columns, by party, as it is in other, similarly preferential, electoral systems, rather than as an alphabetically ordered long ballot (Darcy and Marsh, 1994). Party names have been on the ballot since 1965, and these are now complemented by colourful party logos, but the unwary voter will still have to scan a list of around a dozen or more candidates carefully if he or she is to organize all their preferences along party lines.

Making the Ballot

All respondents were provided with something very like the ballot they would have been faced with on Election Day and were asked to fill it in as they did at that time.[9] Respondents were also offered the option of filling in the ballot and placing it in a sealed envelope. Eighty-nine percent of all respondents and 92 percent of those who claimed to have voted filled in the ballot. Using this evidence, we examine how they did so. This involves

scrutinizing not simply first preferences but second, third and lower preferences, and exploring the extent to which people appear to vote for parties as opposed to candidates. We discuss different ways in which the importance of the party label might be manifested in the preferences and show how different definitions can lead to different conclusions about the role of party.

What sort of pattern would we find if party were the dominant criterion for voters? There has been considerable analysis of the patterns of voting using the aggregate material at constituency level available from official results, which indicates a strong degree of voting on party lines, as a high percentage of votes tend to be transferred between candidates of the same party (see, for instance, Gallagher, 1978, 1993, 1999, 2003; Marsh, 1981; Sinnott, 1995). However, the information this gives is limited to those votes that do transfer. Moreover, the original preference of those voters whose vote is transferring can soon be lost. Ideally, we would know how each voter voted and this is what our simulated ballot tells us. In a pioneering analysis of such data, drawn from European Parliament elections and by-elections, Bowler and Farrell (1991a, b) discussed how the information from simulated ballots could shed light on the importance of party (see also King, 2000). The strongest sign that party matters would be that whenever a voter voted for a candidate he subsequently voted for all the other candidates of that party in sequence. Party would clearly be the dominant criterion. Candidate preferences could well matter, but only nested within party preference. Whether or not this should also be confined to one party is a matter for debate, but if we apply the criterion all the way down the ballot very few voters would be classified as party-centred. A similar, if weaker, sign would be that all the running mates of the first-placed candidate are supported before any other candidate. Party would be dominant, at least for the first-placed party and for the most influential preferences in terms of the outcome.[10] Weaker still is a pattern identified by Laver (2004) in an analysis of the full record from the three constituencies using electronic voting in 2002. This is when all of a party's candidates receive a vote but not necessarily in sequence. This is significant because most voters indicate a preference for only a few of the candidates standing.[11] Ranking two of the first three from a single party, or three of the first four, indicates that party is playing a very strong role.

This general approach infers party-centred voting from a pattern of preferences that favours a particular party's candidates. The relationship between pattern and inference is very deterministic. Voters must adhere to one of a few candidate orderings in order to be classified as a party voter.[12] Should some allowance be made for random error? In essence, must a party voter stick strictly to the party list or can there be some deviation? If so, how great a deviation? Considering a party voter as one who votes, a complete ticket may be a more realistic basis for definition than requiring that he do so in a strict sequence. A second problem is that where a party runs a single candidate it is not possible to see any difference between a

party vote and a personal vote. Someone who picks the sole Labour candidate as No. 1, the sole Green as No. 2 and sole Progressive Democrat as No. 3 may be voting on party grounds but may also be choosing on some other basis. We cannot tell simply on the basis of the simulated ballot. We can analyse voting patterns where a party fields more than a single candidate and try to generalize from that situation to others. This is not wholly unproblematic since most multi-candidate situations involve either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael and their voters may be more loyal, more party-centred, than those of other parties. However, some contrasts between Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour are apparent and will be considered when generalizations are made to the wider electorate.

Using several definitions, the patterns of voting are examined in Table 1. Analysis in this section is confined to parties running more than one candidate in the respondent's constituency. It shows the proportions of voters who cast a complete vote, i.e. support all the candidates of their first-preference party. Once they cast their first-preference vote for a party, 60 percent vote for all remaining candidates of that party. The figure is a little lower for Labour than for Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, but the differences are quite small. Most such complete ballots are also sequential. Forty-eight percent of those giving their first preference to Fianna Fáil cast a complete and sequential ballot – akin to the classic 'straight-ticket'. The figure is lower for the other parties, but more than two out of every five supporters of those parties cast a complete and sequential ballot. Forty-four percent of those casting their first preference for a party running more than one candidate cast a vote for all that party's candidates before expressing any other preferences. Moreover, many of the departures from a strict sequence are small, involving the interpolation of a single candidate. Overall, most first-preference votes for parties translate into votes for the whole party slate, and the majority of the latter are cast in sequence. While this still allows for a considerable degree of candidate-centredness *within* the party slate, it does imply that party is the most important element for a large number of voters.

Table 1. Patterns of voting in multi-candidate situations

	Fianna Fáil	*Fine Gael*	*Labour*	*All*
Voting a complete party list – as a % of first preferences	62	60	50	60
Voting a complete party list in sequence – as a % of first preferences	48	40	36	45
First two votes for candidates from same party – as a % of first preferences	61	46	41	55
N	964	410	84	1472

Notes: Includes only instances where a party fielded more than one candidate. Self-reported voters only. Those voting for independents and others are excluded.

