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VOTER BEHAVIOR UNDER STV-PR: Solving the Puzzle of the Irish Party System

Shaun Bowler and David M. Farrell

This paper examines voter preferences when voters are allowed to rank order large numbers of candidates both within and between different parties (STV-PR). How voters complete such a ballot has consequences both for models of voting behaviour and also for patterns of party competition. More concretely, although such a system should promote a great deal of candidate centered voting behaviour, this does not, in fact, seem to occur for the case we examine. While Irish voters do seem to exhibit multiple party loyalties they are, nevertheless, party and not candidate specific loyalties. The consequences of this for both a Michigan account of party loyalty and also standard interpretations of Irish party competition are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

By and large, studies of voting behavior have rested very heavily on evidence from the U.S. or British cases. To a considerable extent, however, these represent atypically simple examples in terms of both party and electoral systems. If we consider a single office voters are generally only allowed to make one choice between two alternatives. Introducing even moderate degrees of complexity raises many questions about the wholesale applicability of models grounded too closely in Anglo-American experiences as the literature on Canada illustrates (Bowler, 1990a; Clarke and Stewart, 1987). Ireland's STV-PR system represents what is, perhaps, the most complex electoral system of all.¹ Yet Ireland's party system of disciplined parties does not conform to the standard idea of the type of party system produced under proportional representation. Ireland thus represents an important case to study in that it is anomalous in terms of the literature relating party competition to electoral systems. In this paper, we

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address the seeming paradox of the Irish case grounded in an account of voting behavior and ideas on how preferences may be shaped under conditions of complexity. Our answer to the puzzle of why there is a disciplined party system in Ireland in the face of electoral system pressures lies in the interaction between voter preferences and the electoral system.

The paper proceeds in three parts. In the first part, we consider in somewhat greater detail the problem the Irish party system poses to studies of the effects of the electoral system upon party competition. We then move to argue that the system itself will shape voter responses in such a way as to maintain the current party system. In the third section, we use evidence from two surveys of the Irish electorate, one conducted in the Galway West constituency during 1987, the other conducted at the time of the General and Euro-election of June 1989. Both surveys asked voters to mark a mock ballot, and this provides us with set of voter preference schedules against which we can test our hypotheses.

Intra and Inter-Party Choices Under STV: Candidate vs. Party Effects

While PR systems in general seem to promote instability in party systems, there is reason to believe that STV-PR provides even more opportunity for multi-partyism and party fractionalization than party list PR. The reason for this is that the preferential ballot provides scope for voters to express preferences over individual candidates as well as, and perhaps instead of over parties. The importance of candidate specific voting behavior has been noted by many who study Irish party politics and has given rise to several branches in the literature on Irish politics. One such branch considers "friends and neighbors" effects in which parties nominate candidates with specific neighborhood followings, such as sports personalities, who are well known within at least part of the constituency (Parker, 1982, 1983).

The parties . . . know that, given the parochial concerns of the voters, a local candidate who can exploit strong neighborhood identifications will constitute one of the most attractive inducements to voters to cross party lines (Carty, 1981, p. 121).

A related literature stresses the "parish pump" or "personal vote" aspects of Irish politics (Bax, 1976; Carty, 1981; O'Connell, 1983; Farrell, 1985; Komito, 1984). Simple survey evidence suggests that Irish voters greatly value constituent services of the kind discussed by Cain et al. and of the type legislators are willing to supply (Cain, Ferejohn, and Florina, 1984). For example, during surveys conducted in the period 1977–1982, on average, 41% of Irish voters responded that the candidate would be "most impor-

tant” to them in helping them make up their mind how to vote. The next most-cited factor was that concerning the policies of the party; and here an average of 24% of voters during this period cited policy as an influence.

Given that Irish districts have between three and five seats, Irish parties face a whole series of decisions over nomination strategies, not just which candidate to nominate but also how many. Having more slots to fill does not necessarily lessen internal conflict since the party must avoid over-nomination (Cahan, McKinlay, and Mughan, 1975; Katz, 1981). In addition to interparty disputes over nomination, the “personal vote” and constituency service are important vehicles for intra-party competition.

