

# Localism, Candidate Selection and Electoral Preferences in Ireland: The General Election of 1977\*

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*Precis:* Irish parties tend to choose parliamentary candidates who have strong local attachments. Party is known to be the dominant factor in electoral choice but many voters, particularly rural voters, are often said to prefer locally based representatives. Systematic evidence is provided to show how effectively parties consider such preferences in drawing up lists of candidates to contest constituencies in rural Ireland. Most candidates are selected at constituency level but the Fianna Fail leadership imposed several in 1977, a move justified by national rather than local electoral considerations. The weight of local attachments in electoral preferences is assessed through an analysis of transfer patterns and it is suggested that the importance of localism, even on cross-party voting, may have been exaggerated.

## I INTRODUCTION

It is a particularly striking feature of the electoral process in Ireland that it produces members of parliament (TDs) who are local people. They are local in so far as they live and have usually spent their lives in the constituencies which they serve. The proportion of TDs who live in their constituencies has increased since the early years of the Republic (Garvin, 1972). Many TDs are members of local councils, having become so either before or after their election to the Dail. This too is increasing (Farrell, 1971). The first generation of Irish politicians often owed their position to their roles in the struggle for independence, but, as this generation passed on, new criteria were applied in selecting its successor (Cohan, 1972). This feature of political life contributes to the conventional description of Irish politics as parochial. Yet it is clear that electoral choice is influenced primarily by party rather than localism or any other variable. The single transferable vote (STV) electoral system permits voters to express their preferences freely between candidates regard-

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less of party, but analysis of electoral results has demonstrated that a high proportion of voters give their highest preferences to candidates from the same party and many voters vote only for the candidates of one party (Gallagher, 1978). Does this mean that the importance of local loyalties has been exaggerated, or does it mean that parties have successfully mobilised such loyalties to their own advantage?

This question will be considered here through an examination of aspects of the selection and election processes. It will be evident not only that parties nominate locally based candidates but also that, in doing so, they balance the claims of various sub-constituency loyalties and interests, thus acknowledging and incorporating parochial demands. Electors vote primarily within party constraints but, to the extent that they do not, parochial considerations are significant and there is also evidence that preferences within parties are influenced by local considerations.

## II CANDIDATE SELECTION

Most levels of party organisation are involved in candidate selection in one way or another. In each party candidates are selected at specially convened constituency conventions subject to the approval of the executive. Conventions comprise delegates from parties' county and Dail constituency committees and from local branches within the constituency. They can be quite large, with several hundred people attending, and are presided over by a representative from the national executive – usually a senior parliamentarian or party official. Parties have to make two important decisions regarding selection in each constituency. The first concerns the number of candidates to be put up, the second concerns the personnel. Some conflict necessarily occurs because different groups within parties have different primary interests at this point. The national party, whose interest is represented and articulated by the convention chairman, wants to win as many seats in the constituency as possible. In pursuit of this aim it is advisable to achieve three things:

(i) *A balance on the party list.*

What is balanced depends upon what are seen to be the salient interests within each constituency. Ideally, a party should provide each potential supporter with a candidate whom that voter finds attractive. It is then hoped that support thus gained will be transferred, if necessary, to another candidate of the same party.

(ii) *Full utilisation of votes.*

A party wants to ensure that the votes gained can be used to elect

as many of its candidates as possible and thus aims to avoid a situation in which votes are divided between several of its candidates, none of whom is elected, when the sum of those votes would ensure the election of one of them. Essentially, this means that the right number of candidates must be nominated, with "right" being optimally defined as equal to the number of seats a party might hope to win (Lijphart and Irwin, 1979).

(iii) *Selecting those candidates most likely to win votes.*

These aims are not mutually reinforcing. For an individual branch, and sometimes for a group of branches, the primary objective may be to see favoured candidates nominated. There are several reasons for this, many arising from the fact that favoured candidates are local, as with "favourite son" candidates at American presidential conventions. Satisfaction may be derived simply from promoting a local man or woman — perhaps from the same branch — but more concrete rewards might be expected, especially if nomination proves to be a passport to higher office. Sometimes it is felt that an area has been deprived of a local candidate for a long time and locals consider that such a candidate is necessary to revitalise local party spirit. Whatever the reason, branches want their choice nominated, even at the cost of possible "wasted votes". They are therefore liable to emphasise the virtues of a "good spread".

There are also one or two individuals whose influence may prove decisive who have other interests again: such are incumbent TDs. All those not elected to the Dail on the first count are dependent upon transferred support, mostly from running mates, to get them home. Few are elected at the first count. Incumbents thus want running mates who will win votes which will transfer to themselves and will try to ensure, moreover, that running mates do not collect votes at the incumbent's own expense. Incumbents will therefore support a balanced ticket. However, they may be less in conformity with the party's desire to choose the best vote winners, preferring running mates who can provide support without thereby endangering their own position. In the Labour Party, where often only one candidate is selected, incumbents may seek to avoid all competition and trust to their own personal following and cross-party transfers. In the other major parties there is often more than one incumbent. Even so, the arguments as expressed above still apply.

