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Keeping it local: An Investigation of the Phenomenon of 'Friends and Neighbours' Voting at the Irish General Elections of 2011 and 2016

Thesis presented by

Cathal Mullaney

For the degree of

Master of Commerce

Government and Public Policy

University College Cork

Department of Government and Politics

Head of School: Dr Clodagh Harris

Supervisor: Dr Liam Weeks

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This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism.

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Introduction

"Their politics are local, but politics should be local. Why would I vote for someone who won't help me?".

This was the answer of TJ, a local man sitting at a bar in Kilgarvan, the home village of the renowned Independent politicians the Healy-Raes, when speaking to the *Irish Times* about the phenomenal performance of Michael and Danny Healy-Rae in winning seats in the Kerry constituency at the 2016 general election. (Boland, 2016)

The opinion of TJ neatly surmises the political calculation many Irish voters consider when it comes to election time: what can the person I'm voting for do for me and my local area? It is a long-established approach for Irish voters (Gorecki and Marsh, 2011) and lends itself to lamentations from some commentators about the prominence of 'parish-pump' in Irish politics (McGee, 2018)

In an electoral context, 'parish-pump' can be defined as the 'friends and neighbours' effect: whereby candidates win a disproportionately large amount of votes in their own local area - from their friends and neighbours, as it were.

Given the intensely localised nature of Irish life in a wider context - sport, religion, geography, culture – it should be of little surprise that the 'friends and neighbours' effect has been such an important part of Irish elections during the life of the country since independence in the early 1920s. Ireland is organised into 32 counties – 26 of which are in the Republic. Everywhere, dividing lines are drawn: be it along provincial, diocesan, county, barony, parish or townland lines. At every level, dividing lines are important and help create a sense of belonging and loyalty for those who live within.

Irish TDs focus on local because the Irish political culture often requires them to; and if they don't, a local councillor or area representative – often of the same party

– will ensure the pothole is filled or the funeral of a local person is attended, and they will reap the benefit at the ballot box. While the aim of most ambitious politicians in this country is to enter the corridors of power in Government Buildings, it is often local effort that will get them there.

Looking after local, therefore, is a prerequisite for electoral success in Ireland. Local people will often back a local candidate because they are from the certain area. It is a case of supporting the 'home-town boy', or a desire to 'see the local boy do good'. (Johnston, Wickham Jones, Pattie, Cutts Pemberton 2016; Johnson 1989). Naturally, in these circumstances the ideal candidate is often someone who is 'big in the community' with a track record on local issues (Busteed 1975, Carty 1981).

In previous Irish studies that specifically focused on the 'friends and neighbours' effect, Sacks (1970), Parker (1982), and Johnson (1989) all identified that 'friends and neighbours' voting was evident in both rural and urban settings at general elections. As some time has passed since the publication of these studies – they focused on elections in the 1960s and the 1980s – there is merit in engaging in a similar study to examine whether the same conclusions and patterns emerge in a more modern political setting in 2011 and 2016.

Any study of the 'friends and neighbours' phenomenon must first identify that it still exists – and that will be the initial stage of my research. However, where my study differs and adds to those of the past is in its broadness: it will consider 20 constituencies from both the 2011 and 2016 general elections, including tally data on 289 candidates. Tally data is a curiously underused resource in Irish election studies and is a vital part of the electoral process. Tallies, gathered by tally people during a count, detail the individual votes a candidate received in each polling booth. Though unscientific – one person attempts to identify what candidate received a number one preference, and the other records this – it is a hugely resourceful method and a valuable insight into where candidates do well, or not so well. The width of the study makes it what I envisage to be a real contribution to

the rich quantity of research that has already been gathered and allow a wider consideration of the 'friends and neighbours' effect which I believe to be necessary.

This research will attempt go further – and look to rigorously analyze the data to unearth real, substantive findings about the 'friends and neighbours' effect. This study doesn't want to stop at concluding that 'friends and neighbours' voting does indeed exist – it wants to deduce further findings from it to ensure a greater, broader understanding of this phenomenon that has been integral to virtually every Irish election.

To do this, I will consider six variables, controlling the data to unearth conclusions. I will look at the relationship of key variables such as gender, age, the impact of running mate(s), whether the constituency is rural or urban, political experience and its effect on 'friends and neighbours' voting, and I will test whether party affiliation affects local performance on a given candidate's 'friends and neighbours' effect.

All of these topics take the study of 'friends and neighbours' voting to another area – to one of new insight and understanding. The findings of this research can provide real, tangible evidence as to how key variables effect 'friends and neighbours' voting. This can contribute to the wider understanding of Irish elections, and how the Irish electorate vote.

I also consider it necessary to include data from two general elections in this study, as it allows a robust comparative analysis to take place.

The overall intention of this research is to provide a greater level of insight into the 'friends and neighbours' effect in modern Irish general elections. Given the significant change that Irish society has undergone in recent times, and also given the historic period in which we live as the 100th anniversary of the country's foundation approaches, it is an opportune time to survey a voting behavior that has, for as much as those 100 years, dominated Irish politics to such an extent that

the saying ‘all politics is local’ as declared by American politician Tip O’Neill has become the very definition of political life in this state. (O’Neill, 1997)

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review

'Friends and neighbours' voting has been the subject of a significant amount of academic research. Given its prominence in elections, this is understandable.

In an Irish context, the 'friends and neighbours' effect has often been referred to as 'parish-pump' (Carty, 1983) where those in the local area – his or her 'friends and neighbours', as it were – will support overwhelmingly the candidate who hails from the local area. Johnson defined this effect as 'the propensity for a candidate to receive a greater proportion of support around his/her home area than elsewhere in a constituency' (1989: 93). There is also the notion of a 'personal vote' for a candidate, which differs slightly: this is the portion of a candidate's vote which 'originates in his/her personal qualities, qualifications, activities and record' (Cain, Ferejohn, Fiorina 1987).

The research area: friends and neighbours voting research to date

A general point that can be applied to most political settings is made by Gimpel, Karnes, McTague and Pearson Merkowitz (2008) in 'Distance Decay in the Political Geography of Friends and Neighbours Voting' – social science evidence, they say, suggest that voters trust a candidate closer to them over a candidate who is based further away (2008). This is one of a number of reasons for the propensity of candidates to receive a larger vote close to their home, when compared to elsewhere in a given constituency.

There are several contributory factors that situate the 'friends and neighbours' effect in such a prominent position within Irish electoral politics. It should be noted that its importance can be, and often is, superseded for voters by other considerations - Marsh (1981) said at that time it was only the major determinant

for less than 25pc of voters – but more recently, a decline in party attachments for voters (Garry, Kennedy, Marsh, Sinnott 2008; Courteney and Weeks, 2018) has seen a rise in the percentage of voters who attribute most importance to the perceived potential of a candidate to do good for their local area. (Gallagher and Suiter, 2017)

The study of the 'friends and neighbours' effect in Irish electoral politics goes back a considerable distance, but it is pre-dated by the seminal study by V.O. Keys in America, which is viewed as the starting point of research on this topic. The concept of 'friends and neighbours' voting was first discussed by Keys in his 1949 publication 'Southern Politics in State and Nation'. Here, the author observed that candidates for state office in southern America polled very strongly in their home areas, while also gathering significant support in the surrounding hinterlands. McCarty's study on support for Senator John McCarthy in US Senate election of 1952 indicated that there was a relationship between distance and the vote McCarthy received in Wisconsin (1954). These studies provided a base from which dozens of other studies have emerged in an American context.

Numerous studies in Britain have observed a local voting trend, which is somewhat surprising given the fact that Britain is usually characterized by voting on an ideological basis (Schmitt and Loughran 2017). Nonetheless, Arzheimer and Evans' (2012) study of the 2010 election concluded that in the case of Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat candidates, distance between a voter and candidates did matter – and consequently discovered that voters found candidates who were based further away less appealing, including incumbents. Similar findings have also followed from the British 2015 election (Arzheimer, Campbell, Cowley, Evans, 2017). In Belgium, recent research has indicated that voters are beginning to favour casting a preferential vote for a candidate, as opposed to a vote for a party list (Wauters, Weekers, Madden 2010).

It is necessary to pay close attention to previous studies conducted in this area. American political scientist, Paul M Sacks, was the first academic to study in-depth the trend of localism in Irish politics when he spent time in Donegal in the late

1960s and into the 1970s. In his publication 'The Donegal Mafia: An Irish Political Machine', Sacks examined the electoral workings of Neil T Blaney and his workers in Donegal. In giving reasons why localism was so prevalent in Donegal, he suggested that the geographic fragmentation of the constituency – and Irish constituencies generally – helped foster a loyalty and desire among locals to see a candidate from the area represent them. (Sacks, 1970)

In a similar vein, Sacks' study on the voting patterns in the 1969 General Election in the same constituency – Donegal North East – provided an in-depth insight into how parties and candidates garnered their vote. In 'Bailiwicks, Locality and Religion: Three elements in an Irish Dail constituency election' (1970), Sacks shows how "strong sociological forces such as partisan feeling and parochial loyalties were harnessed by the political parties to a system of party bailiwicks which mitigated much of the structural conflict inherent in the system of multi-member constituencies." (1970: 531)

In his analysis, Sacks reveals strong evidence of local voting, with an inverse relationship obvious between the candidates' percentage of the first preference vote and the distance from their homes. Also, Sacks points out the almost perfect vote distribution in terms of the Fianna Fáil vote between their candidates on a local basis. Interestingly, Fine Gael selected a protestant candidate, Boggs, in this election alongside their other candidate Harte in an effort to garner the protestant vote which was significant in a constituency along the border such as this. This is one example of strategic vote management.