[I]ntraparty conflict finds expression in the assertion by rival candidates of their individual merits as constituency or sub-constituency representatives. As members of the same party and as supporters of a common party program, the individual candidates are unable to compete on grounds of policy or ideology. Rather, they compete in terms of individual effectiveness or competence in a manner which does much to depoliticize electoral competition (Mair, 1986, p. 293).

In response to these pressures, candidates from the same party may draw up an agreement which restricts campaigning for first preferences to geographically restricted areas. These contracts vary in both specificity and formality. In the Wexford constituency in 1989, for example, the Fine Gael candidates drew up a formal Code of Conduct which divided up the constituency into areas over which each candidate had sole right of campaigning. Each Fine Gael candidate in Wexford was also allotted 2 days in which to campaign across the entire constituency (Yates, 1990, pp. 48–52, and, more generally, Katz, 1986). This type of campaigning will overlap with, and may even be the main basis of “friends and neighbors” effects. The point here is that it also provides incentives for candidates from within the same party to cheat on such agreements and so engage in a campaign against fellow party members. Candidates from within the same party, then, can be seen to contribute to the usual fissiparous effect of PR upon party unity and stability. The importance of intra-party competition in terms of voter choice is seen when we note that in 1977, 13 of 32 incumbents lost to challengers from the same party (Chubb, 1978, p. 31). In 1982, 17 of the 25 sitting Fianna Fail deputies who lost did so to members of their own party. For Fine Gael, this figure was 5 of 12 (Farrell, 1985, p. 259).

Duverger’s Law suggests that proportional representation electoral systems should produce a multiplication of parties and often produces a great deal of instability at the level of the party system. Yet Irish experience with a highly proportional and candidate-centered system does not support this view (Chubb, 1978, p. 27, and on the relatively high proportionality of the Irish system, see Rose, 1984, p. 75). Indeed, the Irish party system is often

characterized as a stable one in which smaller parties have a difficult time surviving.

[T]here has been no marked fractionalization of the party system—at either the electoral or parliamentary level—and the country has had one-party government for most of its history (Carty, 1981, p. 7, see also Chubb, 1978, pp. 27–28).

The question we seek to answer, then, becomes why we see a stable party system in the face of such pressures stemming from the electoral system. Following Carty, we argue that Ireland represents a deviant case in terms of the literature on party and electoral systems and is, therefore, worthy of more general examination (Carty, 1981, pp. 11–13). One way of resolving the paradox posed by Irish parties would be to find strong party-oriented loyalties at the level of the electorate. This is an argument that is obviously consistent with Sartori's general argument in relation to Duverger's Law to the effect that proportional representation does not necessarily lead to fragmentation if voter loyalties are deeply enough rooted (Sartori, 1966). To the extent that we find such loyalties we can be said to have found one way of accounting for the maintenance of the Irish party system.

Pursuing this route may seem somewhat perverse since the prior case for strong party loyalties in such a system seems to be weak. There are, however, some reasons for thinking that party loyalties should be strong, perhaps especially strong, under STV-PR. At the very least we can suggest that constituency service may be of more importance to candidates than voters, and hence suggest that candidate-specific effects are overstated in the Irish literature and, indeed, in the voting literature in general.

To the extent that constituency service is regarded by voters as a part of the job description for legislators then it may well be the case that voters see individual candidates as substitutes, in the economists' sense of the term, when it comes to constituency service. Each candidate if elected may be reasonably expected to perform a roughly similar level of constituency service or provide a roughly similar amount of "pork." Candidates are not, however, substitutes when it comes to ideology or more general policy matters. Good constituency service may not, then, help a given legislator nearly as much as supposed, although bad constituency service ("not doing his/her job") might harm one. While under certain circumstances, for example, where the parties are ideologically indistinct or where voters themselves do not have preferences over policy *per se*, it may be the case that voters will care more about constituency service than other matters; it would seem more usual to expect that the policy packages of the parties are important determinants of choice even in a supposedly highly personalized and candidate-centered system such as Ireland's.