Bowler and Farrell (1991a, b) suggest another way to look at the influence of party on the way people fill in the ballot. This involves an examination of the extent to which voters cast a vote for two successive candidates of the same party. Each preference set can be seen as a number of pairs – 1 and 2, 2 and 3, 3 and 4 and so on – and each can be seen as a pair from either the same party or from different parties. A strong partisan structure would show a high number of party-consistent pairs; a weak structure would show a low number or none at all. This offers a potentially more nuanced measure of party-centredness using a summation of the number of party pairs, but voters give different numbers of preferences and again there is the problem that many parties run no more than one candidate in any constituency, and that different constituencies have different numbers of party-consistent options. Limiting analysis to just the first pair, the third row in Table 1, shows that in 2002 the majority of voters who could do so voted for candidates from the same party with their first- and second-preference vote. Fifty-four percent voted for two candidates of the same party.[13]

Whatever definition is employed, we have demonstrated that while some voters act as if their choice is strongly party-centred, some do not; seemingly, an attribute of the candidate other than party is a critical one for many. How large the proportion of voters is that we might describe as candidate-centred rather than party-centred is a question of definition. On some counts, well over half of all voters may be termed party-centred.

Reasons for First-Preference Vote

A second way of estimating the relative importance of candidate and party in vote choice is to use a direct question: to ask respondents themselves to explain their vote choice. Respondents were asked a number of questions about their choice. We asked: '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?' This was followed by 'And what other reasons did you have for giving your first-preference vote to that candidate?' In grouping the answers to that question, interest is particularly in the breakdown between those that made the party of that candidate central and those that emphasized some other aspect of that candidate.

Most answers fall within one of four categories: personal characteristics of the candidate, the area the candidate comes from, the party of the candidate and the candidate's policies. The first set is essentially personal: the voter knows the candidate, the candidate is 'good', the 'best candidate' is 'honest' or 'sincere'. This is not to say that performance does not matter: many see the candidate as a 'good worker' or a 'hard worker', or as someone who has been 'helpful' to the voter. The second set of answers highlights local representation: the candidate is from the area, or has been good for the area, and has a 'good record' in the area or is a 'good worker' for the

area. The third set is essentially partisanship, giving the party of the candidate as the key reason. Finally, there are 'policy' justifications, citing the views or opinions of the candidate. Other reasons include a view that the candidate represented particular interests (farmers, workers, business or the elderly), tactical or strategic voting, and vague reference to family factors that are not clearly either personal or party. Table 2 gives the distribution of these motives across the sample, and shows, firstly, the main reason given and, secondly, all reasons, including subsidiary ones. When asked, people appear to see candidates in terms of who they are and what they have done rather than their party or policy. Half of all respondents who gave any reason provided an essentially personal justification and only one in five spontaneously mentioned party. However, it is obvious that in some instances a respondent might feel partisanship would be an inappropriate answer. Anyone voting for one of the two, three or four Fianna Fáil candidates in a constituency, for instance, might feel the need to explain why they chose that Fianna Fáil candidate rather than another. The same could be true of most Fine Gael voters and many of those voting Labour.

In the second part of Table 2 we show the responses of those who voted for a candidate who had no running mate from the same party. The main differences between this group and the whole are a decrease in those giving personal responses, as we would expect, and in those stressing area representation. This is compensated by a striking increase in those giving a policy response and a small increase in those giving a party response. The implication of this may be that area and personal factors are more important for selecting within parties than between them, while policy is more important for selecting between parties. However, it is also possible that these factors vary across parties. By confining analysis to single-candidate situations we reduce the impact of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael voters on the distribution and increase the weight of those voting Green or Sinn Féin. We also examined the responses by the party of the candidate receiving the first preference and

Table 2. Main and subsidiary reasons offered for selecting first choice candidate

	All parties		*Single candidate parties only*	
	Main reason %	*All reasons* %	*Main reason* %	*All reasons* %
Personal attributes	39	51	36	41
Party	20	27	27	33
Policy	8	11	18	24
Area represented	30	35	20	26
Other	11	16	13	17
N	1880	1880	655	655

Note: The sum of each column may exceed 100 due to multiple responses. Up to three main reasons and three subsidiary reasons coded for each respondent.
Self-reported voters only. Those voting for independents and others are excluded.

by the numbers of candidates from that party. This confirms not only that, indeed, responses vary considerably within parties according to how many candidates are running, but also that they vary between parties, even when allowing for numbers of candidates. The example of Fine Gael, which has sufficient instances of one, two or more candidates, shows that party is less likely to be given as a reason where there are multiple Fine Gael candidates.

This analysis suggests that most voters appear to be attracted by the personal characteristics and attributes of the candidates themselves rather than by their party. However, it is arguable that this evidence understates the importance of party. As we have seen, the number of candidates put up by a party has an impact on the way the question is answered. There are few instances of single-candidate situations for Fine Gael and none for Fianna Fáil. It may also be that 'party' is a response which may be unacceptable to many who feel parties have a low reputation in general and that they will appear more conscientious if they can give apparently more informed reasons for their support. Finally, the stress in the question on the choice of candidate may also have encouraged respondents to provide non-partisan answers. However, even if the party-centred voter is not as rare as Table 2 suggests, these answers do highlight the significance of factors other than party and to that extent reinforce the findings in the earlier section which indicated that many voters did not appear to vote as if motivated primarily by party. They also reveal the cultural norms of voting and representation that devalue party and emphasize personal and local service.

Closed-ended Questions about First Preference Vote

In addition to the open-ended questions, we asked people directly to tell us whether party or candidate was most important for their decision on first preference.[14] Only 39 percent responded by selecting party, the majority saying it was the candidate that was most important (Table 3).[15] Party is most important for Greens, Sinn Féin and, to a lesser extent, Fianna Fáil. We later posed the same question in a different way, asking respondents if they would still have voted for the same candidate had that candidate stood for a different party (Table 4).[16] There is considerable consistency at the individual level across the two questions, with only 17 percent giving apparently inconsistent answers: claiming to be candidate-centred but saying they would not follow the candidate into a different party, or claiming to be party-centred but willing to follow the candidate into a different party. The results are also similar in the aggregate, with 38 percent saying they would not follow a candidate who changed party, as against 39 percent saying that party (as opposed to candidate) was the major factor in their choice.