Support for a candidate is usually considered to be restricted to a particular area of a constituency, or at least to be much stronger in one area than in others. Many candidates are not well known to the electorate from which they seek support. A candidate who has run before, an incumbent, or even a senator, will have a wider following in most cases because his name

will be known more widely. Senators and TDs use their position to widen their circle of contacts and can attract more publicity than a prospective candidate who is merely a local councillor or party stalwart. They will also have had a greater opportunity to demonstrate their worth as public representatives.

The role of the public representative in Ireland is primarily that of an intermediary between citizen and administration; more of an ombudsman than a legislator. Various explanations have been advanced to account for this function (Chubb, 1970; Bax, 1976; Sacks, 1976; Gibbon and Higgins, 1974) but, regardless of the cause, the fact that a TD's role is seen in this way means that a local person is often preferred for the job. A TD who is known, personally or through a friend or relative, may be expected to do more for "his own".

Frequent reference has been made to area and locality but the terms are relative. Identity is a function of context and not simply of objective considerations. Whether an individual considers himself from village, county or state or ethnic group depends partly upon the situation in which the need to proclaim identity arises (Sacks, 1976). Even so, within a constituency several objective areas of political significance can be identified.

(i) In constituencies which encompass more than one county, county is an important differentiating factor.<sup>1</sup> Counties have had a long existence in Ireland and have served as the unit for political, administrative, social and, not least, sporting organisation, for many years. The most important local authorities today are county councils (Chubb, 1964).<sup>2</sup> Many new candidates are county councillors and, in divided constituencies, they are unlikely to be known well outside the county.

(ii) A second, smaller locality is the County Electoral Area (CEA) the constituency for county council elections, and as such an important unit for party organisation. It is the area within which the prospective candidate who is a county councillor becomes well known. It lacks the continuity of the county having been defined and redefined since independence. CEAs date formally from 1942 but the boundaries then defined were themselves somewhat dependent upon the older boundaries of Union districts and Rural districts. A major revision took place in 1974 in time for the county council elections of that year. The primary purpose of the revision was to correct the disproportionalities which had arisen between CEAs in the same county

1. County is stressed in election campaigns, particularly by candidates who are their party's sole choice in counties which form the smaller part of a divided constituency. Reynolds, the Fianna Fail candidate in Co. Longford (Longford-Westmeath) argued in his campaign literature: "Longford needs a Longford TD for Longford people" and declared that he was "Your Co. Longford candidate". *Longford Leader* 27.5.1977 and 10.6.1977.

2. In the Dublin area, the City Council, and Dun Laoghaire Borough Council are also major local authorities.

since 1942. The number of CEAs within each constituency varies, and sometimes CEA and Dail constituency boundaries cut across each other, but, of 118 CEAs, 86 (73 per cent) are fully in one constituency. Most of the divided CEAs are in Cork, Galway and Mayo, all counties which are divided into two or three constituencies. Most single-county constituencies contain between three and five CEAs; the two-county constituencies have eight or nine. Efforts were made to base the new CEAs in 1974 on natural and traditional divisions. A Local Government circular noted that "the aim should be to base the county electoral area on a town of a suitable size and its natural catchment area" (Dept. of Local Government, 1974). In consequence, most CEAs centre on large towns. Popular identification with the areas described by the CEA is doubtless variable, being stronger in those which echo older areas and weaker in others which cut across them.<sup>3</sup>

(iii) A third set of areas are defined by the so-called "bailiwick system" (Bax, 1976, Sacks, 1976). Public representatives from the same party tend to negotiate agreements with each other to divide the constituency into regions for which each is responsible. Representatives handle business within an area rather than outside of it and canvassing is often restricted. There seems to be a code of conduct under which canvassing in another's bailiwick takes place only by mutual consent, with the constituency electoral executive tending to play the role of arbiter when disputes arise. A well-defined bailiwick system can control intra-party conflict and, at the same time, enhance the status of the politician as a local man. It also helps to explain the spatial differences in the popularity of candidates. Where bailiwicks follow formal political boundaries, such as those of the counties of CEAs, they may reinforce localism within these areas. Bailiwicks are, however, not always well defined or well maintained. Support for individual politicians is not static and most politicians try to increase their support so as to maintain or secure their own position. In a constituency where all the candidates are new, territories may not be marked out clearly. In addition, divisions are dependent upon the pattern of competition within each party and so vary between parties. Generally then, bailiwicks lack the clarity and universalism of counties and CEAs although they are none the less important for that.