Aside from simply offering some reasons to doubt the much-touted im-

portance of the “personal vote,” it can also be argued that ideologies should in fact matter more in PR systems than under simple plurality systems. Some sections of the literature on party competition, for example, suggest that ideologies should be more important to parties in multi- rather than in two-party systems as the parties themselves seek to stake out some specific identity in the voter’s mind and/or the policy space (Sartori, 1966, p. 131; Downs, 1957, p. 127; Bowler, 1990b, and on Ireland in particular, see Mair, 1987b; Laver and Arkins, 1990). More important for our purposes is that an emphasis upon ideologies or party brand names as information cost cutters may be especially appropriate for voters PR systems in general and STV-PR in particular. Voters under STV-PR are asked to face a complex set of decisions in being asked to rank order a number of candidates from a number of different parties. While, for some districts, these demands may be relatively light, e.g., in the Roscommon district in 1987, Irish voters were asked to rank order five candidates from three parties, in other districts the demands may be heavier (Dublin West in that same year offered 20 candidates from ten parties). Under STV-PR, then, more is asked of voters than under the Anglo-American system, where, at a Californian extreme, voters may be presented with a very lengthy ballot but are still only asked to make pairwise comparisons for each office.

When faced with complex ballots such as the Irish one, it is reasonable to ask what a voters’ reaction might be. By and large, there is not a large literature in which to ground our expectations at this point since the literature on voter preferences in multi-party PR systems is not well developed, although there are some exceptions, e.g., van der Eijk and Niemoller, 1983. We can, however, develop some expectations if we consider voting under STV-PR as an example of decision making under the costly condition of complexity.

One way of thinking about this complexity is in terms of the familiar Downsian formulation of

$$p(b)-c \quad (1)$$

Various operationalizations have considered b and c at the systemic level in studies of voter turnout. Ease of registration, competitiveness of the election, or such discriminatory practices as literacy requirements have all been used to assess aggregate levels of turnout (Powell, 1980; Sinnott and Whelan, 1989). Here we can consider the ballot itself as imposing an additional set of costs that the voter has to deal with once the major, systemic costs of turning out to the polls have been borne. Simply, it would seem to take a great deal of effort for voters under STV-PR to rank order from 1 to n candidates who may be from 1 to m parties ($m < \text{or} = n$). Since most

citizens in Western democracies seem to have apathetic or decidedly ambivalent opinions on politics that reflect their “part-time” or “intermittent” involvement in politics (Harrop and Miller, 1987, p. 125) it seems reasonable to suppose that voters would like to find ways of dealing with this complexity or, in terms of Eq. (1), lowering the information costs of making a decision.

One reaction from voters that would help achieve this goal would be to simply stay at home. Yet another might be to mark only one or two preferences for a favorite candidate whose name or family the voter happens to recognize; though to the extent voters do in fact see candidates as substitutes this may not be a likely prospect. Another reaction might be typified by the Australian phrase “donkey vote,” where the preference ordering follows the ordering of names on the ballot. That is, we should see strong ballot position effects as a response to the complex ballot (Bain and Hecock, 1957; Bagley, 1966; Robson and Walsh, 1974; Benn, 1970; Darcy, 1986; Darcy and Schneider, 1989; Darcy and McAllister, 1990).

Yet another plausible reaction to such a complex ballot is the one we wish to explore here in particular, namely, that the voter relies even more heavily on the party label as a guide to vote choice as a means of cutting the costs of information necessary to making a decision.

Clearly, to the extent that we can advance an argument grounded in the party loyalties of voters we have to demonstrate that Irish voters do rely on party as a guide in making their choices and that this has consequences in terms of election results in mitigating the effects of the electoral system.

One question, however, remains, and that question is just what do party loyalties look like under STV-PR. This is a far less simple question than it might appear since there are a whole range of possible reactions to the complexity of an STV-PR ballot that a voter may exhibit. Table 1 displays

TABLE 1. Some Hypothetical Preference Schedules for Parties x, y, and z

Preference	Exclusive (type I)	Pure (type II)	Deviating (type III)	Unraveling (type IV)	Non-partisan (type V)	Non-party (type VI)
1	x	x	y	x	z	x
2	x	x	x	x	x	—
3	x	x	x	x	y	—
4	—	y	x	y	x	—
5	—	y	y	z	z	—
6	—	y	y	y	y	—
7	—	z	z	z	z	—
8	—	z	z	y	x	—

some possible reactions. The first two of these display the preference profile of possible party loyalists who may rely most heavily on party as a guide and either vote for all the candidates from one party and then stop voting or vote by party block. The remaining categories represent more hesitant types of party fealty with the last category representing a bullet vote for the one candidate known locally to the voter. Types III and IV represent somewhat more ambivalent categories in which voters express some degree of preference for both candidate-specific and party attributes. The preferences schedule displayed in Type III is one where the voter ranks an individual candidate most highly, while Type IV voters express preferences over candidates after party preferences.