Further reasons for local support are advanced in a similar study by AJ Parker on the 1977 general election in the Galway West constituency. Here, a similar pattern appears with a strong 'friends and neighbours' effect evident for six of the ten candidates. Parker argues that the successful candidates on polling day are those who manage to extend their bailiwick – which is an area where the candidate has essentially cordoned off as his/her own for vote-gathering - over a large area, not only defeating rival candidates but also party colleagues (Parker, 1982). The author

says the two reasons for local voting are: 1) Voters have a knowledge of the candidate, and self-interest plays a part – voters hope to gain from a local candidates' success and, 2) The development of bailiwicks by local politicians within a constituency forces parties to recognize the importance of geography. (1982:19-20)

This notion is further advanced by Johnson (1989) where she says there is a 'see the local person do good' (1989:93) syndrome amongst Irish voters. In her analysis of the 1981 election in Dublin West, 'friends and neighbours' voting is apparent across the board. Johnson's study offers a valuable insight into the urban voter mindset and illustrates that the 'friends and neighbours' effect is as important in an urban context as it is in a rural one. Moving forward to the modern day, the strength and continued importance of 'friends and neighbours' voting in an Ireland was underlined by Gorecki and Marsh (2012), who reported that in the highly volatile election of 2011 when national issues took centre-stage, a 'friends and neighbours' effect was still noticeable despite the election taking place in the midst of an unprecedented national crisis.

Localism, is, according to Culhane, the defining political logic that defines Irish politics (2017). The body of literature reflects its importance, though there is a distinct lack of in-depth study, on the level of Sacks, Parker or Johnson in the years since their publication.

It is the intention of this study to examine the impact of certain variables on the 'friends and neighbours' effect. What follows is an investigation of the existing research on these variables in an electoral context.

Age

Given the significant importance attached to establishing a local network and the strength of the friends and neighbours effect (Gorecki and Marsh, 2011, Parker 1982), it is not improbable to assume that the more established a political figure is,

the stronger his/her 'friends and neighbours' vote will be. In the same way, it is not unfair to assume that a younger candidate will have had less time to establish local networks that an older candidate has had, be it in a political context or a social, sporting or community context. Similarly, young candidates may receive more of a 'friends and neighbours' effect because they are young and inexperienced and haven't had the time or opportunity to expand their political base beyond the local area given the wide span of ages between candidates.

There is a potential political culture difference between younger candidates and older candidates. The RTÉ/Behaviour and Attitudes 2016 exit poll for the Irish General Election indicated that the major motivator for the way people under 35 voted contrasted with older cohorts of voters (RTÉ, 2016). Similarly, those under 35 showed a marked difference to older cohorts when asked if they would still vote for their first preference candidate if he/she ran for a different party: 33pc of voters under 35 said they would, compared to 42pc of voters above that age (RTÉ, 2016). To further the potential differences between voters of different ages, Inglehart and Norris state that changes in the younger cohorts of society such as a greater female workforce and new moral values has meant that younger women, in particular, have become more left-wing (2000 and 2003).

Elsewhere, research in Germany has shown that older politicians have the capacity to improve their networking skill and political nous at a far greater rate than their younger counterparts (Oerder, Blickle, Summers 2014)

Rural/Urban divide

While previous studies on the friends and neighbours effect in Ireland have looked at both the rural (Sacks 1970 and Parker 1982) and urban (Johnson 1989) elements of society, the country has experienced huge change since their publication. Ireland's urban areas continue to grow rapidly – the 2016 Census revealed that of the 173,613 increase in Ireland's population between 2011 and 2016, 138,899 came in urban areas. (CSO, 2016)

Do rural and urban voters differ in their voting behaviour? Some data indicates that this may well be the case. To refer once again to RTÉ's 2016 exit poll, when asked for the major motivator for voting for the candidate they voted for, only 2pc of Dublin voters said it was a constituency matter – compared to 9pc, for example, of Connacht-Ulster voters, a predominantly rural region. When asked whether or not they would vote for their chosen candidate if they had run for another party/grouping, 53pc of Dublin voters said they would not – compared to just 37pc of voters from the other regions. In his study on voting behaviour, Simon King found that the likelihood of personal vote occurring in urban areas outweighed rural areas by 1.28:1. However, King's definition of the personal vote – which he defined as a voter stating they would vote for a certain party, but change their vote to another on account of that particular candidate – differs slightly from that of the 'friends and neighbours' effect (King, 2000).

In the sociological literature, some scholars have said that communities, according to classical sociological theory, should not exist at all in cities (Knox and Pinch 2009). One would imagine if this were the case, 'friends and neighbours' voting would be shown to be much weaker – or even non-existent - in urban areas. Elsewhere, Girvin and Sturm (1986) write that 'socio-economic changes' do not appear to have impacted on the political system and that rural migrants to urban areas tended to hold the same political allegiances. Does this mean that if they were motivated by, as the RTÉ exit poll asked, local considerations in their native area, the same logic applied to their new home in the city?

Gender

The investigation of the vote of male and female candidates is a topic that has been researched extensively. In the Irish context, few have explicitly found that voters prefer male candidates over females because of gender, or that they receive a lower local vote than their male counterparts. However, Farrell (2006) states that the localistic nature of Irish politics inhibits women. Similarly, Galligan, Laver and

Carney (1997) found that women suffered at election-time due to the lack of female incumbents as opposed to a gender bias from voters.

Schwindt-Bayer, Malecki and Crisp (2010) state that Ireland's Catholic culture has helped foster the notion that women should remain in their traditional in-home roles, while a gap in political ambition (McElroy, 2010) has also been put forward as a reason for the lack of female politicians in Ireland.

When it comes to the 'friends and neighbours' effect, one might assume that female candidates would struggle to match the level of support male candidates receive in their locality. I say this because 1) The occupations of females – ie. Solicitor, teacher etc – can impact on their ability to establish local networks as opposed to males who often occupy prominent roles in the community such as a shopkeeper, businessman etc (Randall and Smyth 1987, Galligan 1992, 2010), 2) Many female candidates have significant family responsibilities that impacts on their ability to get out and about locally due to time and financial restraints (Fox and Lawless 2004) 3) Female candidates often receive different treatment from voters – Catherine Martin, the Green Party TD, says she was asked on the doors 'Who is minding your children?' (Martin, 2019). This stereotype has also emerged from research in other democracies (Schwindt-Bayer, Malecki and Crisp, 2010).

Ultimately, this is a contested subject: Marsh (1987) confirmed a negative bias against women, but Gallagher (2003) suggested that male candidates fare better than female ones, all things being equal, the effect is far smaller than the impact of electoral status or party.

Political experience

The importance of incumbency and the advantages associated with it at election-time (Galligan, Laver, Carney 1999; White 2006) has been widely researched and the conclusion, in a variety of contexts, is that it is a powerful tool in helping candidates get re-elected. However, there has been less of a focus on the wider importance of political experience. Does being a local councillor aid bids to get elected to Dáil Éireann, by virtue of the fact that the councillor would, presumably, have a strong local profile in his/her area? Kavanagh (Galligan 2010) says that one obstacle to more female politicians is the lack of female councilors; in the Irish political environment, being a councillor is viewed as a stepping-stone to becoming a TD (Chubb, 1992).

Political experience, to me, can work both ways: a first-time candidate may not have had the time/resources/profile to establish a strong local presence and network, and therefore may be expected to struggle locally, especially if there are other more established candidates in the immediate vicinity. However, this can also be turned the other way around: because they are a first-time candidate, it is precisely in the local area that the new candidate should do best, because he/she has not had the time/resources/profile to engage with voters from further away.

Similarly, at the other end of the scale, government ministers and opposition leaders may be expected to have less of a 'friends and neighbours' effect, due to the fact that they have a national profile and therefore are well-known not just in their local area but constituency-wide. But, it is because of this – that they are well known due to a national profile – that they may see a strong friends and neighbours effect, due to the fact that 1) Their friends and neighbours are keen to support the local man/woman representing the area on the national stage – 'local boy do good' syndrome (Johnson, 1981) and 2) Parties may have employed a rigid vote-management strategy that allows another, weaker candidate in the constituency a wider area to get votes and restricted the well-known and established candidate to

their own local area as they know their election is virtually assured. This would, somewhat artificially, create a 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Party affiliation

The party to which a candidate is affiliated is quite important in an Irish context, given the large proportion of voters who identify with parties (Gallagher, Marsh 2016). Not only this, but the benefit of being a party candidate – especially of large parties – is that candidates have access to greater resources both in terms of financial allowances for postering, literature and advertising, but also in terms of party workers on the ground.

This is a topic that has been researched, to an extent, by Simon King (2000), who found little or no disparity between TDs of various hues in a survey conducted in the late 1990s with regard to constituency work.