Returning to the selection process it will be remembered that two decisions and three aims were identified. The decisions to be made concerned the number of candidates to be selected and who they were to be. The aims were a balanced ticket, the minimisation of wasted votes and the selection of the candidates best equipped to win votes. The number of candidates to be selected is decided by each party's national executive. Essentially, the

3. Candidates stress their town identity as well as stressing local problems such as the closure of hospitals or railway stations. Jimmy Bennet, Labour candidate in Longford-Westmeath, used the slogan: "Wanted Urgently - a TD for Mullingar", *Westmeath Examiner* 10.6.1977.

decision is made to minimise wasted votes, but in some cases where the national executive adds candidates to the chosen list other considerations might be important (see below). The chairman makes the decision of the national executive known to the meeting and thus provides one of the major parameters within which selection takes place. Nominations of potential candidates are made by the various branches and the conventions normally vote on these. However, outstanding candidates, such as incumbent TDs, are commonly selected by acclamation and voting is confined to the selection of the incumbent's running mates.

There are several ways in which geographical balance is encouraged. First, the nominations are made by the individual branches. For reasons already given, this generally leads to the convention being given the opportunity to select a balanced set of candidates. Second, the ballot procedures contribute to a wide geographical distribution of candidates. This is particularly true within Fianna Fail where the ballot is normally conducted in stages with a separate vote for each additional place on the list. This enables the convention to select each candidate with an eye on the overall composition of the ticket. In some circumstances there are separate ballots for candidates from districts within the constituency to ensure that key areas are represented. For instance, in the Roscommon-Leitrim constituency in 1977 there were separate ballots at Fianna Fail's convention for North Roscommon, South Roscommon and Leitrim.<sup>4</sup> This structured partition would only be enforced where a chairman feared that a balance might otherwise not result and that salient areas would be "unrepresented". Within the other two parties there is a single ballot by single transferable vote. To the extent that voting is strongly influenced by localistic considerations a reasonable geographic balance should ensue. In practice, since sitting TDs are frequently re-selected by acclaim, the procedures in Fine Gael and Labour are more similar to Fianna Fail's than might appear. A third factor is the already mentioned desire of strong and influential candidates to secure their own areas and therefore to put their secondary support behind prospective candidates from other parts of the constituency. This factor is probably less important where there is more than one such individual in so far as the more powerful figures might not be able to agree amongst themselves.

Party executive bodies all possess formal authority to amend the list of candidates drawn up at conventions. However, only Fianna Fail took much advantage of this authority in 1977. Fianna Fail's extensive central inter-

4. These candidates then campaigned explicitly as the representatives of these areas: *Roscommon Champion* 10.6.1977. The same areas seem to have been salient to delegates at the Fine Gael convention: *Connaught Tribune* 3.6.1977. The party executive sometimes decides how many candidates should be selected for an area. Thus the Fianna Fail National Executive determined that there should be one candidate only from the Longford part of Longford-Westmeath, *Longford Leader* 27.5.1977.

vention was a novel phenomenon; authority had existed previously but had not been used before on such a scale. The first straws in the wind of change could be identified at that party's 1977 Annual Conference when a proposal was advanced which would have given the party's leader, Jack Lynch, the power to nominate one additional candidate in each constituency if he felt it would be in the party's interest.<sup>5</sup> Lynch himself amended the motion, suggesting that he should act only in consultation with the National Executive. Speakers for the amended motion stressed the need for the party to field its best candidates. Electoral boundary changes made by the Coalition Government were expected to work against Fianna Fail and maximum effort was necessary if Fianna Fail was to win. It could not afford to allow the intransigence of local leaders to keep out active and attractive candidates. The "tact and discretion" of the leader would ensure that the power was not misused. There was strong opposition to the motion particularly from Dublin branches who perhaps realised that it was in the Dublin area that central intervention would be most energetic. Appeals to the party's republican traditions and the (in retrospect, false) argument that candidates not wanted by the local party would not be wanted by the electorate failed to sway the conference. Most of the party executive supported the motion which was carried by a large majority. Lynch and the National Executive made use of the authority and nominated sixteen candidates, eleven of whom were imposed on constituencies in the Dublin area and another in Cork City.<sup>6</sup> The evidence of the elections to the European Parliament at which several impositions were made suggests that the National Executive will continue to use its authority. Whether or not the special mandate, (which seemed to serve a largely symbolic function), will be renewed for the next election remains to be seen.

The Labour Party's executive intervened in selection only in Dublin. It refused to ratify some candidates and imposed another candidate who had been defeated at her local convention after protracted discussions on the credentials of certain branches. Fine Gael intervened directly in Louth where it nominated a fourth candidate.

### III CANDIDATES<sup>7</sup>

Those selected were overwhelmingly local in two respects. Most claimed addresses in their constituencies although some of these were convenience

5. For details see *Irish Times* and *Irish Press*, 21 Feb., 1977.

6. A full list is given in the *Irish Times*, 31 May, 1977.

7. Information used here is taken from J. Knight and N. Baxter-Moore, 1973, T. Nealon, 1974, T. Nealon, 1977, press coverage of the campaign, biographical details in the official results of the 1974 local elections and the official notices of Poll.

addresses. The few candidates from the major parties, outside the urban areas – operationally defined as Greater Dublin and Cork City – who did not live in their constituencies were mostly TDs displaced by constituency reorganisation. In addition, most candidates were, or had been, local councillors. (Ministers have to resign local office.) Again this was true particularly in rural Ireland (see Table 1) a situation which may be due more to the fact that there are relatively more local councillors in rural areas than to any difference in the preferences of nominating conventions.