The extent to which we can claim to resolve the paradox of the Irish party system by appeal to a model of voter behavior rests on the extent to which we can see preference schedules Type I and II, and perhaps also Type IV among the electorate. These simple hypothetical preferences schedules highlight that this is not necessarily a straightforward task since we need to address both the frequency and sequence of the preferences expressed. It is to this we now turn using data from two mock ballots presented to Irish voters at two different times and in two different circumstances. One poll is of the Galway West constituency during 1987, the other of all Ireland conducted during the Euro-election of June 1989. Using these, we find strikingly similar patterns as we will show now looking first at the simple numbers of preferences expressed and then turning to examine the party composition of preferences.

VOTER PREFERENCES

Frequency

The simplest forms of dealing with the complexity of the ballot involve the voter not marking many preferences at all or following the "donkey vote" pattern. The evidence in favor of the view that Irish voters simply shrink away from the complexity of the choices available to them is decidedly mixed. Irish voters in general seem willing to express a substantial number of preferences both in terms of simple numbers and also in terms of number of parties chosen. On the other hand we also find evidence of position effects.

Table 2 shows that Irish voters are not averse to expressing preferences and do not, for example, simply rely on bullet voting in the face of such a complex ballot. Nor do we see a simple secular decline in the number of preferences marked, i.e., fewer voters express strictly two than strictly three, three than four, and so on.

An obvious next step at this point would be to examine individual

TABLE 2. Distribution of Number of Preferences Market^a

Total number of preferences	Number of voters	
	<i>N</i>	Percent
European election survey: 1989 ^b		
1	91	7.2
2	234	18.5
3	594	47.0
4	171	13.5
5	73	5.8
6	29	2.3
7	14	1.1
8	10	0.8
9	6	0.5
10	23	1.8
11	2	0.2
12	10	0.8
13	1	0.1
14	3	0.2
Galway West constituency: 1986 ^c		
1.000	110	10.27
2.000	148	13.82
3.000	242	22.60
4.000	199	18.58
5.000	74	6.91
6.000	33	3.08
7.000	6	0.56
8.000	116	10.83

^aSource: MRBI/Irish Times Survey: June 1989; Galway West Survey, 1986 Centre for the Study of Irish Elections

^bMean = 3.34, *SD* = 1.86.

^cMean = 3.2, *SD* = 2.2.

sources of variation in the number of preferences marked. In terms of Eq. (1), for example, this can be discussed in terms of seeing *c* not just as a constant but as a function whose form varies with individual specific factors. For example, individuals with high levels of interest in politics might be willing to mark more of the ballot. Unfortunately, the opinion polls do not contain enough information to be able to pursue this line of enquiry with any great degree of confidence.²

As we can see from Tables 3 and 4, we do see evidence of positional effects. Of course, ballot position alone cannot dictate vote choice; we

TABLE 3. Estimation of Ballot Position Effects European Election Survey: 1989^a

Variable	Coefficient	Standard error	Standard coefficient	T	P(two tail)
Dep var: First preferences ^b					
Intercept	22.069	7.110	0.000	3.104	0.003
Ballot position	-1.591 ^e	0.748	-0.234	-2.129	0.039
FF	43.879 ^e	7.159	0.700	6.129	0.000
FG	22.325 ^e	7.105	0.356	3.142	0.003
PD	13.715	9.778	0.155	1.403	0.168
LAB	14.501	9.024	0.181	1.607	0.116
Dep var: Average preference ^b					
Intercept	3.523	0.299	0.000	11.792	0.000
Ballot position	0.062 ^e	0.031	0.209	1.985	0.054
FF	-1.785 ^e	0.301	-0.651	-5.933	0.000
FG	-1.492 ^e	0.299	-0.544	-4.999	0.000
PD	-1.131 ^e	0.411	-0.292	-2.752	0.009
LAB	-1.153 ^e	0.379	-0.329	-3.041	0.004
Any preference ^d					
Intercept	56.826	11.446	0.000	4.965	0.000
Ballot position	-2.211 ^e	1.203	-0.151	-1.838	0.074
FF	104.018 ^e	11.525	0.774	9.026	0.000
FG	68.830 ^e	11.437	0.512	6.018	0.000
PD	52.417 ^e	15.740	0.276	3.330	0.002
LAB	43.046 ^e	14.527	0.251	2.963	0.005