Those who said 'it depends' are drawn almost equally from those who previously gave party and those who gave candidate as the main reason for their first preference vote. Neither response pattern is logically inconsistent.

Table 3. Self-reported most important factor in deciding first preference, party or candidate?

	Candidate %	*Party* %	*Total*	*N*
Fianna Fáil	56.0	44.0	100.0	947
Fine Gael	64.6	35.4	100.0	443
Green	41.5	58.5	100.0	84
Labour	68.0	32.0	100.0	200
PD	72.0	28.0	100.0	70
Sinn Féin	44.7	55.3	100.0	97
Total	58.7	41.3	100.0	1841

Self-reported voters only. Those voting for independents and others are excluded.

Party-motivated voters who would nonetheless follow a candidate could view two (or more) parties with almost equal approval. Candidate-motivated voters might still see party as a factor sufficient to limit their choice. One respondent explained his first preference vote by saying his favoured candidate was 'anti-Fianna Fáil'. This underlines the point that both candidate and party factors should be assumed to play a role for any voter, but that while for some the weighting of the two may be equal, for others the weighting is very unequal. As it becomes more unequal it is reasonable to classify voters as primarily 'party-centred' or as primarily 'candidate-centred', but this does not mean other considerations are entirely absent. It again appears that party is weighted most strongly among those who support the Greens, Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil candidates and weakest among those supporting candidates from Fine Gael, Labour and the Progressive Democrats. Combining the two measures, we find that 38 percent are clearly candidate-centred, 26 percent party-centred and 36 percent not unambiguously of either type.[17] Green and Sinn Féin voters are most party-centred; Fine Gael and Progressive Democrat voters are most candidate-centred (see Table 5).

Table 4. Would respondent vote for same candidate if candidate stood for different party?

Party	*Yes* %	*Depends* %	*No* %	*Total*	*N*
Fianna Fáil	42.7	14.7	42.6	100.0	958
Fine Gael	58.5	10.7	30.8	100.0	451
Green	15.8	26.0	58.2	100.0	87
Labour	44.8	22.5	32.7	100.0	201
PD	48.8	24.2	26.9	100.0	70
Sinn Féin	37.3	19.2	43.5	100.0	99
Total	46.0	15.8	38.2	100.0	1866

Self-reported voters only. Those voting for independents and others are excluded.

Table 5. Candidate or party index from direct questions

	Candidate-centred %	*Mixed* %	*Party-centred* %	*Total*	*N*
Fianna Fáil	35.0	35.0	30.0	100.0	964
Fine Gael	49.8	26.8	23.5	100.0	451
Green	15.0	41.6	43.4	100.0	87
Labour	40.5	36.7	22.8	100.0	204
PD	46.7	35.0	18.2	100.0	70
Sinn Féin	25.4	34.4	40.2	100.0	99
Total	38.7	33.0	28.3	100.0	1875

Candidate-centred voters are those whose candidate is the primary factor in their first preference vote and that if their candidate had run for some other party they would still have voted for him. Party-centred voters are those who say party is the primary factor in their first preference vote and that if their candidate had not run for that party they would not have voted for him. The rest, including non-respondents to one or other question, are classified as ambivalent.

Self-reported voters only. Those voting for independents and others are excluded.

Candidate and Party Ratings

Asking people to voice their reasons for making any choice is problematic, because people may in reality make decisions without thinking through the sorts of criteria they are being asked to consider. They may also be unaware of the way in which certain predispositions impact on their evaluations of the choices offered. While these direct questions are useful they should not be seen as definitive. Ranking is also less than ideal, as we do not know whether a primary reason clearly outweighs a secondary one, or whether the margin is a small one. Questions that ask respondents to rate several things on a scale can be more nuanced and so more useful. Much electoral research is based on asking people to rate stimuli – leaders, issues, performances and so on – on a number of scales and the most important factors in vote choice are then inferred from the pattern of correlations. This may be a simple enough exercise where there are only two or three parties; it is much more time-consuming where there may be up to 17, as is the case with candidates. However, we asked our respondents to rate each of the parties and each of the candidates from those parties on a thermometer scale.[18]

We feared that independent and minor party candidates would be particularly difficult for respondents to evaluate and so excluded such candidates from this part of the survey. If voters are to decide on the basis of candidates rather than parties, it is necessary for them to know something about the candidates other than their party label. Seventy-five percent of all voters report having met the candidate to whom they gave their first preference and, more importantly, the rating data demonstrate that most voters seem able to differentiate between many candidates. They do not know something only about their first choice. In fact, respondents were generally willing to evaluate

the majority of candidates. More than half rated all of them and the average respondent rated more than 70 percent of candidates. This compares with 95 percent who rated all parties.

Of course, it remains to be seen how far party and candidate are differentiated and it is the relative ratings of parties and candidates that we are interested in most. It might be expected that party-centred voters would rate party above, or at least equal with, that party's candidates and that candidate-centred voters would rate candidates more highly. A clear majority of respondents do differentiate candidate and party, with 62 percent giving a rating to the party of the candidate who gets their first preference vote that is different from that they give to the candidate. Table 6 gives the average rating of the first-preference candidate and the average rating of the party of that candidate, again broken down by party.