Table 1: *Local council background of Dail candidates in 1977*

	<i>Rural Ireland</i>		<i>Dublin and Cork</i>		<i>All</i>
	<i>Major parties</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Major parties</i>	<i>All</i>	
	per cent	per cent	per cent	per cent	per cent
Local Council Member or ex-Member	82	77	53	46	66
No Local Council Background	18	23	47	54	34
n	190	234	112	139	373
Missing Data					2

The concern here is less in the extent to which most candidates have constituency roots than in the extent to which parties succeed in using these to best effect. The analysis is confined to the rural areas: twenty-seven of the forty-two constituencies. It is generally assumed that localism is more significant in those constituencies and this strategy enables county and CEA to be employed as descriptive of locality.

If the CEA in which each candidate is said to be resident (addresses are printed on the official notices of poll and ballot papers) is taken to indicate locality, the efficiency with which parties spread their candidates geographically within any constituency can be assessed. In general the spread was very good, in as much as it was relatively rare to find a party nominating more than one candidate from the same locality (CEA). Fine Gael probably succeeded best in maximising spread but the difference between parties was slight despite the difference in electoral procedures at respective party conventions. There were five constituencies in which more than one Fine Gael candidate came from the same CEA when, at the same time, there were unrepresented areas: only eleven of the party's seventy-six candidates were



involved. Fianna Fail candidates overlapped in nine constituencies, nineteen candidates being involved. There was no overlapping of Labour Party candidates but Labour fielded two or more candidates in six constituencies only.

An examination of individual cases reveals that over one half of the overlaps occurred in areas which contain a disproportionately large element of respective constituency electorates. Furthermore, the Fine Gael overlapping in Limerick-East took place in a city which itself is a county borough and therefore contains its own equivalent of CEAs — county borough electoral areas (CBEAs): there was no overlap within those. Fianna Fail's overlap in Cork NE is also understandable. Although there are four CEAs in that constituency only two of these fall wholly within the constituency's boundaries and these include the great majority of the electorate. No candidates came from the small, partial CEAs. Fianna Fail's overlapping of candidates in Limerick E. and Fine Gael's in Wexford cannot be explained in these terms.

The position of incumbent TDs in overlaps is interesting. Clearly TDs cannot always ensure that they have a free run in their own areas. TDs themselves overlapped in Galway City. Elsewhere, there were both instances in which a party's other candidates were selected from the same area and where a running mate was from the incumbent TD's own area.

The power to impose candidates gave party leaderships an opportunity to correct geographical imbalances and improve the overall spread. There were five candidates added in rural areas. Fianna Fail added Henry Abbott in Longford-Westmeath, Mark Killelea in Galway E., Ria O'Brien in Waterford and John Dennehy in Mid-Cork. Fine Gael added Hugh McGahon in Louth. Whilst all these additions improved the geographical spread they did not improve it significantly. All impositions except Abbott's created overlaps. Even so, imposed and selection-conference candidates came from opposite ends of their CEAs in all cases except that of Dennehy. It was suggested at the time that McGahon's candidature was necessary as Fine Gael otherwise had no candidate from Dundalk Town, the largest population concentration in the Louth constituency. Killelea in Galway East was expected to bring in votes from the north-east portion of that constituency and his home base of Tuam is one of the largest towns in the constituency and otherwise unrepresented by Fianna Fail. Dennehy, from the edge of Cork City, appeared to be placed so as to challenge the Labour incumbent in the constituency who is from the same area. All these impositions left some CEAs unrepresented; these were small ones in Louth but larger in Galway East and Waterford.

All of these candidates were runners-up at their respective conventions. Imposition meant, in practice, adding to the number of candidates rather than actually making the selection. Other prospective candidates might

sometimes have improved geographical spread more significantly<sup>8</sup> but in each case the runner-up was chosen. This was not so true in Dublin where not all imposed candidates just missed convention selection; nor were they all imposed in the constituencies in which they originally sought selection. In all, six of the Fianna Fail additions were women and since this served to double the number of women standing as Fianna Fail candidates it is clear that imposition mitigated a national imbalance. Several additions were only in their twenties and the executives choice thus served to emphasise the party's campaign appeals to women and youth. Most of the added candidates were middle class and prominent within the national party, several being members of Fianna Fail's National Executive Committee. Thus, impositions could be seen as in line with the publically stated desire to raise the "quality" of candidates expressed by proponents of imposition at Fianna Fail's Ard Fheis (Annual Conference) and the party's general secretary since that time.<sup>9</sup> Generally then, imposed candidates improved the national social balance rather than the local spatial balance of candidates. The National Executive was clearly influenced by what had happened at local conventions in making its choice. It could have used its power to ensure a better geographical spread and could have intervened on other constituencies if its goal had been that of maximising such balance. Evidently, however, national considerations predominated over individual constituency campaigns.