^aSource: MRBI/Irish Times Survey: June 1989.

^bN = 48, R² = .562.

^cN = 48, R² = .596.

^dN = 48, R² = .753.

^eSignificant at .05 level or better.

should also control for party label. (As we shall argue in a moment, however, party label is more than a simple control variable.) Using the mock ballots, Table 3 shows that, after controlling for the informational advantages of party label, candidates lower down the ballot do receive fewer first preference votes. They also receive total votes, i.e., first preferences, plus second preferences, plus third) and also lower average preference rankings. Table 4 provides figures which confirm these results using first preference votes from the Dail election of 1989 showing that the results from Table 3 are not specific to the survey.

These simple figures do not, of course, show the main focus of our interest which is the nature of the party loyalties themselves. While we can talk of party label in terms of its advantages in reducing the costs to voters of dealing with an STV ballot, the question is not so much how many preferences are expressed but who receives them.

TABLE 4. Estimation of Ballot Position Effects General Election: 1989^a

Variable	Coefficient	Standard error	T	P(two tail)
Constant	2033.244	610.689	3.329	0.001
Incumbent	3198.986	238.867	13.392	0.000
Position ^c	- 74.743	34.930	- 2.140	0.033
FF	2316.899	302.539	7.658	0.000
FG	1842.195	312.543	5.894	0.000
PD	-306.932	386.866	-0.793	0.428
LAB	1788.684	414.709	4.313	0.000
SEATS	54.567	138.956	0.393	0.695

^aDep var = number of first preference votes received by each candidate, *N* = 370, and *R*² = 587.

^bIndependent variables: incumbent (0,1) 1=incumbent candidate, 0=not, position = position on ballot, and seats = number of seats in constituency.

^cParty dummies: FF (0,1) 1=Fianna Fail party candidate, 0=not, FG (0,1) 1=Fine Gael party candidate, 0=not, PD (0,1) 1=Progressive Democrat party candidate, 0=not, and LAB (0,1) 1=Labour party candidate, 0=not.

Sequence

One simple way of illustrating the importance of party as a means of voters dealing with an often lengthy and complex ballot is to look at the extent of straight party ticket voting. As can be seen from Fig. 1, Irish voters are more than willing to vote for more than just one party, over 65% in both samples express a preference for two or more parties, around 40% in both samples express a preference for three or more. That is, we see

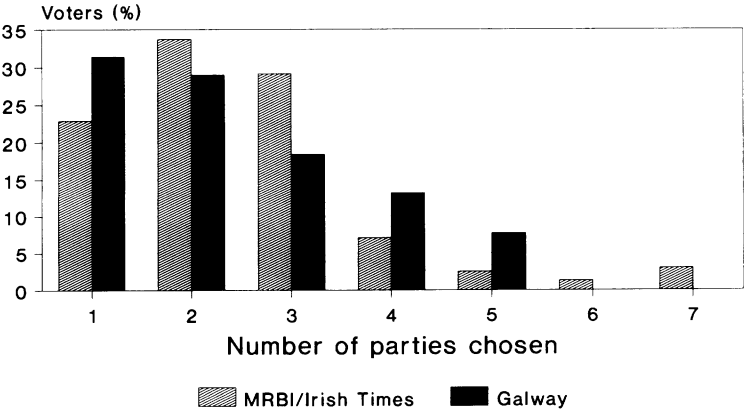


FIG. 1. Number of parties chosen by voters (in percent).

relatively few Type I, or, for that matter Type VI preference schedules. At the very least, it is clear that for most Irish voters, party loyalty does not have the same all-or-nothing behavioral component that is embodied in phrases such as “Die hard Republican,” “True blue Tory,” or “Red hot socialist” that are familiar from the U.S. or British cases.