Table 6 demonstrates that the average voter rates his first-preference candidate more highly than he rates his first-preference party. The difference is small enough, but it is significant at the 0.01 level. This is generally true across all parties, with the exception of the Greens and Fianna Fáil, where the average party rating is slightly higher than the average candidate rating. Within these parties the difference is very small: only in the case of Fianna Fáil is it significant at even the 0.05 level. However, the pattern is similar to those we have observed above, with party evaluations higher than candidate evaluations for Green, Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin voters and lower than candidate evaluations among voters supporting Fine Gael, Progressive Democrat and Labour candidates.[19]

We can also use this indirect measure to explore lower preferences. This is given in Table 7 for the first three preferences. Looking first at all voters in column 1 we see that candidates obtaining a first preference are rated more highly than their parties, but that the situation is reversed for those obtaining lower preferences. (This remains true even when we confine the analysis to those who expressed at least three preferences.) However, this pattern varies substantially between those whose vote appears to be more

Table 6. Candidate and party ratings for respondents' first preferences

	Mean rating of first preference candidate	*Mean rating of first preference candidate's party*	*Mean individual difference*
Fianna Fáil	80.0	81.4	–1.4
Fine Gael	79.4	68.8	+10.2
Green	72.3	74.8	–1.9
Lab	76.6	69.4	+6.8
PD	77.5	70.2	+7.8
Sinn Féin	82.6	77.6	+3.9
All	79.3	76.2	+2.9

Self-reported voters only. Those voting for independents and others are excluded.

Table 7. Candidate–party differences for lower preferences

	All voters	*All voters casting sequential ballot*	*All voters not casting sequential ballot*	*All voters casting party-inconsistent first pair*
First preference	+3.3	–2.5	+6.5	+10.1
Second preference	–2.3	–13.1	+5.2	+8.8
Third preference	–4.1	–10.8	+0.4	–2.8

Self-reported voters only. Those voting for independents and others are excluded.

or less party-centred. In column 2, where analysis is limited to those casting a sequential ballot, those who vote for all candidates of their first-preference party in sequence, party rates higher than candidate for all preferences, although there is a big gap between 1 and 2. In contrast, when we look only at those who do not cast a sequential ballot, mean candidate ratings exceed those for party and are similar for both first and second preferences. Limiting analysis only to those who cast a party-inconsistent set of first and second preferences, we see the same is true: candidates outweigh party but the relative ratings are similar for the first two candidates.

This demonstrates that party is a stronger determinant of lower preferences than it is of first preferences, although for some voters there is little difference between the first and the second preference in the primary importance of candidate. This general primacy of party over candidate can be understood in terms of information, as Richardson (1988) has argued in the case of Japan. In what is a small political context, most voters do have good information about perhaps one or two candidates, but after that they know more about parties than candidates, and judge accordingly.

Comparing the Measures of Candidate-/Party-centred Voting

We have examined several measures of candidate-centred voting. Before we go further, we briefly review these measures and compare the estimates given by each measure of the extent to which Irish voters are primarily candidate- or party-centred. Comparison is confined here to the group of voters analysed in Table 1: those who did not vote for an independent and who could vote for at least two candidates of their (apparently) preferred party. First ballot behaviour: what proportion voted for all the candidates of the same party sequentially and what proportion voted at least for all the candidates of that party, even if not in strict sequence. The first group – comprising 44 percent – we see as essentially party voters, the second – comprising 16 percent – as having well-mixed motives and the residual 42 percent as candidate-centred. Our pair of closed-ended questions when combined yields a lower

Table 8. Candidate- versus party-centred first preference voting: a comparison of distributions obtained using different measures

	Candidate-centred	*Mixed*	*Party-centred*
Ballot behaviour[1]	42	16	44
Closed questions[2]	38	36	26
Open question: 'party' response[3]	75	6	19
Ratings	35	37	27

Notes: Includes only instances where a party fielded more than one candidate. Self-reported voters only Those voting for independents and others are excluded.
[1] Mixed includes those who cast a complete but not a sequential ballot.
[2] See Table 6.
[3] Mixed includes those for whom 'party' was a stated reason but not the main reason.

figure for party-centred voters and a higher one for those with mixed orientations. Comparing candidate and party rankings again gives a smaller figure for party-centred voters, with only 27 percent favouring party as opposed to 35 percent favouring the candidate. However, only the open-ended question seems to elicit a very different response, with just 20 percent giving party as a main reason and a further 7 percent giving it as a contributory reason. Seventy-three percent do not mention party at all. The problems with the open-ended question that may account for the low number of apparently party-centred voters have already been identified. Discounting the open-ended measurements, it seems reasonable to say that around two-fifths of voters appear to be essentially candidate-centred, while the rest incline more to party. Interestingly, however, the behavioural measure gives the highest estimate for more narrowly party-centred voters, while the other measures suggest no more than one-quarter of voters are firmly party-centred. It seems that inferences from reported behaviour of voters will give a higher figure for party-centredness than inferences from reported motives, although, judging by the results of Blais et al. (forthcoming) discussed above, it is possible that even the former may underestimate the real importance of party factors. I revisit this point below.

There is not space here to explore in any detail who the more candidate-centred voters are.[20] The key point is that there is evidence based on a variety of methods that suggests importance of party in the voting decision varies considerably within the Irish electorate. In the last section of this article I explain the implications of this for our explanations of Irish voting behaviour.

Explaining Electoral Choice

Here, I examine the performance of what we argue is a typical multivariate model of party choice across different types of voters, differentiated by the extent to which they are candidate- rather than party-centred. Before we

discuss the model we must explain how such a differentiation is made. We could simply pick one of the several measures discussed above. However, on the assumption that these measures all tap the same phenomenon, it makes more sense to combine them into a single measure. This can be done using factor analysis, which also gives us some indication of how far each of the measures reflects the same phenomenon. If they do, the factor analysis will indicate that a single dimension could underlie all 'responses'. Table 9 displays the results of two principal factor analyses. The first includes almost all of the items identified in Tables 1–6,[21] the second those which loaded reasonably well (in practice at 0.39 and above) on the first dimension in the first analysis. To enable the analysis to include all voters for parties (those for independents and 'others' are excluded), the two behavioural measures were coded at 0 when the voter's first choice had no running mates. In addition, the ratings measure was reversed to make party dominance a positive score: in Table 6 it is a negative score.