The reception given to impositions varies.<sup>10</sup> Most were accepted by local parties. Certainly, significant frictions did not necessarily follow imposition and those situations in which there was conflict may have been the result of insensitivity by the candidates concerned. Imposed candidates were often well received by the electorate. Half of the imposed candidates defeated locally selected candidates, several were elected and one, Niall Andrews in Dublin, topped the poll. In the rural constituencies one imposed candidate (Killelea) was elected at the expense of a sitting Fianna Fail deputy and nominees in Louth and Waterford came third of four on

8. The candidate who finished just behind Abbott at the convention was said to be better placed geographically: *Longford Leader* 27 May, 1977, Killelea's rival, Fahey, also could claim to be better placed: *Connaught Tribune* 3 June, 1977.

9. An interview with Seamus Brennan, party secretary, in the *Irish Press* 10 March, 1977; cf. *Irish Times* 21 February 1977 and *Irish Press* 21 February 1977.

10. Some local parties asked for additions. Such was the case in Longford-Westmeath and Galway East. However, requests are made more often than they are granted and may sometimes be simply a device to transfer the responsibility for rejecting a candidate on to the central party so as to maintain local harmony.

respective party lists. Thus impositions must be seen as relatively successful.

Labour and Fine Gael, running as a coalition, might have been expected to maximise their joint coverage of a constituency by taking account of each other's selections. However, this would probably require more central interference in selection than exists. The pressures tending to create local balance within parties would mostly not work to achieve inter-party balance. Only in so far as individual candidates of either party were seen to be exceptionally strong in their own areas might the other party deliberately avoid challenging them. An examination of Coalition patterns of candidate selection shows far greater overlap than was found for individual parties. In seventeen of twenty-four constituencies in which both Labour and Fine Gael candidates were fielded there was an avoidable overlap and in no case was duplication within Fine Gael only.

Parties usually provided candidates from each county in those constituencies which encompassed more than one county. Exceptions were Fianna Fail's failure to field a candidate from the Leitrim part of the Sligo-Leitrim constituency and Fine Gael's lack of a candidate from the Clare end of the Galway W. Constituency. Even so, in both cases the neglected areas comprised a relatively small section of the constituency. Fine Gael and Fianna Fail did field candidates in these "neglected" areas of Sligo-Leitrim and Galway W. respectively although in the case of the former the candidate had originally been elected in the Leitrim constituency before reorganisation and had been a TD since the 1950s.

Overall it seems that the spatial balance was achieved through a variety of processes and procedures. Certainly, parties consider locality to be important and take it into account in selecting candidates. Even so, other considerations, such as those of sex and age, also appear to have been considered by the central leadership in Fianna Fail with an eye to national image rather than local balance. The use of CEA as an indicator of locality is justified by the results of analysis so far. While CEA will probably not describe a candidate's home territory with complete reliability and while formal residence is not always indicative of local attachments, the fit of data to expectation so far justifies the use of this indicator in further analysis.

#### IV LOCALITY AND VOTING

Most Irish voters vote only for the candidates of one party. In rural Ireland, less than one-third of all votes were transferred across party lines in 1977. For Fine Gael and Fianna Fail the loss was less than a quarter of their support, and a majority of those votes were transferred in situations in which there was no opportunity to transfer to a candidate of the same party; in

other words, voters probably expressed lower preferences for other parties' candidates having first voted for the candidate(s) of their most preferred party. Such figures suggest that locality can be the major determinant of electoral choice for only a small minority of voters. It may be important but at most is secondary to a party.

The practice of voting for a local candidate, the "friends and neighbours" vote, has been observed in a number of countries and electoral circumstances (Taylor and Johnston, 1979). The reasons for such voting are similar to those given earlier for party branches nominating a local person. Local candidates are more likely to be known, often personally, by electors. They may draw on a reservoir of local loyalties as well as local self interest by both their identification and familiarity with an area. In his analysis of voting in Donegal in the 1969 General Election, Sacks was able to demonstrate the localisation of support for candidates by using unofficial returns from individual polling booths. Using these data he showed there was a considerable correlation between the distance from a polling booth to a candidate's home and the candidate's support at that booth (Sacks, 1976).<sup>11</sup> Such data are not available nationally. Rather than examining the local origins of first preference votes this analysis, therefore, necessarily focuses on transfers. By linking transfer patterns with information on the CEA and county location of candidates an assessment of the importance of locality in structuring preferences, both within and between parties, can be made. The relative importance of county and CEA can also be assessed.