This study will consider the difference between candidates of a specific party and candidates who don't have a party: Independents. Given the fact that Independents are somewhat unique to Irish politics, and that they have become more prominent in recent elections (Weeks, 2014), an examination of their ability to win a personal vote may provide a greater insight into the recent increased success of Independent candidates.

Irish culture and localism – shaping the friends and neighbours phenomenon

The prominence of 'friends and neighbours' voting in Irish elections is clear, but the reasons for this should be considered. The source(s) of the 'friends and neighbours' effect likely come from Irish culture and traditions, as customs from other areas of Irish life inevitably filter into the political process.

Ireland's traditional Roman Catholic background means parishes – an administrative district, small in size, in which there is usually a priest and a church -

are often seen as a dividing line in Irish society, and this has been further reinforced through the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), whose local club teams are often established by parish boundary lines with local players representing their parish, and counties divided by county boundary lines. Community councils have also become prominent in local areas, consisting of a committee charged with facilitating local activities and events. The local parish, club or community is viewed as a reference group (Gorecki and Marsh, 2012). Indeed, proficiency at Gaelic Games – either football or hurling – is viewed as a major benefit for candidates running for election: Chubb (1992) went so far as to say that GAA proficiency replaced a 'national record' – ie. involvement in the struggle for Independence and the subsequent Civil War – as a prime qualification for candidature and office. *Career Patterns in the Irish Political Elite,* says that in rural Ireland, 'the voters like their men to be GAA men' (1973: 224) and that the GAA provides a way for the rural politicians to know all of the 'locally prominent people' (1973: 224).

The linkage of community or cultural traditions to the political actions of voters is interesting. John Tomaney's *Parochialism - A Defence*, says that 'our modes of reasoning and our forms of cultural actions" are rooted in particular moral communities and historical traditions, as well as in our wider engagements (2013: 663). Landlordism in Ireland is one potential explanation for the personal vote in the country; it is referred to as a 'cultural prerequisite' to the phenomenon (King, 2000). Elsewhere, Carty points out that there is a 'deeply ingrained conviction that the government can be successfully tapped for needed good and services, but only if approached through an intermediary of influence' (1983: 23). The 'gombeenman' tradition has long been an element of Irish society (Gibbon and Higgins, 1974), and Busteed says that given that the clientelist nature of Irish politics means the representative is seen as an intermediary between the local community and government, it is only natural that local public service is seen as important (1990). The observation of Komito (1984) was that the strong belief remains that a local advocate is useful, whether this means electing a neighbour to the County Council or wanting a local TD to be a government minister. This localized viewpoint contributes to the stepping stone pattern of local councillors progressing to

become TDs – for example, in 1989, 70pc of TDs elected were previously councilors (Chubb, 1992). Marsh, in his study of the 1977 election, said of the tendency of voters to support a local candidate: 'A TD who is known, personally or through a friend/relative, may be expected to do more for his own.' (1981: 270) Johnson (1989) put forward two motivations for voting for the local candidate: 1) The desire to see the 'local person make good' syndrome, and 2) Voters believe that a local candidate is better equipped to solve their problems. Whyte (1974), meanwhile, says that Irish politics is 'without social bases', and in this context, localism thrives.

Komito (1992) points to Ireland's rural values and its colonial history as potential explanations for electoral clientelism and localism. Komito does highlight, though, that brokerage is a social as opposed to a strictly political phenomenon, and that Ireland's small-scale communities lend themselves to the 'friends of friends' characteristic being used extensively.

Responses to Irish cultural influences on elections

Geography and its importance

As a result of STV, amongst many other factors, geography becomes a key consideration for parties who field multiple candidates in a constituency (Gallagher, 1998), and its importance, not only in the election itself but in the party nomination process, has been emphasized in a variety of papers (Parker 1982, Marsh 1981; Weeks 2007). Parker (1982) goes as far to say that in the absence of a candidate within the local party, parties may opt to nominate a popular local individual as opposed to a non-local party member. For sitting TDs, their incentive to cultivate a strong local support is significant not only because of the presence of other party candidates locally, but also from those within the same party (Gallagher and Suiter, 2017). Martin (2010) states that the electoral system can have an impact on the level of constituency focus of politicians. He points out that the need to cultivate a personal or local vote is greatest for candidates facing competition from multiple candidates of the same party – and argues that existing TDs who make more of an

effort to cultivate a personal vote have greater electoral success. At a national level, a frequent illustration of the importance of geography is the distribution of Cabinet ministries and indeed junior ministries once a new government is formed, or a reshuffle takes place. It is generally accepted that while some of the appointments are based upon ability, most are down to geography and the optics of not leaving any part of the country behind. (Busteed, 1990)

Electioneering

When campaigning begins in an election, contact matters. In pure convenience terms, it is more likely that a candidate in the local bailiwick or electoral division area will come into contact with a voter in that area as opposed to elsewhere in the constituency, and thus local voting is reinforced.

However, this is not always the case: Fleming et Al includes a quote from a Green Party candidate who said that, in the absence of a strong party machine similar to the larger parties, his team 'canvassed more intensively areas where we already polled well' (2003: 76) – not necessarily the candidate's local area.

Other elections and political settings

The local factor doesn't just apply to general elections – a study on the Labour Party leadership elections of 1994 and 2010 revealed, in both contests, each candidate won more support in their own constituency than elsewhere (Johnston, Wickham Jones, Cutts, Pemberton, 2016)

The local effect tends to persist when a politician is elected: a Fianna Fáil MEP once commented that most of the representations he received were from constituents in his own county, despite the fact that he was a representative for a vast constituency which spanned several (Fallon and Hayward, 2009). For voters in a

locality, a strong belief still exists that a county councillor or TD from the vicinity is useful. (Komito 1984; Pennimen and Farrell, 1987)

In an international context, one of the more interesting studies was conducted in a time of electoral change in Israel during the 1990s. Here, the introduction of constituencies for Israeli elections to the Knesset are said to have impacted on the behaviour of MKs – where candidates elected from constituencies began to behave in a manner inconsistent with their non-constituency counterparts. Those running in constituencies ran campaigns based upon local issues in a bid to win a local vote with little focus on national issues. (Hazan, 1999). A study in the case of Estonia states that local level political experience, as opposed to being a native of an area, is of more importance and leads to greater success. It also concluded that a local politician with a strong local vote is closely linked to defection in parliament (Tavits, 2010). In America recently, Mixon (2018) explored the impact of political scandal on localism using the example of Republican candidate Roy Moore in the 2017 US Senate Special Election in Alabama, concluding that the scandal Moore was embroiled in virtually eroded the friends and neighbours effect. In an American context where multiple elections often take place on the same day, Meredith (2013) is among those to have examined the coattail effects resulting from a 'friends and neighbours vote': even a one percentage point increase in the personal/local vote of the 'gubernatorial' candidate can impact positively on the vote of the attorney general and secretary of state candidates from the same party by as much as 0.2 percent.

Female candidates

Part of my research will examine any potential relationship between gender and the 'friends and neighbours' effect. As Galligan (1998) mentioned, party activists, in Ireland at least, appear to be of the opinion that voters prefer male candidates. My intention is to discern whether or not this is the case with particular regard to the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Numerous studies have proven that voters do not discriminate in terms of gender (Galligan, Laver and Carney 1999; Fox and Lawless 2004). However, Sanbonmatsu (2002) does reveal certain stereotypes amongst voters in what male or female candidates would be better placed to deal with (eg. war). Lynch and Dolan (2014) also reveal how voters are influenced by stereotypes, with female candidates being regarded as warm, compassionate and kind, while men are viewed as strong and knowledgeable. Lynch and Dolan continue to say: "Women candidates have a relationship with the public that is coloured somewhat by their sex, not controlled by it" (2014: 66). Sanbonmatsu (2002) concludes that half of the voters in her sample had a 'predisposition to support female over male candidates, or vice versa'.

The findings of Galligan, Laver and Carney (1999) have been challenged by White (2006) who argues that the results of the 2002 election do not necessarily support their conclusions that incumbency is the major obstacle for women. White points out that incumbency is 'relatively equal' barrier for male and female candidates: 29.8pc of male TDs were new deputies, 27.27pc of females were new deputies.

In most countries, but most particularly in Ireland, being a councillor or a local representative is viewed as an important stepping stone to becoming a candidate for Dáil elections. However, there are a lack of female councillors in Ireland (Galligan 1998). This inhibits potential female Dáil candidates in more ways than one; but especially in terms of building a local support network and profile (Galligan 1998).

Community and localism

For the purposes of my research, I am particularly interested in how community strengthens ties with the local area and creates a sense of loyalty or identity.

Research indicates that the older a person is, the more likely they are socially involved in their communities or with neighbours. International studies in America

(Cornwall, Schumann and Laumann 2008) and The Netherlands (Van Den Burg, Arentze, Timmermans 2015) highlight that contact is much more prevalent among the older cohort in local communities. The American study quantifies this: a 10-year increase in age leads to a 29pc increase in the odds of having socialized with a neighbor on a weekly basis. (Cornwall, Schumann, O Laumann 2008). More recently in an Irish context, research from the young farmers association Macra na Feirme and Electric Ireland (2011) showed that younger people had far less contact with neighbours than older people. This research has provided the basis for a 'Get to Know Your Neighbour' campaign.