The eigenvalue for the first factor is just over 2.0, indicating clear evidence of a common factor, if not a strong one. With the exception of most coded responses to the open-ended question, all items load at 0.39 or above, and the 'party' response to the open-ended question also loads at 0.40. The policy response is almost completely unconnected to the primary dimension. A second analysis, excluding the three weakest items, produces a generally better solution, with the eigenvalue almost unchanged, although the open-ended 'party' response now loads at only 0.31. This gives us some confidence

Table 9. Principal factor analyses of candidate-/party-centred voter measures

	Factor loadings on first factor: unrotated	*Factor loadings on first factor: unrotated Weakest measures excluded*
Open-ended: Policy	.05	–
Open-ended: Party	.40	.31
Open-ended: Personal	–.21	–
Open-ended: Area	–.14	–
Voted consistent first pair	.70	.74
Voted sequential party list	.71	.75
Direct: party versus candidate	.60	.57
Direct: hypothetical	.58	.56
Indirect: party versus candidate	.39	.37
Eigenvalue	2.03	1.97

Notes: N = 1389. Each variable codes 1, 0, –1; those voters who gave first preferences to a party running only one candidate and who thus could not be classified as party- or candidate-centred on the basis of the ballot are treated as an intermediate category (0), as are ties on the indirect measure and those who answered 'it depends' on the hypothetical measure. Those voting for independents and others are excluded.

that these measures do reflect the same phenomenon. The alpha index measure of reliability for these five items is a reasonable 0.60 (0.62 without the open-ended measure).[22]

We can now use this derived measure of party-/candidate-centredness – the factor scores – to examine the need for a different explanation for the electoral behaviour of party- and candidate-centred voters. Explanations of electoral behaviour generally emphasize party, something candidate-centred voters see as relatively unimportant. The analysis here is intended to be no more than illustrative. We use a conventional model explaining electoral behaviour.[23] Our expectation is that the model will work poorly in explaining the behaviour of more candidate-centred voters and much better with respect to other voters. The model contains the following variables:

- Demographics: (non-)membership of union, membership of the Gaelic Athletic Association, gender, urban–rural location (all 1, 0), age in years and education (1–6).
- Ideological position: self-placement on the national issue, left–right and abortion (11-point scales).[24]
- Party attachment (1, 0, with 'leaners' at 0).[25]
- Evaluations of the performance of the economy, 3-point scale scored –1 to +1; attribution of credit or blame to government (1, 0) and interaction.[26]
- Evaluations of party leaders (11-point scales).

The estimates for this model for the 2002 election are given in Table 10. In line with most other analyses of Irish electoral behaviour it is clear that social cleavage measures are weak predictors of voting (Laver, 1986; Marsh and Sinnott, 1993, 1999; Whyte, 1974). Ideological issues too are weak (see Laver et al., 1988; cf. Bowler and Farrell, 1990) and so is the performance of the economy – perhaps because it was doing so well. The most significant factors are partisanship and comparative assessments of leaders (Carty, 1981; Harrison and Marsh, 1994). Overall, the McFadden adjusted R^2 for the model is 0.31, hardly a high figure given the large number of variables included. It is accepted here that this model might be improved; different measures of government performance, alternative scales of political values and perhaps more sensitive measures of social status might all lead to more significant coefficients and an improvement overall in the adequacy of the model. However, this model is typical enough of those used to explain choice in many countries. Following Rivers (1990), we should be very cautious about any of these estimates, since ignoring existing heterogeneity might lead us to overestimate or underestimate actual effects. And, of course, it is argued here that this model is severely affected by heterogeneity because many voters are not strongly influenced by party-related cues.

Our contention is that the weakness of the model is in part a function of the strong candidate-centred norm among Irish voters. One crude way to test this is to run the model separately for relatively candidate-centred and for relatively party-centred voters. For this distinction, we have divided the

Table 10. Multinomial logit estimation of vote choice model

	PDs	*Fine Gael*	*Greens*	*Labour*	*Sinn Féin*
Leader evaluations					
Ahern (Fianna Fáil)	–.055***	–.041***	–.042***	–.051***	–.040***
Harney (PD)	.042***	.002	–.002	–.006	–.015+
Noonan (Fine Gael)	–.003	.034***	.004	–.004	–.009
Sargent (Green)	–.016+	–.013**	.078**	–.015*	–.013
Quinn (Lab)	.015	.008	.002	.047***	.007
Adams (Sinn Féin)	.005	–.006	–.008	.005	.065***
Party attachment					
Fianna Fáil	–1.19*	–1.61***	–1.98+	–4.35***	–3.62**
Progressive Democrat	1.53+	.286		–.440	
Fine Gael	1.04	3.12***		–.081	
Green	.842	1.98+	2.38+	–3.75+	3.17+
Labour	.538	.667	–	.3.90***	.341
Sinn Féin		1.30	.781	3.10+	5.92***
Ideological position					
Abandon United Ireland	–.026	–.014	.038	–.055	–.098
Spend and tax more	–.056	.021	–.134+	.042	.071
Pro-abortion	–.044	–.031	–.065	.010	–.019
Government Performance					
(a) The economy better	.224	.371	–.774	.736	.006
(b) Govt responsible for economy	–.702	–.031	–.035	.613	–.444
(a) * (b)	.630	–.611+	–.847	–1.15*	–.227
Demographics					
Rural versus urban	–.928**	.389+	–.314	–.542*	–.721*
GAA member	–.219	–.060	–.584	–.607+	–.621
Union member	–.641+	.235	–.506	–.140	.194
Age in years	.011	–.001	.012	.001	.045***
Woman	–.379	.098	.314	.114	.135
More education	.125	.109	.303*	.212*	–.051
Constant	–22.47	2.88	–27.11	–1.81	88.89**