Elsewhere, we have examined in some detail possible preference profiles under STV of the type displayed in Table 1 and the implications these patterns have for the party identification model (Bowler and Farrell, forthcoming). There we also set out a measure of party loyalty in terms of the extent to which preferences fall into blocks for a given party list. In looking at the preference schedule as a whole, we can see whether or not a voter’s first preference is cast for the same party as her second preference, her second as the third, and so on. Party loyalties, then, can be seen in the extent to which the whole preference schedule is composed of these consecutively consistent pairs of preferences.

Table 5 presents a simple breakdown of the numbers of consecutively consistent pairs of preferences from the two surveys. Across all districts, over 40% of voters did not express a single consistent pair of preferences. Obviously, these figures will be constrained by the number of feasible consistent pairs which may be expressed. As can be seen, when the feasible maximum increases, so does the number of consistent pairs as a percentage of total preferences; marked voters are, then, somewhat sensitive to the number of candidates on the ballot from the various parties.

We can look at the impact of party loyalty and number of candidates running another way if we examine the extent to which subsequent preferences are consistent with the very first preference of all. That is, we can ask

TABLE 5. Consistency of Paired Preferences (%)

		Consistent pairs					
	FF + FG ^a	0	1	2	3	4	5
Dublin	2	56.3	40.1	3.7			
Leinster	2	41.0	51.9	6.5	0.6		
Munster	3	49.5	39.5	9.9	0.9		
Connaught	3	50.8	38.0	10.5	0.6		
Euro-survey (all)		49.2	42.4	7.8	0.6		
Galway West	5	42.0	24.8	20.9	10.6	1.2	0.22

^aFF + FG = maximum number of consistent pairs if only considering the two main parties. If we consider minor parties (especially Sinn Fein), then for Dublin the maximum feasible number of consistent pairs remains 2, for Leinster the figure becomes 5, Munster 4, and Connaught 5.

TABLE 6. Relationship Between First Preference and All Preferences

District (number of candidates for main parties)	All voters (%)		FF first: FF (%)	FG first: FG (%)
	FF	FG		
Dublin (2 FF, 2 FG)	33	23	61	51
Leinster (2 FF, 2 FG)	38	31	63	64
Munster (3 FF, 2 FG)	36	17	67	54
Connaught (2 FF, 3 FG)	32	30	67	74
Galway (4 FF, 3 FG)	40	24	77	66

the question what is the extent to which the complete preference schedule involves marking a preference for the same party as the individual ranked first? Table 6 shows that, as expected, the amount of the preference schedule given over to preferences in favor of Fianna Fail is much higher for those who place a Fianna Fail candidate first than for voters in general. This is also true for Fine Gael voters. Again this pattern is sensitive to the number of candidates nominated so that, as the party nominates more candidates, more of the preference schedule is devoted to preferences for that party. It is worth stressing that this is substantively different from simply expressing more preferences. While the number of preferences may not increase, the number devoted to the first preferred party does. Given a choice, then, voters do seem to prefer to vote a party ticket.

This has some bearing on nomination strategies. In the course of discussing the dangers of overnomination, Cahen et al. assumed the greatest danger to a party was vote leakage through the transfer process. Their prescription was for parties to nominate fewer candidates that seemed grounded at least in part in assuming that candidates matter to voters.

... a lower number of candidates may prove less confusing to the voter, thus reducing the possibility of votes being transferred away more or less by accident (Cahan et al., 1975,p.370).