The question of mobility ties in to this topic. Of course, older age can coincide with a growing inability to travel long distances to meet relations or friends or engage in activities. Therefore, older people, to gain social interaction, must engage with their neighbours or else risk total isolation. For example, Kirby and Carmody (2010) highlight the fact that the lack of neighbourliness in newly generated residential environments in Dublin's city centre is largely down to the fact that the majority of residents there now will move again within the next five years. Mobility, too, in terms of social class is recognized as a mitigating factor in voting behavior: David L Weakliem (1992) says that 'mobility has an indirect effect on political attitudes through its influence on personal contacts' (1992: 154). He says that upwardly mobile people will be more influenced by their present status than will the downwardly mobile.

The issue of mobility has been the subject of anthropological studies of Ireland in the past. However, Arensberg's seminal study on a rural Irish community in the 1950s refers to the lack of transport at that time, which in turn contributed to a highly localized way of life. "Irish familism is of the soil. It operates most strongly within allegiances to a definite small area. Life moves within this area for the countryman; he very rarely goes beyond it except on periodic visits to his market town. He counts his fellows from within these same narrow bounds. Beyond the next stream, over the next hill, down the valley, a similar allegiance begins and

ends. Across the line are people no different from himself, but they are strangers from beyond, or from the other side.' (1959: 107)

The strong identity Irish people have with their own local area is undoubtedly a major motivator of the localized nature of Irish society, including in elections. Durkheim (1976) commented that identity with place concerns 'interactive processes of social labelling and identification.' People classify others as belonging to different towns, villages, counties. Inglis (2015) refers to research showing that after family, Irish people regard identity with place as significant as any other identity. Indeed, the same author wrote in his publication *Global Ireland* that 'villages are a bit like families'. It is here that he observes the village of Ballivor in County Meath and concludes that such is the loyalty to a sense of place, that Ballivor villagers speak of neighbouring villages as though 'they were in another land with different families, histories and ways of being.' (2008: 195)

It has been argued that a sense of community can help support or create political activity – it provides 'an additional political resource in the struggle to promote or defend interests (Parry, Moyser and Wagstaffe, 1987). Similar to Bordieu's notion of Habitus, place is also about a sense of belonging and bonding. This is reinforced in Irish society through a number of various forms: religion, sport, community organisations and so on. For example, the division of areas along parish lines, which Arensberg refers to as lines that 'may once have marked an ancient kingdom's frontier' retain their significance in modern Ireland, despite the modernization of society. 'The importance of the parish…cannot be underestimated' said Heather Crawford (2010). Arensburg and Kimble's study of 1930s Ireland refers to the mindset of local men in rural Clare, saying: "He (local man) is ready to back the men of Luogh against the men of the neighbouring townland; to back those of the mountain region against those of the valley lads; those of his parish against the rest." (1937: 274)

The story of former Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, is illustrative of the power of the GAA in a political context. Loyalty, not just in a sporting or political sense, is very significant

in Irish society. Riser states that 'Loyalty is typically motivated by emotional involvement with particular persons having particularized circumstances.' (2013: 33) Irish academic Elaine Byrne, in an Irish Times piece titled 'Unwavering loyalty admired and rewarded in politics', says that 'Ireland attaches enormous historical importance to loyalty and we place this on ambiguous political entities wrapped up in notions of family and localism.' (2008)

Community life, despite the major changes in Irish society in the 100 years since its foundation, retains its importance. Bartley and Kitchin (2007) point out that one of the reasons why *The Economist* named Ireland as having the best quality of life in the world in 2004 was that certain 'cosy' elements of the old, such as family and community life, have been survived. Clearly, its preservation has, in part, led to localism continuing its role as a protagonist in shaping the results of Irish elections.

Voter behaviour

As is already established, community and the local is a major part of Irish life, which may lead to a willingness or a need for local people in a given area to commit to conformity with other locals in how they vote. Coleman (2004) writes that while conformity can motivate people to simply vote, it can also 'stimulate conformist behavior among some voters with regard to which party to vote for' (2004: p76). As with Schmitt-Beck (2008), Coleman references the 'bandwagon effect', which states that people join what they believe to be expected positions in society. So, if local and pride in place is as important as we have identified earlier, it could well be the case that the 'friends and neighbours' effect is further cemented by a keenness by local people to conform to societal norms and support the local candidate as many voters are already doing so. In broad terms, this could fall under the category of 'expressive' voting, where voting is viewed as a social act and the way a person votes reflects the values of one's reference group (De Graaf, Heath, Nieuwberta 1995)

Modernization

Ireland's 'peasant culture' is often cited as one of the main reasons for the 'friends and neighbours' vote, and the inherent localism in Irish politics (Chubb, 1963; Peillon 1982; O'Connell 1983).

Described as a nation which is 'distancing itself more from its historical roots than any other long-established democracy' (Crotty, 1999: 134), Ireland has experienced vast changes to its society, particularly since the turn of the millennium. Peasant systems have diminished according to some (Hannan, 1979), yet others argue that though the country has modernized to an extent, many traditions have withstood the tide of change (Girvin, 2010; Coleman, 2007). In an electoral context, Marsh, Sinnott, Garry and Kennedy (2008) write that while campaigns are now 'sophisticated PR operations' that are run on a nationwide basis by political parties, local remains the 'key' part of campaigns.

The phenomenon of Irish modernization is perhaps best summed up by Tom Inglis (2009) who introduced the use of glocalization to explain the country's current societal make-up – a mixture of a new, globalized society along with its older traditional values.

Conclusion

It is evident that there is a vast body of literature solely focused on 'friends and neighbours' voting and localism, or loosely aligned to it in some way. This is unsurprising, given the continued importance of localism in Irish society today. In terms of elections and voting patterns, there are three distinct electoral studies in Irish terms that closely relate to the topic I am set to explore: Sacks' study in Donegal (1970), Parker's Galway West study (1982) and Johnson's urban investigation in Dublin West (1989). These three studies are imperative in understanding the 'friends and neighbours' effect in Ireland and have been widely referenced in subsequent political literature. However, they are all based in a

different generation; a different political landscape in a different Ireland. While it is surprising that no major study has been conducted using tally data in the interim, I view it as an opportunity for my work to fill that void and provide a new, fresh insight into the 'friends and neighbours' effect in a modern Ireland. However, I also want to go further than the aforementioned work: I want to explore certain aforementioned variables to add to the rich collection of literature already established surrounding the 'friends and neighbours' effect and localism in Irish politics.

CHAPTER TWO

Methods and Methodology

As is evident, there has been quite an extensive amount of research completed on the 'friends and neighbours' effect both in Ireland and overseas. Studies to date (Sacks 1970, Parker 1982, Johnson 1989) have indicated that there is a 'friends and neighbours' effect in Ireland. This study will investigate if this remains the case, but also to expand on the 'friends and neighbours' effect by exploring the impact of several variables and their impact on the phenomenon.

The research statement upon which this work is based is sufficiently broad to allow for a study that considers several variables and their impact – which is key, as there is no one explanation for the friends and neighbours effect.

Methods

There is little doubt that tally data is one of the most underused resources in the academic study of Irish elections. This raw data is collected during the count process, with parties and candidates organizing volunteers to watch as votes are taken out from boxes, and record what they see. While the data that is extracted is highly useful, the process to gather it is remarkably basic: one, or two people (depending on availability and resources) will watch as boxes are opened, and votes are straightened out in preparation for counting. As the ballots are straightened out, the tally man/woman watches to see who has received the number one vote and will record this on a sheet. As every box has a name, this allows candidates the opportunity to see how they performed in each individual box from every area – the official first count does not provide this, instead just giving an overall total of all first preferences from across the constituency. It is a vital insight into how candidate's 'friends and neighbours' vote. It should be noted that tally data is not 100pc accurate – human error insures votes are missed one way or the other – but

nonetheless they do provide a very accurate picture of what is to follow in the official count.

The underuse of tally data in an Irish political research setting is difficult to understand. In this context, studies include Parker (1982) on the Galway West constituency and Sacks (1970) on Donegal North East. Johnson (1989) looked at the Dublin West constituency for an urban viewpoint on 'friends and neighbours' voting in the 1981 general election. However, since these studies, the use of tally data from Irish elections has been virtually absent from academic research work. I view my study as something that will fill that void.

In order to obtain tally data needed for this study, I contacted individual TDs, party headquarters and local newspapers, who often publish the box-by-box account of the election in their constituency. It is reflective of voters' interest in these figures that local papers still engage in this practice. Generally, however, tally data is not readily available but is gathered by parties and TDs for research and analysis purposes. I was pleased with the response to my requests for tally data from the various TDs, party headquarters and newspapers I contacted.

Though my initial research efforts only considered a handful of constituencies, I concluded early on that given the complexity and contrasts between the various Irish constituencies, I would require data from quite a few constituencies to provide the necessary width and depth to my study. Therefore, I settled on focusing on 20 constituencies from both the 2011 and 2016 general elections; this represented half of the total of 40 constituencies that currently elects Dáil deputies. In order to be able to compare and contrast constituencies, I chose the same constituencies for both 2011 and 2016 – though, in some cases, boundary changes and availability of data meant that some constituencies were not the exact same in both cases but by-and-large, a similar formation persisted. The selection of constituencies was a mixture of suitability and availability – but I was satisfied that those selected provided a broad enough sample of three, four and five seaters.