Note: McFadden's adj R^2 = 0.32; N = 1401; log-likelihood = –1186. Voters for independent candidates excluded. The reference category is Fianna Fail. ***Significant at 0.001; **significant at 0.01; *significant at 0.05; +significant at 0.10. Cells are blank when there is no variance.

factor scores from the second analysis in Table 9 at the median. The respective McFadden adjusted R^2 figures for the two models are 0.11 (N = 640) for relatively candidate-centred voters and 0.51 (N = 740) for relatively party-centred voters. This is a considerable difference but, of course, the basis for estimation becomes smaller in the two groups and the variances differ. Moreover, this distinction between party and candidate is very crude.

A better way to test our contention is to compare the performance of the overall model for several different subgroups of voters by examining the prediction errors. We can do this most easily by comparing the predictions given by the model against actual party choice and seeing whether predictions are more accurate for more party-centred respondents. Such a comparison

is displayed in Figure 1 for voters of all parties (the solid line) as well as for those of Fianna Fáil (dashed line) and Fine Gael (dotted line) alone. A perfect model would predict actual first-preference votes with complete certainty (i.e. with a probability of 1.00). If our contention that this model will be more effective in predicting the votes of more party-centred voters is correct, then the prediction of actual first preference will come closer to 1.00 as the voter is more party-centred. We have again used the factor scores from the second analysis given in Table 9 to measure degrees of party-centredness, and rounded them to give us a 5-point scale from –2 (most candidate-centred) to +2 (most party-centred). As Figure 1 shows, the average prediction of first-preference vote for the most party-centred voters is almost 0.8; for the least party-centred voters it is 0.2. Predicted probabilities across the six possible outcomes in Table 10 (including Fianna Fáil, the reference category) will always sum to 1.00, so 0.8 is a satisfactory performance and 0.2 is clearly not at all good. The fact that the results for the voters of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, respectively, are similar in shape indicates that this pattern is not simply an artefact, because a Fianna Fáil vote is on average most likely and Fianna Fáil supporters as a whole seem party-centred, as we saw above. For Fianna Fáil the slope runs from a low of 0.40 to a high of 0.80, while for Fine Gael it runs from 0.12 to 0.86 and for the full sample from 0.14 to 0.80, an increase in accuracy of 500 percent.[27]

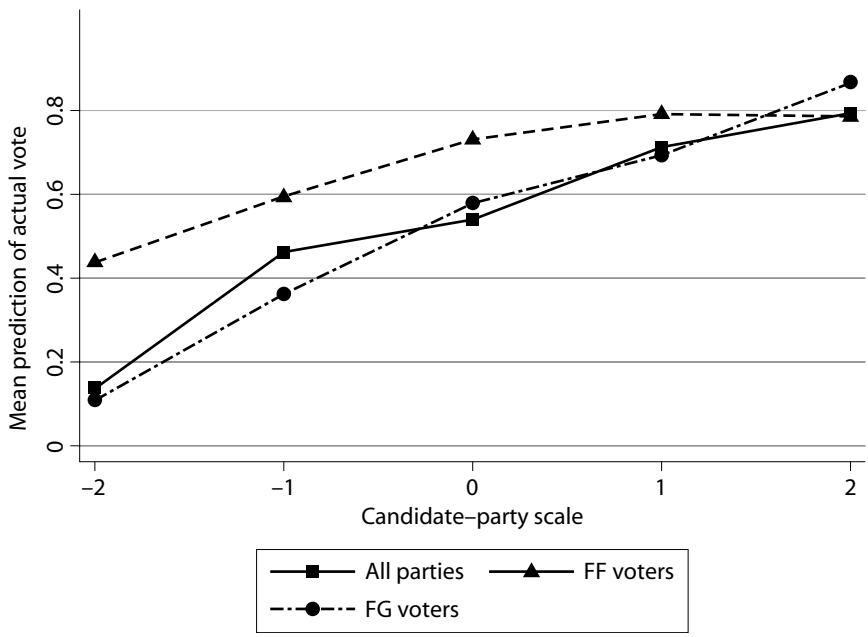

Figure 1. Predicted probability of actual first preference vote. (Voter type measured by factor scores from analysis in Table 9: independent voters and those supporting others are excluded)

Discussion and Conclusions

In this article, I set out to examine the extent of personal voting in Ireland. While there is consensus that many Irish electors are strongly candidate-centred, the systematic evidence to support the claim and assess the relative importance of candidate and party has been absent. The measures that have been used in the past have seemed to indicate different answers and contain sufficient uncertainty or ambiguity to caution us against drawing firm conclusions.

There are many ways to explore how important party is to voters. We have chosen four here: open-ended questions, a simulated ballot, direct closed-ended questions and indirect scale measures. All coincide in indicating a very significant degree of candidate-centred voting; the more direct measures suggest most and the more indirect ones suggest least. All concur in identifying some parties' voters as more party-centred (Greens, Sinn Féin, Fianna Fáil) and others (Labour, Progressive Democrats, Fine Gael) as more candidate-centred, at least in 2002. Several measures do suggest that around 40 percent of voters for these parties are significantly candidate-centred.[28] In general, the measures based on behaviour indicate lower levels of candidate-centred voting than those based on reported behaviour, while open-ended questions seem to indicate by far the highest levels. It seems likely that although many voters may vote a party ticket they will rationalize this to themselves in terms of candidate qualities. The open-ended measure correlates least well with the other measures, but including all types of measure in a factor analysis still results in an acceptable scale. The cutoff points of this would be arbitrary, so this does not tell us how many voters are either party- or candidate-centred, but it does provide a measure of differences in degree. Behavioural measures are not applicable across many electoral contexts. However, the results here indicate that the sort of closed-ended questions used can produce results that are reasonably equivalent to those obtained using reported behaviour. This should be helpful in comparative work.