The first piece of analysis focuses on the extent to which votes are transferred between candidates in patterns consistent with the locality, defined as the CEA, of the respective candidates, and the conditions under which consistency is greatest. Table 2 shows the average percentage of a candidate's votes transferred under certain conditions set by locality and party. A distinction is made in the table between cross- and within-party transfers. The former group is further divided according to the party of the candidate whose votes are being transferred. Coalition transfers, those between Fine Gael and Labour, are also isolated. A problem in the analysis of transfers is the difficulty of controlling for the situation in which transfers are made, i.e., which candidates are available to receive transferred votes. The attempt has been made to isolate comparable sub-groups without the sacrifice of too many cases. For each party grouping there are three calculations:

- (1) the average proportion of votes transferred to a candidate from the same CEA,

11. Pearson  $r$  correlations were  $-.77$  and  $-.56$  for the two Fianna Fail candidates and  $-.43$  for both Fine Gael candidates, this lower set of correlations for Fine Gael being explained partly by the emphasis on religious affiliation in Fine Gael's appeal in that area.

Table 2. Average proportion of transferred votes going to (1) a candidate of the same locality (CEA) and (2) a candidate of a different locality (CEA) at the same count and (3) the difference between them, by party of transferrer and transferee

Type of transfer:	(1) Same CEA		(2) Different CEA		(3) (1) - (2)
	per cent		per cent		per cent
Cross Party (excluding within Coalition)					
From Fianna Fail	11.5	n = 43	6.2	n = 79	5.3*
From Fine Gael	5.6	n = 37	2.6	n = 44	3.0*
From Labour	12.4	n = 18	4.9	n = 39	7.5†
From Sinn Fein	13.9	n = 21	9.1	n = 28	4.8
From others	14.9	n = 61	9.4	n = 104	5.5*
From all	11.8	n = 180	6.9	n = 294	4.9*
Within Coalition	20.9	n = 19	11.5	n = 11	9.4
Within Party	47.9	n = 15	31.4	n = 11	16.5

\*significant at .001.

†significant at .05.

n = number of instances of transfer from one candidate to another.

- (2) the average proportion of votes transferred to a candidate from a different CEA when those votes could have been transferred to a candidate from the same CEA, and
- (3) a comparison of transfers to local and non-local candidates when both options existed made by subtracting (2) from (1).

For instance, the "Fianna Fail to other parties" row shows the average transfer to each non-Fianna Fail candidate, local and non-local, when a local non-Fianna Fail candidate was available, and the difference between the two proportions. The significance of this difference is estimated using a t test.

It was expected that the influence of locality would be reflected in a positive difference of means calculation. This expectation is upheld, although due to the small number of cases and considerable variation in some groups the difference is not always significant statistically. The cross-party transfers show the most convincing effect being generally significantly larger when made to a candidate from the same CEA by a magnitude of between 1.6 and 2.5:1. For the within-party and Coalition transfers the data may over-emphasise the real effect. The figure indicating average transfer to a candidate from the same CEA is swollen due to the fact that in some cases only one candidate from the relevant party is available. A more accurate idea is obtained if we include only instances in which two candidates from the same party (or the

Coalition) are available, one of whom is from the same CEA as the candidate from whom the votes are being transferred. Revised figures are then 34.6 per cent and 31.2 per cent for within-party transfers, and 17.1 per cent and 11.5 per cent for Coalition transfers. These revised figures produce differences of 3.4 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively, relative magnitudes rather smaller than for the other cross-party groups in Table 2 when the size of the transfer is considered.

A closer examination of within-party transfers reveals four instances in which the local candidate received more votes than the non-local candidate(s), three in which he did not, and two cases in which one non-local candidate received more votes and one received less. For Coalition transfers the pattern is more consistent with the local candidate dominant in six of eight cases and placed in an intermediate position in the ninth.

Table 3: *Average proportion of transferred vote going to (1) a candidate of the same county and (2) to a candidate of a different county at the same count and (3) the difference between them, by party of transferrer and transferee*

<i>Type of Transfer:</i>	<i>(1)</i> <i>Same county</i>		<i>(2)</i> <i>Diff. county</i>		<i>(3)</i> <i>(1) - (2)</i>
	per cent		per cent		per cent
Cross Party (excluding within Coalition)					
From Fianna Fail	5.8	n = 38	3.2	n = 9	2.6
From Fine Gael	4.4	n = 26	2.7	n = 23	1.7
From Labour	8.8	n = 17	2.1	n = 12	6.7†
From Sinn Fein	10.9	n = 14	5.5	n = 4	5.4
From others	14.3	n = 33	9.3	n = 24	5.0
From all	8.7	n = 128	5.0	n = 72	3.7*
Within Coalition	19.0	n = 15	8.9	n = 10	10.1
Within Party	48.4	n = 28	27.0	n = 18	21.4†

\*Significant at .001.

†Significant at .05.

n: See Table 2.