The selection process also considered the spread of constituencies in terms of size and location, to ensure that the final selection was representative of all different characteristics found in Irish constituencies: rural/urban, geographically small/large, and so on.

The tally data in each constituency outlines the number of votes in each box, the name of the box, and the number of votes each individual candidate received. For the purposes of this research, I included candidates who received more than 5pc of the total first preference vote in the constituency, which left me with 289 candidates of all different political persuasions.

In obtaining the candidates' home address – necessary in order to identify distance to the various polling stations - I was able to source the necessary details from ballot papers, election books, the candidates' websites and various other sources, such as the Oireachtas Register of Members Interests. On occasion, this required significant effort as some candidates opt to put forward their office address as their base. However, for this study, it was important that I identify their home address in order to have an accurate result. Indeed, I double checked some candidate's addresses where anomalies appeared to insure against any major errors.

To identify the relationship between the vote a candidate received in a given polling booth and the distance he/she lived away from there, I calculated the distance between the candidate's home address and every polling station in the constituency using Google Maps, inputting both the home address of the candidate and the location of the polling booth. This offered a distance in kilometres, which I rounded to the nearest 100 metres to give me a distance between the two. It should be noted that the distance obtained was not 'as the crow flies', but a route via the road network. On each occasion, I took the shortest distance as the distance between the polling booth and the candidate's home. In some cases, albeit very few, Google Maps failed to identify the exact location of some polling stations ie. A local national school, community hall etc. In order to combat this problem, I made efforts to identify the address of various places through other methods of research

online, in books or via friends and colleagues. In a handful of cases, I was unable to obtain the exact location of a polling station despite my best efforts; in this case, the general local area was used as the location of the polling station.

Once the distance was obtained to a certain polling booth, I went about calculating the percentage of the vote that the candidate received in that particular booth. This necessitated a basic mathematics formula: the total number of votes the candidate received, divided by the total number of votes cast in that booth, and multiplying the answer by one hundred to give a percentage. This method was repeated for every single polling station, for every candidate considered.

Having completed this process, I entered all data into a Microsoft Excel programme. Here, I was able to calculate a basic correlation coefficient, which enabled an initial insight into the relationship between the distance to a polling station and vote received. A series of average figures provided the basis of my analysis, and thereafter I went about controlling these figures for certain variables: gender, age, political experience, and so on. Again, identification of these variables was difficult at times, due to varying degrees of information available online. In some cases, I contacted the candidate themselves, a local journalist or political worker to complete this process.

To add some real-life experience to the figures, I contacted politicians of all political persuasions for their own views on the 'friends and neighbours' effect in politics, to give a real-life element to this research. In this regard, I contacted dozens of politicians, former politicians and candidates via email or phone. Unfortunately, many requests were unsuccessful, but nonetheless I was pleased to get responses from several politicians, former and present, who were happy to talk. In some cases, questions were asked over email; in the majority, they were happy to take a short phone call. The reason for the different methods was merely one of convenience given the hectic schedule of many politicians. I did not ask every candidate the same set of questions – I felt it necessary to ask some of the same questions to everyone, of course, to get an insight into any potential differences,

but I also felt it necessary to change the angle of questioning depending on the politicians experience, age, political party and so on. Overall, this process was hugely beneficial – not only do the insights from actual politicians add weight and insight to this research, but they also gave me an interesting feel for how candidate's approach elections. This was invaluable to my deeper understanding of this complex topic.

Methodology

Before outlining the rationale for my decisions in going about this research, the previous studies and their approach should be outlined first.

AJ Parker's 1982 study concerned the Galway West constituency in the west of Ireland and the way it voted in the 1977 General Election. Parker's aim is to illustrate the strength of the respective votes of the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael candidates in their own 'bailiwick' areas, and the strength of the 'friends and neighbours effect'. In doing this, Parker outlines the strength of the 'friends and neighbours' effect using a method similar to the one I have employed: measuring the distance from the candidate's home to each polling booth and finding a correlation. Parker uses 'straight-line' distance as the measure. The author illustrates effectively, with use of images of the constituency including dividing lines between the 63 different District Electoral Districts (DEDs), the areas in which the four Fianna Fáil candidates and the four Fine Gael candidates lived, and subsequently where they received their highest portion of the party vote. Interestingly, Parker also employs evidence of an increase in the party vote locally to illustrate the impact of the 'friends and neighbours' effect. Correlations and controlling for certain variables are at the core of this study, though the party vote is the only variable considered.

Sacks (1970) study on the General Election results in Donegal North East in 1969 uses correlations with the candidate's home and the distance from every polling booth. In calculating the distance, Sacks uses the distance between the two

locations via the main road. This research concerns the party vote and reveals a 'friends and neighbours' effect, as well as strong loyalty by party members to the voting strategy advocated by either Fine Gael or Fianna Fáil. Interestingly, Sacks points to a sectarian voting pattern in the constituency, in which Fine Gael ran a Protestant candidate, Boggs, to sweep up the Protestant vote. The use of graphs and images containing every individual polling booth provides further depth to his findings.

Johnson's examination of Dublin West in the 1981 General Election follows a similar research pattern as the previous two studies. Here, Johnson shows that the 'friends and neighbours' effect is evident too in an urban constituency, by measuring the distance between polling booths and the home of the various candidates. The distance between a candidate's home and a given polling booth is measured using a straight-line measurement. A basic Pearson's coefficient is applied to the data, and this data is well illuminated by use of graphs.

Rationale for my approach

The studies already conducted in this field of research provided analysis that contributed much to the understanding of the 'friends and neighbours' effect. Two points in particular, however, become apparent when consulting this research: 1) The significant amount of time that has passed since their publication and 2) The fact that the three aforementioned studies only concern one constituency.

A personal interest in tally data was one of the key reasons I decided to base my research on this topic. It's place in Irish elections is quite important, though I feel this is not reflected in the academic research on Irish elections.

The reason for my choosing of 20 constituencies was to ensure a broad, representative sample which enabled not only constituency-based analysis, but also a wider reach which incorporated constituencies of varying societal formations, political history and geographical considerations. The acquisition of data from 20

constituencies provides for a better understanding of the 'friends and neighbours' effect across the Republic of Ireland. Of course, consideration of all 40 constituencies – or 43 in the case of the 2011 election - would be the ideal database but practicality and time constraints rendered that approach unsuitable. Similarly, a countrywide study would include all candidates who ran for election, but consideration of anyone who polled less than 5pc of the first preference vote was applied from the outset in order to eliminate candidates who may have received no votes in quite a number of polling stations.

Constituencies were chosen with a view to providing an equal spread of three, four and five-seater constituencies, as well as having an adequate variation of constituencies in terms of location, size and an urban/rural variation. Of course, practicalities such as the availability of information and tally data itself also influenced the selection process.

Having concluded this process, the constituencies used for the 2016 study were: Cavan-Monaghan, Clare, Cork North West, Cork North Central, Cork South Central, Dublin Bay North, Dublin Central, Dublin Fingal, Dublin Mid-West, Dublin North West, Dún Laoghaire, Galway East, Galway West, Kerry, Laois, Longford-Westmeath, Limerick City, Mayo, Roscommon-Galway, and Waterford.

Due to some constituency changes prior to the 2016 general election following the Electoral (Amendment) (Dáil Constituencies) Act 2013, it was not possible to have the exact same set of constituencies in the 2011 data set. By and large, however, the set of constituencies remained the same, with the major difference being the inclusion of Donegal North East and the absence of Clare. This was down to the fact that it was a much more difficult process to acquire tally data given the passage of time.

The 2011 set included: Cavan-Monaghan, Cork North Central, Cork North West, Cork South Central, Donegal North East, Dublin Central, Dublin North, Dublin Mid-West, Dublin North East, Dublin South East, Galway East, Galway West, Kerry

North-West Limerick, Kerry South, Laois-Offaly, Longford-Westmeath, Limerick City, Mayo, Roscommon-South Leitrim, and Waterford.

As with previous research conducted in this area, the calculation of the vote in each individual polling station is quite a simple process. A basic correlation – Pearson's - when all data is gathered allows an overall impression into the profile of that candidate's vote, and from there further variables can be controlled for an in-depth insight into the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Calculating the distance from the candidate's home to the various polling stations in a constituency offers a choice between straight-line, or 'as the crow flies' measurements, or via the road network. I chose the latter, on the basis that in a geographically fragmented constituency straight-line distance can be deceptive if an area is separated from another by the sea, lakes, mountains, or other landforms. The distance via the road network provides a more accurate reflection of the perceptible distance for voters, and thus more appropriate for use in this research. This was consistent with the approach of Sacks in his 1970 study on Donegal North East.

Obtaining the basic correlation between distance from a candidate's home and the vote received in a given polling station was the first stage of this research. After this, I applied and controlled for certain variables to help gain a deeper understanding of the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

The 2016 election was the first in which there was a gender quota imposed, whereby parties were required to run at least 30pc female candidates, or risk losing state funding. This was, therefore, not applicable for the 2011 election, which allows for a comparison in overall terms on the impact of more female candidates on the 'friends and neighbours' effect. All parties bar none adhered to this new requirement, and therefore the prominence of female candidates was much higher than other elections. In this study, I decided to examine whether there were any

variations between the female and male candidates when it comes to the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Similarly, as already referenced, stand-alone studies have been conducted in regard to the friends and neighbours effect, but none have had the necessary database to engage in a comparative analysis between rural and urban constituencies – but this study has. The breakdown of constituencies into urban and rural was considered at length. Ultimately, it was decided that any constituency containing a significant rural area – even if there was also a sizable urban centre within the same constituency - was considered rural. Constituencies solely based in urban areas were considered urban: therefore, this included nine constituencies in both 2011 and 2016 – all Dublin-based constituencies, plus Cork North Central, Cork South Central and Limerick City. The remainder – 11 – were considered rural.