The apparent paradox of candidate-centred voting combined with partisan stability at aggregate level is hardly resolved by this analysis. Of course, the paradox may be no more than apparent. The party system is becoming much more unstable – as we might expect in the absence of strong party anchors in the electorate. Survey evidence points to less party identification (Marsh, 2006) and aggregate evidence is that levels of partisan solidarity in voting patterns are lower than ever (Gallagher, 2003: 105–6), while independent candidates have done unusually well in recent elections. The next Irish election study will provide important evidence on the association between candidate-centred voting and partisan stability as it will complete a panel started at the 2002 election. The data will show how far voters who were more party-centred in 2002 actually do remain more faithful to their parties, and show how far candidate-centred voters whose candidate is no longer standing are nonetheless attracted to another candidate of the same party.

It is also possible that the importance of candidate remains overestimated by all the measures used here. Candidate evaluations may be added to the model estimated in Table 10 and each respondent's predicted vote choice calculated, both with candidate evaluations included and again with all candidate evaluations set to zero. The two sets of predictions can then be compared, as Blais et al. (forthcoming) have done for Canada. We did this and concluded that only 20 percent of voters would have made a different party choice (with Fine Gael, as might be expected, the biggest loser).[29] This is a simple simulation that pays no attention to the standard errors that surround any such prediction. Nor does it allow for the fact that parties may be liked because of a candidate they nominate. Even so, while the result suggests that the personal vote is more important in Ireland than in Canada, it does at least warn us that candidate-centred voting may be less extensive than is suggested in Table 8.

It has also been argued here that differences in the degree to which Irish voters are party-centred indicates a heterogeneity in the electorate that has not been modelled by any analysis to date. This applies whether 20 percent or 40 percent of voters are candidate-centred. While it has been recognized that different Irish voters probably do use different criteria when deciding how to vote, the precise implications of this for multivariate models have not been pursued. We have seen here that the more candidate-centred the voter, the less easily is his or her vote predicted by a conventional model of electoral behaviour, one that emphasizes party. This has obvious implications for our understanding of how people vote and what the vote means. While lip service is frequently paid to the idea that there are 42 separate contests (one in each constituency), too often the significance of this is ignored when commentators interpret the decision of the electorate. Commentators and academics may draw policy lessons from the vote where they are not justified, since many voters may have chosen their candidate for reasons quite unconnected with that candidate's party. The lesson of this for the study of Irish electoral behaviour is that the research agenda for Irish electoral behaviour must include the development of candidate-centred assessments, paralleling those of party, which can be integrated into models of the vote. The same surely applies in other countries where individual candidates matter.

Notes

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1 A recent review identified 10 states with such strong preferential voting (Chile, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Poland, San Marino and Switzerland) plus a further four with candidate votes that are not automatically pooled at party level (Ireland, Malta, Mauritius and Vanuatu) (Karvonen, 2004: 208). Shugart also includes Brazil and Peru, but sees Estonia's list system as more strongly determined by party ordering. In addition, recent changes have increased the importance of the preferential vote in Austria and Belgium (Shugart, 2005: 41–3).

2 Rejecting earlier arguments that this demonstrated strategic voting, Moser and Scheiner argue that it indicates a personal vote for that candidate. This is because the candidate–party difference for the first-placed candidate is positively correlated with the closeness of the race and not negatively correlated, as would be implied by strategic voting. They show this is the case in several systems although not in Germany, a result they attribute to the high level of party institutionalization in that country.

3 See also the 2004 Finnish election study results for question 72: http://www.fsd.uta.fi/english/data/catalogue/FSD1260/cbf1260e.pdf.

4 Module 2 of the Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems (CSES) project did include questions on candidate recognition and candidate contact and, where preferential voting was possible, whether the respondent cast a candidate preference: see http://www.umich.edu/~cses

5 This study was funded under the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions of the Higher Education Authority of the National Development Plan and directed by Michael Marsh and Richard Sinnott. The data are available from the Irish Social Science Data Archive: http://www.ucd.ie/issda/.

6 Dalton and Wattenberg (2000) argue that this situation itself is changing, but their interpretation of party-centred voting is narrower than that employed here.

7 As the most highly ranked candidates in terms of first preferences win the great majority of seats, success seems largely unaffected by lower preferences. However, this holds only because of the extent to which the distributions of lower preferences are broadly similar to those of first preferences. Also, at most elections there are a number of candidates who owe their election to winning more second and third preferences than first preferences: see Gallagher (1978, 1979).

8 In this context, a voter might well use ballot position as a cue, and there is certainly some evidence for this (Marsh, 1987; Robson and Walsh, 1974).

9 The simulated ballots lacked the candidate photographs and party logos of the real thing, though they did feature party names. They thus resembled closely the pre-2002 style of ballot.

10 Bowler and Farrell (1991a) called this pattern an 'unravelling' one, in the sense that preferences for a single party's candidates come first, followed by a mixture of candidate and party preferences for the less significant votes.