A similar analysis can be carried out with county as the "local" unit (Table 3). The data set out here are based on fewer cases as only seven constituencies have significant county divisions. This fact goes some way to explain the lack of statistically significant results. Even so, the direction of the locality effect is positive in all cases and significant for extra-party transfers in general (excluding those within the Coalition) and for within-party transfers. The greater magnitude of the locality effect for within-party

and Coalition transfers is striking. When those situations in which only one candidate of the relevant party or from the Coalition was available are excluded the strong effect remains. The "same county" mean becomes 44.7 per cent (within party) and 23.7 per cent (Coalition); the  $n$  for the latter group, however, is only nine.

The evidence of these two tables suggests that a significant proportion of voters who transfer their support *away* from a party are influenced by locality. This is true both when CEA and when county are taken to define locality, although the magnitude of the CEA effect is more substantial. Relatively few voters are attracted away from a party for reasons of locality or any other reason. Most voters, and most transfers, stay within a party. Within-party voting is subject to a locality influence but a clear and significant effect can be seen only at county level. The weakness of a locality effect at the level of the CEA might be due to the influence of incumbent TDs attracting votes from all localities. As was noted earlier, most overlaps did not involve TDs. However, this explanation does not withstand closer inspection. There were nine cases in which two or more candidates from different CEAs were available to receive transfers. The largest proportion went to a non-local man in five of these and in only two instances was the recipient an incumbent TD. An alternative explanation is that transfer patterns are strongly influenced by parties who are concerned to ensure that votes are not wasted and in consequence recommend certain preference orderings. Party supporters are sometimes told to vote first for their favourite candidate and then for the remaining candidates from the party in a particular order. Where such instructions are given and followed on a large scale any locality effect would be obscured, although it would demonstrate that party loyalties exceeded local preferences.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 summarise the observed effects of locality and further emphasise the importance of party loyalties. Table 4 shows Pearson correlations between the size of a transfer received by a candidate (as a proportion of all votes available for transfer at that count) and whether or not the recipient is from the same locality as the eliminated or elected candidate from whom the votes are being transferred. The variable CEA INDEX indicates whether a transfer is made to a local candidate and, also, if the transfer is a local one, how many other local candidates are still available to receive transfers. This is accomplished by scoring zero where the recipient is from a different area than the transferring candidate and  $1/n$  (where  $n$  is the number of candidates from the transferrer's locality) where the transfer goes to a candidate from the same CEA as the candidate making the transfer. The index thus varies between zero and one, and, if locality were to be the sole determinant of transfer choice, would theoretically correlate perfectly with that variable.

Table 4: Correlation between size of transfer and respective localities (CEAs) of candidates involved: various sub-groups

Sub-groups	Correlation between % votes transferred and locality (CEA INDEX)	n
Transfers when a candidate from same CEA was available	.02	628
Transfers when a candidate from same party was not available	.28*	366
All cross-party transfers	.20*	671
Cross-party transfers when a candidate from the same CEA was available	.26*	534
Cross-party transfers when a candidate from the same party was not available but a candidate from the same CEA was	.38*	303

\*Significant at .001 level.

*CEA INDEX*: Zero if the transfer is to a candidate from a different locality; if the transfer is to a candidate from the same locality the score is 1/the number of other candidates from that locality.

The correlations for various sub-groups, defined by locality and party, are presented. Cross-party transfers, including those between candidates from different parties within the Coalition, are also included as a group. It is evident that the availability of a candidate from the same locality produces no marked effect by itself, ( $r = .02$ ), but that the non-availability of a candidate from the same party does:  $r = .28$ . In the latter situation all transfers must be cross-party although voters involved may already have voted for all their preferred party's candidates and may feel free to select from the remainder on other grounds. However, the effect of locality is much the same when all cross-party transfers are examined ( $r = .20$ ). When both locality and party are taken into consideration then correlations are notably higher. For all cross-party transfers when a preference for a local candidate is possible the correlation is  $r = .26$ . The sub-group whose transfers *must* be across party lines are responsible for the highest correlation,  $r = .38$ .

A similar analysis taking county as indicative of locality is summarised in Table 5. The variable COUNTY INDEX is calculated in similar fashion to CEA INDEX, merely substituting county for CEA as the criterion of locality. Correlations are generally lower, although all are in the expected direction. Tables 2 and 3 gave grounds for suggestions that county was less important than the smaller CEA and Table 5 seems to confirm this. However, as only a few constituencies contain more than one county, whilst all have more than one CEA, Tables 4 and 5 have different bases. In Table 6 the two locality



Table 5: *Correlation between size of transfer and respective localities (counties) of candidates involved: various sub-groups (Multi-county constituencies only)*

<i>Sub-groups</i>	<i>Correlation between % votes transferred and locality (COUNTY INDEX)</i>	<i>n</i>
All transfers	.11	293
Transfers when a candidate from the same county was available	.12	281
All cross-party transfers	.11	234
Transfers when candidate from same party was not available	.15	123
Transfers when a candidate from the same party was not available but a candidate from the same county was.	.14	117

*COUNTY INDEX*: as CEA Index, Table 4.

criteria are compared for the same set of constituencies. Here the contrast between the two is muted, county being equally important in the cases of "forced" cross-party transfers but having much less effect when voters have a candidate of the same party to give a lower preference to.