The political experience of a candidate was also one of my considerations. It is fair to assume that if a politician has been in office of some shape or form for a length of time, he/she will have had the opportunity and resources to establish a strong local network, and presumably therefore a strong local vote. This also feeds into another variable I felt it was worth including in this study: the age of the candidate. Given the large cultural and societal change Ireland has undergone in the past 30 years, particularly in a political and campaigning sense, I would expect contrasting approaches, and contrasting attitudes, between younger candidates and older candidates when it comes to campaigning and vote composition. This may affect the 'friends and neighbours' phenomenon.

Political differences may also lead to different 'friends and neighbours' effects. I believe it worth considering the respective 'friends and neighbours' effects for both Independent candidates and party candidates. This is similar to the questioning of the impact of a running mate, or mates, on the 'friends and neighbours' effect. It is expected that the addition of a running mate increases the 'friends and neighbours' effect for a given candidate.

In order to examine all of these variables, I engaged in extensive research surrounding each individual candidate: this included identifying their age, their political history, their constituency, their gender, whether there were any specific voting strategies in their constituency, and whether they had a running mate(s). All of this was conducted online using various sources – though on some occasions, it was easier to find than others. Nonetheless, once the required information was obtained, I was able to control for the aforementioned variables, apply to the calculation, and then analyse the results.

As well as engaging in quantitative research in regard to the data and figures, and testing them while controlling for certain variables, I felt it important to provide context and real experiences in this study. This is why I also employed a qualitative approach in engaging in interviews with some experienced politicians and strategists, as well as newer representatives and candidates, to understand the approach of candidates and parties to elections, and whether localism was an important factor in their approach and preparation.

Seven politicians engaged in an interview, either over the phone or via email. The figures who responded to requests were: former Taoiseach Enda Kenny; Fine Gael's Director of Elections in 2016 and former Minister Brian Hayes; former Fianna Fáil Minister Mary Hanafin; People Before Profit TD Richard Boyd-Barrett; Michael Fitzmaurice, a sitting Independent TD; former Green Party TD and Senator Cllr Dan Boyle; and former Labour Party Senator Lorraine Higgins. Several other politicians were contacted but failed to reply. However, the spread of politicians in the aforementioned list represents a diverse range of the Irish political class in terms of ideology, office attained, location and experience.

The interviews proved to be highly informative, though not all interview material was included in this study. All interviews were in an unstructured format, as it required sufficient flexibility to question certain candidates on certain items, though quite an amount of research was necessary prior to speaking to each individual with regard to their own constituency and electoral success, or lack

thereof. Interviews and conversations contributed significantly to this study, and to the author's understanding of this topic in modern Irish politics.

The combination of both Qualitative and Quantitative methods in this research provides a more rounded insight. I consider this a strength of the study: my qualitative work informed my quantitative approach, while my quantitative results helped explain some of my qualitative findings. In addition, given the complexities of the uniqueness of the Irish political system and indeed Irish society, I felt it necessary to engage in both forms of research to deliver a fully informed thesis.

CHAPTER THREE

The 'friends and neighbours' effect in Irish elections

A case study on the constituencies of Mayo and Dún Laoghaire

Introduction

For the purposes of elections in the Republic of Ireland, the state is split into a variety of different constituencies. These take various forms: they can include part of a county, a full county, or in some cases two counties. The number of seats available ranges from three to five, depending on the size and population of the constituency. For the 2011 election, there were 43 constituencies; in 2016, there were 40.

This section will consider, in depth, the 'friends and neighbours' effect in two of these constituencies: Mayo, a county in the west of Ireland along the Atlantic Ocean; and Dún Laoghaire, a constituency in the area of south Dublin. Both constituencies elect deputies to the same parliament but contrast in virtually every way. For example, both had a relatively similar size of total electors in 2016 – Dún Laoghaire totalled 92248 eligible voters; the same figure for Mayo was 92958 (Irish Times, 2016). However, the geographical size of the constituencies contrasted greatly: Dún Laoghaire comprised an area of just 55.2 square/kilometres, whereas Mayo was 5,234.2 square/kilometres (Kavanagh, 2016).

A case study approach allows an initial insight into the 'friends and neighbours' effect, but also provides for an in-depth look at the phenomenon where the vote of each candidate considered can be analysed in detail. This is necessary in a study such as this, as it considers the 'friends and neighbours' effect in a broader context in Ireland. Similarly, the unique characteristics of each constituency can be taken

into account and may provide an insight into how the 'friends and neighbours' effect works in different settings.

The use of the Mayo and Dún Laoghaire constituencies is to enable an analysis of the 'friends and neighbours' effect in different social settings, as outlined above. It can help provide an insight into how 'friends and neighbours' voting operates in two different settings. Of course, other constituencies could have been used, but the availability of data and information surrounding both of the chosen constituencies ensured they were used for the case study section.

Mayo

The county of Mayo is one of the most westerly on the island of Ireland. With the Atlantic Ocean to the west and north, it is part of the province of Connacht and has land borders with the counties Sligo, Roscommon and Galway. It is largely rural in nature. The county's biggest urban centre is Castlebar which is situated in the centre of the county, while Ballina, Westport and Claremorris are other notable towns to the north, west and south of county respectively.

For the purpose of Dáil elections, the constituency of Mayo comprised simply of the entire county in 2011 where five seats were available. However, revisions to constituency boundaries ahead of the 2016 general election saw a change to Mayo's boundaries – a portion of the south of the county, including the urban centre of Ballinrobe, was transferred to the Galway West constituency. The remainder of Mayo made up the new constituency, for which four Dáil deputies were returned.

Dún Laoghaire

The constituency of Dún Laoghaire is one of 12 Dáil constituencies in the county of Dublin. Predominantly urban, it is situated in the south east of the county and runs along the Irish Sea. The constituency traditionally elected five TDs, but that was reduced to four prior the 2016 election. There were also some minor boundary changes ahead of 2016, when some areas from the old Dublin South constituency were added. At local government level the area comes under the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown jurisdiction.

Dún Laoghaire and the wider south Dublin area has long been considered one of the most affluent areas in the country. Earlier in 2019, CSO figures showed that Dún Laoghaire was the area with the most expensive property in Ireland: the median price of a house nationally was reported to be approximately €237000, the average price in the wider Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown area came in at more than double that at €525000. It is also the most educated constituency in the country: the 2016 Census figures reveal that almost half (48.8pc) of people living in Dún Laoghaire have third level education. The next highest figure is 37.4pc in Dublin Central. (Oireachtas, 2016)

Rationale

The inclusion of a combined case study on the constituencies of Dún Laoghaire and Mayo provides for a number of grounds for comparison

- As already referenced, the geography of both constituencies is significantly different. Dún Laoghaire is located in an urban suburb in an affable area of Dublin, while Mayo is a vast, sprawling county. The geographic fragmentation of Mayo, as previously referenced by Sacks (1970) in relation to Donegal, can contribute to the creation of a 'friends and neighbours' effect. A comparison between the two can help identify to what extent geography impacts of the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

- As a key electoral strategy, and following on from geography, vote management takes on an added significance in constituencies where major parties run more than one candidate, as is the case in both Dún Laoghaire and Mayo. The condensed nature of Dún Laoghaire may make vote management redundant as candidates can, if they wish and are directed to do so, canvass the entire constituency with relative ease. The implementation of a vote management strategy – or a lack thereof – could lead to vastly different 'friends and neighbours' evidence.
- The Fine Gael party is strong in both Mayo – where it won four of five seats in 2011 – and Dún Laoghaire, a traditional party stronghold (Gallagher and Marsh, 2002). A comparison between the party candidate's 'friends and neighbours' effect in either constituency will provide for a unique insight into the phenomenon within parties.
- The contrast in lifestyle, culture and traditions between rural and urban societies may feed into a difference in the 'friends and neighbours' effect. As Mayo is a largely rural area, and Dún Laoghaire an urban one, this case study allows for a tentative insight into the contrasts between the two.

Analysis

The following tables provide an insight into the relationship between the vote of the candidates in the Mayo and Dún Laoghaire constituencies, and the distance from the candidate's address to the various polling stations. This allows an insight into the 'friends and neighbours' phenomenon for the various candidates included. The 'correlation' column shows the strength – or lack thereof – of this relationship through use of the Pearson's coefficient formula. This was formulated through use of the Excel programme, which considered the distance to each individual polling station for each candidate as well as the vote they received in each polling station. A correlation close to -1 suggests a strong relationship; a figure closer to 1 suggests a weak relationship.