The figures presented suggest that voters are quite willing to vote a party slate if the party nominates enough candidates. This conclusion is warranted on the basis of the evidence of Table 6 when we compare the figures from the Galway and Connaught constituencies to those from Dublin and Leinster. This does not mean, however, that our alternative prescription is for a party to nominate as many candidates as there are seats. While we agree with Cahan et al. on the dangers of overnomination, we see a different source of that danger; rather, than voters deserting the party, the worry would seem more that nominating too many candidates would

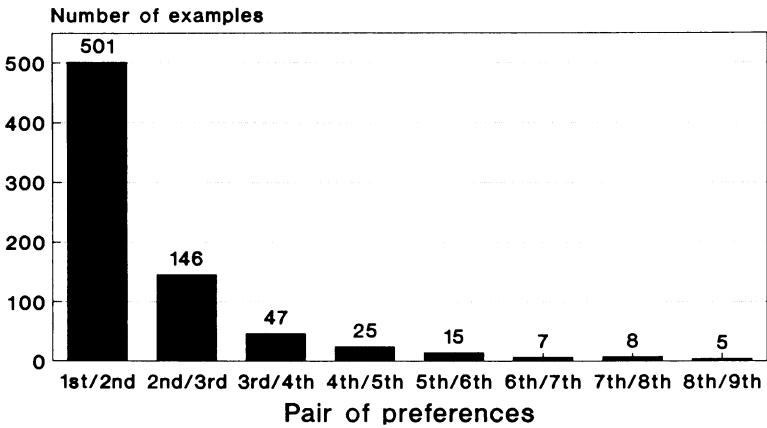


FIG. 2. Location of consistent pairs in the preference schedule, MRBI/Irish Times Survey.

spread the vote out too much, allowing other parties to approach the quota faster. Vote management under STV would seem to demand attention not only to one's own nomination strategy but also the opponent's.

Having noted that, the location of those consecutively consistent pairs is less sensitive to the number of options available. As can be seen from Figs. 2 and 3, it is the top few preferences which are most heavily by party, as measured in terms of consecutively consistent pairs. Voters, then, express a

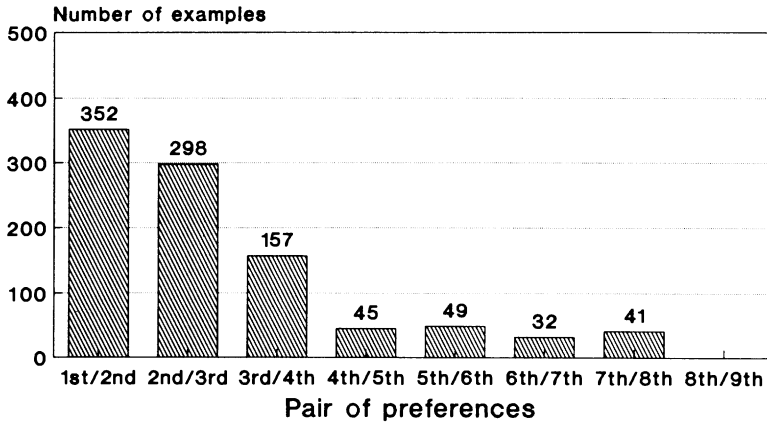


FIG. 3. Location of consistent pairs in the preference schedule, Galway West Survey.

a party preference at the very top of their preference schedules, and having more candidates from the same party allows voters to place the same party in the first three rankings as opposed to the first two. Candidate-specific effects, such as the “friends and neighbors” or constituency service effect are, then, much more likely to be seen lower down the preference schedule, i.e., be much more likely to be seen in terms of Type IV or unraveling voters of Table 1.

In terms of the puzzle we began with of strong Irish parties in the face of electoral system pressures, there is some evidence here to suggest that Irish voters have weak attachments to parties and are, on average, quite willing to vote for more than one party. Using the mock ballots, we see that to the extent that party loyalties are expressed, they occur at the top of the ballot. While voter preferences *per se* do not yield a pattern of straight ticket voting, they do help explain the presence of disciplined parties despite the presumed effects of the electoral system. The key is the location of the party-structured preferences in the top few rankings. Since it is these preferences which are counted most heavily by the electoral system, there is an interaction between the electoral system and individual preferences which goes some way toward underpinning the discipline of Irish parties. An example will make this point clearer.