11 Laver (2004) analysed actual preference data from three constituencies that voted electronically in the 2002 Irish general election. His results appear broadly similar to those from our simulated ballot with respect to the number of preferences expressed and the partisan patterning. The median number of preferences was 3 in Laver's analysis and here. The mean number of preferences was between 4.4 and 5 across the three constituencies Laver examined, as opposed to 4 in the election study data. The number we have per constituency is less than 100, but for the three constituencies analysed by Laver mean preferences are lower, being

between 3.1 and 3.7. Our respondents were certainly much less likely to complete a full ballot. However, comparing the proportion of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael first-preference voters casting a complete and sequential ballot for Fianna Fáil (Table 1) with Laver's figures in his tables 2–3, results are similar. According to Laver's results, between 46 and 53 percent of Fianna Fáil voters gave complete and sequential votes, and between 39 and 43 percent of Fine Gael voters. This goes some way to validating the use of simulated ballots.

12 There are parallels here in the literature on attitude scaling, particularly on cumulative scales (see, e.g., McIver and Carmines, 1994).

13 As Bowler and Farrell (1991a, b) discovered, consistent pairs are much more common at the top of the ballot, with almost three-quarters of all such pairs being those between first and second preference and between second and third preference. Examining all voters who cast at least two preferences, the proportions casting consistent pairs each time are 37 percent, 25 percent, 17 percent, 14 percent and 9 percent, respectively, for the first five pairings.

14 The measures in this section come closest to questions found in opinion polls over many years. These ask respondents which of several options best describes the reasons for their choice. Most of the reasons are party- and policy-related, but one is 'picking the best candidate to represent the needs of the constituency'. It is the latter that has been chosen by between 40 and 50 percent of respondents over the past 20 years (see Mair, 1987; Marsh and Sinnott, 1999; Sinnott, 1995).

15 The question is: 'Which would you say was more important in deciding how you cast your first-preference vote in the general election in May of this year – the party or the candidate him/herself?'

16 The question is: 'If this candidate had been running for any of the other parties would you still have given a first-preference vote to him/her?'

17 Party-centred voters are those who say party is the primary factor in their first-preference vote and that if their candidate had not run for that party they would not have voted for him. Candidate-centred voters are those for whom candidate is the primary factor in their first-preference vote and who say that if their candidate had run for some other party they would still have voted for him. The rest are classified as ambivalent.

18 'I'd like to ask you how you feel about some Irish politicians, using what we call the "feeling thermometer". The feeling thermometer works like this: If you have a *favourable feeling* (a warm feeling) towards a POLITICIAN you should place him/her somewhere between 50 and 100 degrees; If you have an *unfavourable feeling* (a cold feeling) towards a POLITICIAN you should place him/her somewhere between 0 and 50 degrees; if you have a *don't feel particularly warm or cold* (have no feeling towards the politician at all), then you should place him/her somewhere at 50 degrees; where would you place these Irish politicians? And where would you place each of the following PARTIES; and where would you place these CANDIDATES who ran in your constituency in the general election in May?'

19 Different voters may use the thermometer scale in different ways despite the instructions they are given (see Brady, 1985). This can be countered by calculating party and candidate scores for each respondent that are centred on each respondent's mean party and candidate score. However, this standardized measure may be affected by the fact that some parties field more candidates than others, and if all candidates from a favoured party are highly rated the difference

between the top candidate and the candidate mean will then be smaller. For this reason we have simply used the unstandardized measures here.

20 In fact, candidate-centred voters are more likely to be young, female, rural and less knowledgable about politics, although none of these bivariate associations are strong ones.

21 'Complete' voting was excluded, as this is similar to the sequential vote measure and the aim is rather to look at similarities between rather different measures.

22 A problem with the open-ended measure is that it places so few people in the party category, for the reasons already discussed.

23 For multivariate models of Irish voting, see e.g. Garry et al. (2003), Mair (1987), Marsh (1985a), Marsh and Sinnott (1999), McAllister and O'Connell (1984).

24 These are bipolar scales. The pairs are: insist on a united Ireland now – abandon the aim of a united Ireland altogether; government should cut taxes a lot and spend much less on health and social services – government should increase taxes a lot and spend more on health and social services; there should be a total ban on abortion in Ireland – abortion should be freely available in Ireland to any woman who wants to have one.

25 Party attachment is measured using the CSES Wave 2 question. 'Leaners' are people who think of themselves as 'close to a political party' but, when asked how close, say they are 'not very close', or who say only they are closer to one party than the others.

26 'Thinking back over the past five years – the lifetime of the 1997 to 2002 Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat government – would you say the ECONOMY in Ireland over that period of time got a lot better, a little better, stayed the same, got a little worse or got a lot worse?' Five response options ranged from 'Got a lot better' to 'Got a lot worse', plus a sixth option, 'don't know'. This was followed by: 'Do you think this was MAINLY due to the policies of that government or NOT MAINLY DUE to the policies of that government?'

27 The correlation between the raw factor scores measuring candidate versus party from Table 8 and predicted probabilities of voting Fianna Fáil among those who actually did so is 0.89; it is 0.92 for Fine Gael, 0.90 for Labour, 0.83 for the Greens, 0.91 for the PD, 0.91 for Sinn Féin and 0.90 for all parties together. All correlations are highly significant. Overall, for a shift of 1 standard deviation towards a more party-centred vote, the probability of a correct prediction increases by 0.09.

28 Of course this excludes those who voted for non-party candidates, 9.5 percent in 2002.

29 We included in the model a set of evaluations for each respondent indicating the best evaluation of a candidate from each party, i.e. best Fianna Fáil candidate, best Fine Gael candidate and so on. All evaluations were centred on zero (rather than 50) and 0 was made the middle point in all other scales. The 'prediction' is made by taking the most likely outcome for each voter from a complete model and then comparing this with a set of 'predictions' made from a new dataset in which all candidate evaluations are set to zero. Our analysis differs from that of Blais et al. (forthcoming) in that they use multinomial probit while we used multinomial logit. Our model was also more extensive.

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