Table One: Pearson's coefficient for Mayo candidates at the 2011 general election

Candidate	**Address**	**Correlation**
Dara Calleary (FF)	8 Quignalecka, Sligo Rd, Ballina, Co Mayo	-0.582299
Enda Kenny (FG)	Hawthorn Avenue, Castlebar, Co Mayo	-0.6273171
Michael Kilcoyne (Ind)	9 Turlough Road, Castlebar, Co Mayo	-0.5761095
Michelle Mulherin (FG)	47 Moy Heights, Ballina, Co Mayo	-0.7607708
John O'Mahony (FG)	Market Street, Ballaghaderrean, Co Roscommon	-0.6553987
Michael Ring (FG)	Cloghan, Westport, Co Mayo	-0.0986341

Table Two: Pearson's coefficient for Mayo candidates at the 2016 general election

Candidate	**Address**	**Correlation**
Dara Calleary (FF)	8 Quignalecka, Sligo Rd, Ballina, Co Mayo	-0.7101897
Lisa Chambers (FF)	Clooncruel, Ballyheane, Castlebar, Co Mayo	-0.5280732
Rose Conway Walsh (SF)	Drum, Clogher, Ballina, Co Mayo	-0.765915
Jerry Cowley (Ind)	Mulranny, Co Mayo	-0.5898261
Enda Kenny (FG)	Hawthorn Avenue, Castlebar, Co Mayo	-0.6645542
Michelle Mulherin (FG)	47 Moy Heights, Ballina, Co Mayo	-0.7929514
Michael Ring (FG)	Cloghan, Westport, Co Mayo	-0.3009158

Table Three: Pearson's coefficient for Dún Laoghaire candidates at the 2011 general election

Candidate	Address	Correlation
Barry Andrews (FF)	Blackrock, Co Dublin	-0.315959
Ivana Bacik (Lab)	Portobello, Co Dublin	-0.4653378
Sean Barrett (FG)	Avondale, Ballinclea Rd, Killiney, Co Dublin	-0.1432048
Richard Boyd Barrett (PBP)	Brigadoon, Station Rd, Glengeary	-0.2167971
Eamon Gilmore (Lab)	Shankill, Dublin 18	-0.7082285
Mary Hanafin (FF)	7 Newtown Park, Blackrock, Co Dublin	-0.3429025
Mary Mitchell O'Connor (FG)	31 Maple Manor, Cabinteely, Co Dublin	0.43442422

Table Four: Pearson's coefficient for Dún Laoghaire candidates at the 2016 general election

Candidate	Address	Correlation
Maria Bailey (FG)	Kilmore, Killiney Rd	0.37768745
Richard Boyd Barrett (PBP)	Brigadoon, Station Rd, Glengeary	0.16782128
Cormac Devlin (FF)	117 Glengeary Avenue, Dún Laoghaire	-0.3620797
Mary Hanafin (FF)	7 Newtown Park, Blackrock, Co Dublin	-0.382514
Carol Hunt (Ind)	14 Charleville Avenue, Dublin 3	0.20646961
Mary Mitchell O'Connor (FG)	31 Maple Manor, Cabinteely, Co Dublin	-0.0082091
Shane O'Brien (SF)	135 Coolevin, Ballybrack, Co Dublin	-0.4211245
Carrie Smith (Lab)	Inislachan, Seafield Rd, Killiney, Co Dublin	-0.4054357

Analysis

Friends and neighbours – an exclusively rural phenomenon?

An initial glance at the above figures shows quite a contrast between the candidates in Mayo and the candidates Dún Laoghaire: for virtually all of the candidates in Mayo, the relationship between distance from their home and vote received strong; but the opposite is the case for Dún Laoghaire. On further analysis, when compared with Mayo as in the table below, the average figures show a stark contrast.

Table Five: Average Pearson's coefficient for Mayo and Dún Laoghaire, 2011 and 2016

Average Pearson's coefficient (Vote/Distance)	2011	2016
Dún Laoghaire	-0.25114364	-0.1444981511
Mayo	-0.5500882	-0.6217750571

It should be stressed that these figures still reveal a 'friends and neighbours' effect in Dún Laoghaire, but its strength is minimal. One, too, should consider the societal, geographical and cultural differences between the areas that have impacted these figures. Dún Laoghaire is an urban suburb, and geographically is a much smaller constituency to navigate for candidates. It is likely that any given candidate could canvass the entire constituency in an election timeframe, such is the size of the area, whereas the geography and size of the Mayo constituency makes it much more challenging in a rural area. Secondly, many of those who live in Dún Laoghaire may have moved into the area – they have no strong ties to a particular place and thus, to a particular candidate as the case may be. For example, both Ivana Bacik (Labour, 2011) and Carol Hunt (Independent, 2016) have addresses outside of the constituency, while both Mary Mitchell O'Connor and Eamon Gilmore are natives of Galway. In Mayo, all of the candidates are natives of the county. Similarly, the 'us vs them' phenomenon that could well be the case in a geographically expansive county such as Mayo – where individual areas feel cut off from other parts of the county as a result of geography, thus generating a strong local sentiment - loses its relevance in such a tight-knit constituency such as Dún Laoghaire where the electorate is more diverse in terms of where they have come from, and the geographical spread of candidate is much less obvious.

As Sacks (1970) has stated, geography can help cultivate strong partisan feelings and a sense of localism that can generate a 'friends and neighbours' effect: backing the candidate from this side of the bay or from that side of the mountain. People feel a connection with other people from a certain geographic area. It is no

coincidence that candidates from the wider Castlebar area – namely Enda Kenny, Lisa Chambers and Michael Kilcoyne – display a weaker 'friends and neighbours' relationship than those from other, more remote parts of the county. The 'us vs them' phenomenon commented on in the Mayo case study loses its relevance in such a tight-knit constituency such as Dún Laoghaire where the electorate is more diverse in terms of where they have come from, and the geographical spread of candidate is much less obvious.

The figures show that 'friends and neighbours' voting does exist in Dún Laoghaire – but it is a much more watered-down version when compared with a rural constituency such as Mayo.

Fine Gael and the 'friends and neighbours' effect

Fine Gael performed well in both Mayo and Dún Laoghaire in both 2011 and 2016, yet the contrast between candidates of the same party in either constituency with regard to the 'friends and neighbours' effect is vast. All Fine Gael candidates display a strong 'friends and neighbours' effect in Mayo in 2011 and 2016 when compared to the party's candidates in Dún Laoghaire and their virtually non-existent relationship when it comes to distance and vote.

Following on from the first point, this may further underline the difference between two different cultural settings where the 'friends and neighbours' effect is stronger in a rural constituency. Similarly, as will be discussed in the next point, the Fine Gael party appears to apply a strict vote management strategy in Mayo (Carr, 2011) but does not in Dún Laoghaire. This may be reflective of general logistical issues in so far as candidates can canvass the entire Dún Laoghaire constituency easily given its condensed nature.

What it may also point to, however, is the element of class voting that may appear in Dún Laoghaire, more so than Mayo. It has already been established that Fine Gael performs well amongst the middle class (Gallagher and Marsh, 2002),

therefore it could be the case that in an affluent constituency such as Dún Laoghaire, class voting becomes more of a consideration for voters of the middle class.

In any case, the vast difference in the 'friends and neighbours' effect for candidates of the same party in either constituency reveals a significant difference in the respective constituencies, even allowing for the various other aspects that may contribute to this discrepancy.

What follows, in image one and image two, is a graphic representation of the Fine Gael vote in either constituency in the 2011 election. Through use of a colour-coded guide, a clear vote management pattern emerges in Mayo. There is a less obvious distribution of the party vote in Dún Laoghaire, where Sean Barrett wins the highest vote in the majority of District Electoral Divisions (DEDs).

The colour of each individual DED indicates which Fine Gael candidate received the highest vote in that given area. The candidate's home base is indicated by their name, in blue writing, on the map. In the case of the Dún Laoghaire constituency, the DEDs left without a colour were outside the Dún Laoghaire Dáil constituency.