At the 1989 election, for example, 48% of candidates were elected by the fourth count. That is, these candidates could only have been elected by considering the top four preferences of voters, i.e., the ones most heavily structured by party. Obviously, the remaining candidates will also have a pool of votes containing first, second, or third preferences. If we consider the number of votes for the winning candidates at the third count as a proportion of the winning candidates' final tally, the number most always exceeds 80%. Generally, then, somewhere between 80–90% of the preferences which contribute to the final result are from the first three. Simply looking at the number of candidates elected in the top few counts is, however, a much simpler way of illustrating the importance of the top few preferences. It is thus possible to account for the disparity between the party system and the presumed effects of the electoral system as a product of the interaction between how the electoral system counts votes and how voter preferences are structured. To the extent that we see candidate-specific votes, they largely occur lower down the preference schedule.³

What we see, then, is an interaction between the electoral system and voter behavior which helps to maintain disciplined parties in the Irish system. A similar kind of interaction can be said to operate in keeping small parties out of the Irish system. In fact, the kind of multiple party affiliations seen in Fig. 1 show that there is, in principle, a great deal of scope for more parties. In a five-seat district, for example, a new party needs to

obtain around 20% of the vote in order to win one of those seats. There are two ways of looking at this. The first is to regard this as a threshold requirement far more strenuous than the 5% hurdle in Germany. The second way to view this 20% figure is to note that it refers to the final tally of preferences, first, second, third, or lower. In that sense, it may be an easy hurdle to jump in light of the willingness of voters to cast some kind of preference for more than one party, and would be even easier if this electoral system did produce significant candidate-specific effects. The question is, of course, where such preferences will be placed in the entire preference schedule. If voters vote for a block of party candidates then votes for minor parties will appear lower down the ballot after a party preference has been expressed. If these preferences are too low down, they are unlikely to be counted. Alternatively, support for our hypothetical new party may be seen in first preferences. The question here is whether there are enough such preferences to keep the candidate from being eliminated and this depends in part on how many candidates the new party nominates. In this way, it is also possible to see that the interaction between party-oriented preferences and the electoral system also operates to keep out minor parties.

CONCLUSION

In the main, this has been a paper addressed at resolving the puzzle that Irish party politics poses for the study of the inter-relationship of party and electoral systems. We argued that the complexity of the electoral system helps shape people's preferences, and hence their votes, in such a way that when combined with the counting process helps emphasize party rather than individual candidacy. This argument also has consequences for sections of the literature on nomination strategies and the "personal vote" in Ireland.

More generally, we hope to have illustrated two further points. The first point is that party and candidate competition is constrained by voting behavior. This is an argument consistent with Sartori's claim that party systems do not reflect electoral systems but voter preferences. Many discussions of party behavior pay little heed to the behavior of voters. For example, while it may make great sense to assume that candidates spend much time and effort on "pork barrel" or "constituency service" politics, this is no guarantee that this is the basis for voting behavior at the level of the electorate.

The second point is that voting behavior in systems other than the U.S. or the U.K. exhibits a greater degree of complexity than simpler models might allow. More concretely, the very idea of voting for more than one party is hard to square with Michigan's notions of party identification. On

this basis, it is worth noting that many of the conceptions of party and electoral competition that have been grounded in U.S. or British experience do not travel well to more complex institutional settings. Furthermore, to the extent that many students of voting behavior have in the past generalized from U.S. experience to that of Britain, it is worth pointing out that a more rigorous test of theory might be to take those theories to a more complex setting than Britain's. We argued here that the complexity of the system itself helps shape voter preferences. In terms of the Duverger-Sartori debate over whether party systems reflect the influence of electoral systems or voter preferences, the argument has been pushed back a stage further.

While Ireland is, and will remain, a small actor on the world stage, its institutions are not without interest and importance to students of comparative politics. In the terms of reference for this paper, Ireland presented a puzzling exception to accounts and theories of party and electoral systems grounded in other, larger systems. In this case, Ireland's institutional complexity makes it a case worthy of much more attention from political scientists than Ireland's size suggests.

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NOTES

1. Australian Senate elections, Malta, Tasmania, and Brazil also use STV.
2. Preliminary and fragmentary results show that older voters tend to mark less of the ballot and that voters interested in politics marked more of the ballot.
3. It is also possible in this way to reconcile Gallagher's figures on intra-party and inter-party transfers and exclusivity using the transfer pattern with the results of Fig. 2 (Gallagher, 1978, 1987a, b).

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