Generally, the correlations are quite low. At best, locality explains only about 15 per cent of variance and for transfers as a whole locality explains

Table 6: *Correlation between size of transfer and locality in various sub-groups*

<i>Sub-groups</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>CEA INDEX<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>COUNTY INDEX<sup>b</sup></i>
Cross-party transfers when a candidate was available from the same party, county and CEA	164	.27*	.12
Cross-party transfers when a candidate was not available from the same party but a candidate from the same county and one from the same CEA was	103	.30†	.36*

†Significant at .01 level.

\*Significant at .001 level.

<sup>a</sup>See Table 4.

<sup>b</sup>See Table 5.

no variance at all. One reason for this is, undoubtedly, the fact that in most cases the votes being transferred are those for third, fourth, fifth and lower preferences. It may be that correlations would be greater if only candidates elected or eliminated early in the count were considered although this increases the difficulty of controlling for other aspects of the situation. However, it is probable that most cases in which local candidates are available are those earlier in the count; the probability of two candidates from the same area remaining in the contest as the count continues must be a markedly declining one. It does seem unlikely that partial correlations, controlling for the stage in the count for instance, would be much higher than those presented. Another explanation for the low correlations might be that locality has been operationalised in an invalid manner. However, counties are well established areas, undoubtedly meaningful to the public and requiring no external validation. In as much as CEA predicts transfer patterns at least as well as county, it acquires its own validity. Of course there may be local considerations not tapped effectively by one or other indicator. The importance of candidates' "bailiwicks" has already been referred to. Some candidates may make much more of their local connections than do other candidates; the local vote is not a resource to be tapped without effort and not all candidates make an equal effort. Of other factors which have been shown to be important in inter-candidate electoral choice, political experience — as TD, local councillor, Senator — helps a candidate attract the local vote (Marsh, 1981). Further analysis might show that the locality effect is qualified by such attributes in the candidate. The findings of Robson and Walsh, that the order of names of the ballot paper influence the electorates' preferences seem less important here in as much as locality seems unlikely to be related to such positional considerations (Robson and Walsh, 1973).

Thus, whilst it is accepted that a multivariate analysis might qualify the above findings somewhat, the present conclusion must be that the significance of locality in electoral choice may have been exaggerated. Sacks' analysis, referred to earlier, and the folk-wisdom of Irish politics, suggests that locality is very important in explaining *first* preferences but this analysis suggests that its impact on *later* preferences is limited.

## V CONCLUSION

Students of Irish political culture have stressed its personalism, instrumentalism and parochialism. It is not surprising to find that parties are organised with due regard to local autonomy. This is illustrated in candidate selection both by the fact that selection is made essentially at constituency

level and by the role played by lower levels of the party organisations in nominating and selecting candidates. In all multi-member electoral systems parties tend to balance lists in order to satisfy their various supporting groups. In some countries this may necessitate the inclusion of candidates to appeal to different occupational groupings, cultural organisations or religions. In Ireland parties balance localities within constituencies, providing a list of candidates who can each make their appeal to a different area of the constituency. The process of candidate selection encourages such a balance. These processes are less effective in providing the most electorally effective candidates, at least judging by the performance of centrally selected candidates in 1977, many of whom defeated locally selected ones. If effectiveness is seen in legislative rather than electoral terms there seems no reason to expect that existing local procedures can maximise the quality of the candidates. Central control offers a corrective to the omissions and faults of local selection bodies. Partly because of special electoral conditions and the authority of a widely respected leader, Fianna Fail was able to intervene widely in nominations in 1977. It did so with some success, both in terms of the local impact of its candidates and in terms of their national impact. The costs, in terms of ruffled local feathers, were not great.

Whether this will provide a powerful precedent for future interventions on any scale by Fianna Fail and the other parties is open to question. It seems possible. There are obvious gains for the national party, but there are obvious losses too. Parties, like all organisations, must balance loyalty and efficiency within their organisations. Loyalty is maintained in Irish parties partly through local autonomy. This seems to be the case within constituencies as well as within the party generally. If there are efficiency costs – in so far as the best selection of candidates does not result – they must be balanced against the possible costs of greater intervention.

In providing lists of candidates who balance local areas it may be that parties are reacting to their own organisational logic as much as pursuing a rational electoral strategy. As a factor in electoral decisions locality is at best second to party. Local considerations are evident, but perhaps not to the extent that might have been expected. They are contained by parties. Both at the national and the constituency level then, some allowance is made for sub-unit (local) autonomy. By so doing, local loyalties and local connections are used to best advantage.

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