Image One: Fine Gael vote in the Dun Laoghaire constituency, 2011

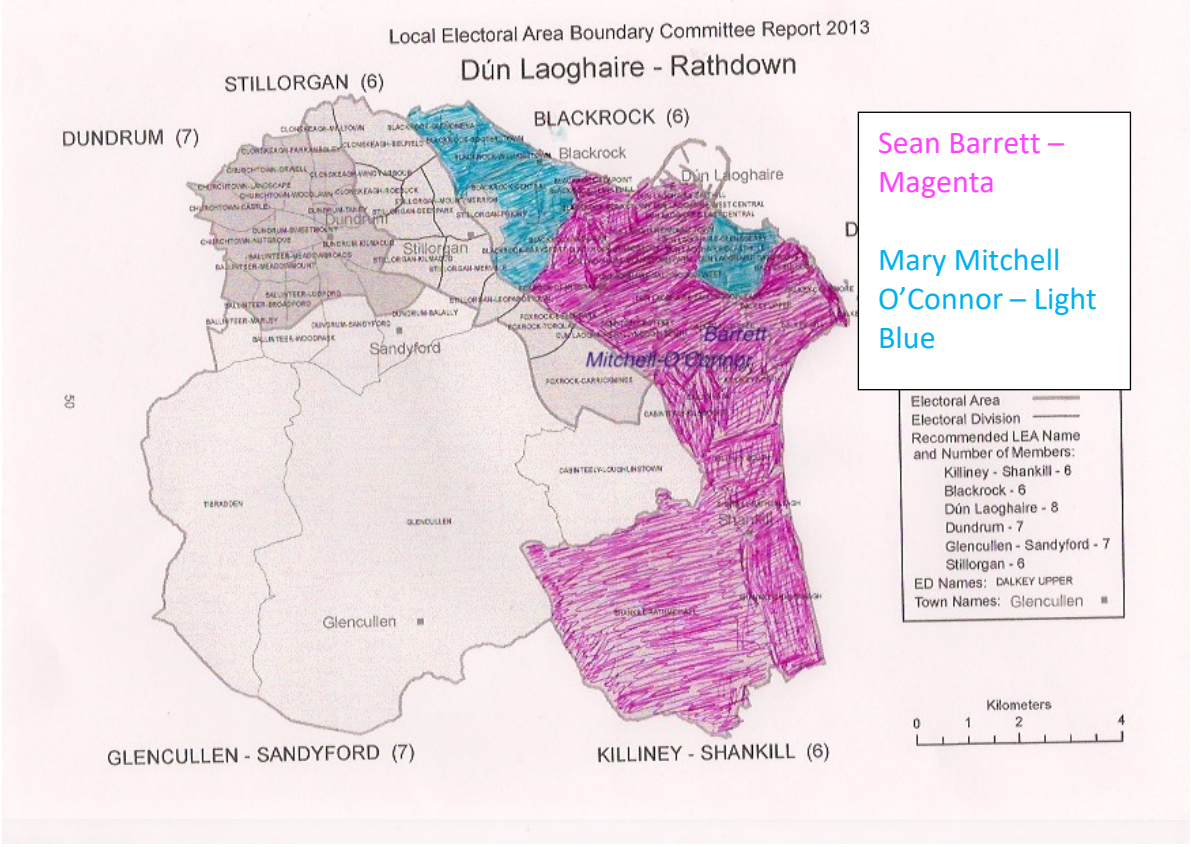
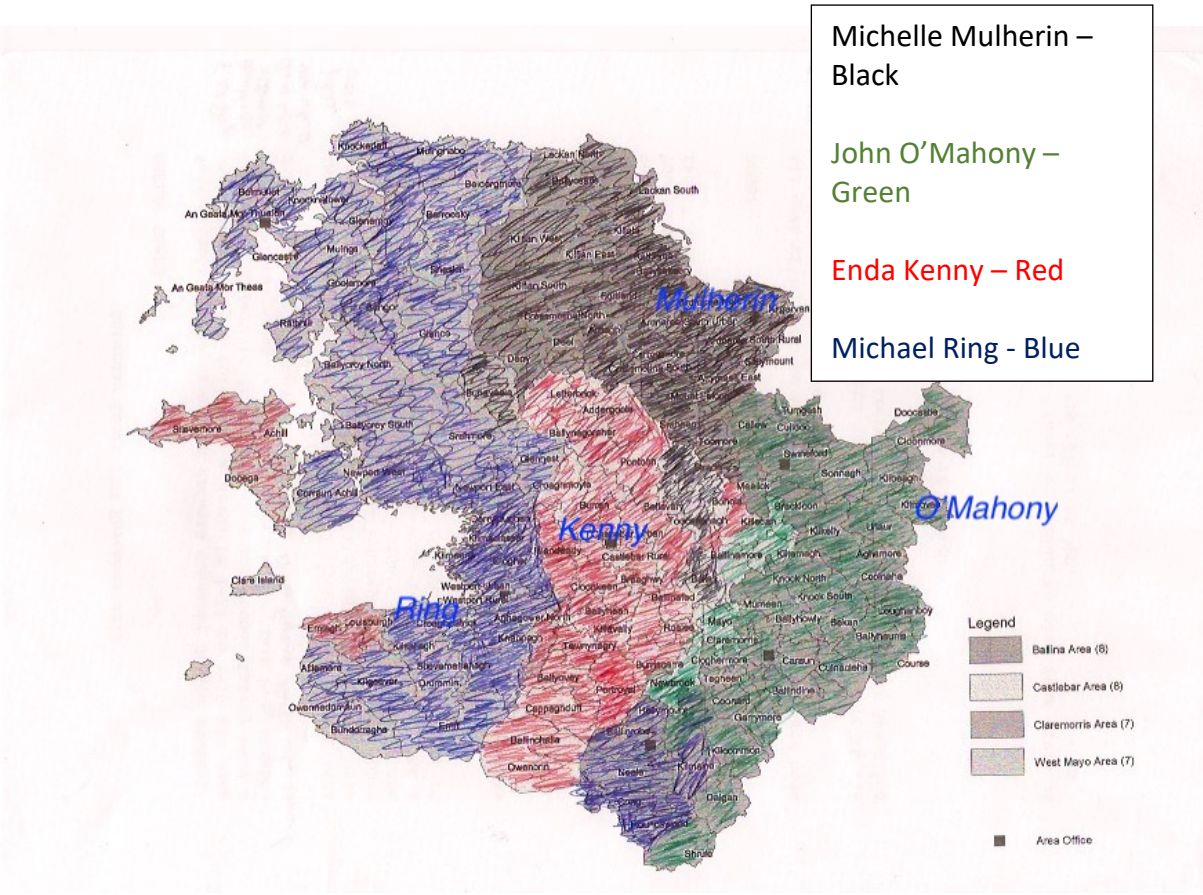


Image Two: Fine Gael vote in the Mayo constituency, 2011



Vote management and a 'manufactured' friends and neighbours effect?

The phenomenon of vote management becomes an important consideration for parties in a PR-STV system where multiple candidates of the same party can run in the same constituency. In engaging in vote management, parties go about dividing constituencies into various areas which one candidate can canvass exclusively, without another candidate of the same party canvassing the same people. The purpose of the exercise is to maximise the 'party' vote as it were, and to efficiently distribute it so as to leave the party in the best possible position to win two or more seats.

Perhaps the best illustration of successful vote management came in Mayo in 2011, when Fine Gael secured four of the five available seats. However, to achieve the result, the party had to rely on an old reliable: the 'friends and neighbours' effect. In acknowledging the impact of this, Fine Gael selected a very well-balanced ticket, geographically: Michelle Mulherin, a councillor in the large urban town of Ballina in north Mayo; Michael Ring, a long-serving TD from Westport; John O'Mahony TD, a native of Kilmovee in east Mayo and the aforementioned party leader Enda Kenny in the county town of Castlebar. Due to a strict vote management policy, the party divided the constituency into four areas – bailiwicks, to use that oft-used political term – in order to maximize its vote (Carr, 2011).

However, by restricting candidates to a certain area for canvassing and campaigning can create a 'friends and neighbours' effect. If Enda Kenny and his team, for example, were allowed to campaign constituency-wide, would the correlation between distance and vote be as strong for such a well-known candidate? It is unlikely. So, it should be noted that while the 'friends and neighbours' effect is evident in Mayo in 2011 – and 2016 – its prominence is contributed to by Fine Gael's employment of a vote management strategy.

Similarly, in Dún Laoghaire in 2011, it is interesting to note that arguably the most high-profile candidate in either election considered, Labour Party leader Eamon

Gilmore, generates the lowest coefficient at -0.708225. There are two explanations for this: 1) The Labour Party attempted to manage its vote in 2011, and thus restricted the area across which Eamon Gilmore was their lead candidate in order to aid the cause of his running mate, Ivana Bacik. In ceding territory, Gilmore was confined to seeking votes in his 'own' area, thus creating a 'friends and neighbours' effect. 2) Gilmore's heavy local support is as a result of his own high profile, and the possibility of him becoming Taoiseach or, as it turned out, Tánaiste. As leader of a major party, Gilmore enjoyed a high national profile. This encouraged his own friends and neighbours – literally – to back the local man in big numbers as he sought to become a major player on the national scene. To quote Nuala Johnson, it is a case of 'wanting to see the local boy do good' (1989: 93)

In both constituencies vote management certainly contributes to a strengthening of the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Conclusions

This chapter outlined the 'friends and neighbours' effect in the Mayo and Dún Laoghaire constituencies in the 2011 and 2016 general elections.

The 'friends and neighbours' effect is clearly more significant for all candidates of all persuasions in the rural setting of Mayo, as opposed to the urban area of Dún Laoghaire.

What this suggests is that factors such as geographical obscurity and vote management contribute to a more obvious 'friends and neighbours' effect. While it is the case that it appears to be more of a factor in Mayo, it should be recorded that there is evidence – however weak – of a 'friends and neighbours' effect in Dún Laoghaire.

The advent of political planning and vote management undoubtedly contributes to the 'friends and neighbours' effect, and this is evident in both constituencies as

outlined above. Vote management should be a major consideration when concluding that the ‘friends and neighbours’ effect is weak or strong.

Ultimately, this section illustrates the importance of the ‘friends and neighbours’ effect in both a rural and urban setting, but also illustrates the vast differences that can exist in voting behavior, even within the same political system.

CHAPTER FOUR

The intricacies of 'Friends and Neighbours' voting

Having outlined the 'friends and neighbours' phenomenon in a broad sense through use of two case studies, this chapter allows a more incisive discussion surrounding this behaviour. In order to further delve into the effect, I intend on pursuing a more rigorous line of research under six headings, which may or may not unearth some patterns with regard to the 'friends and neighbours' effect. They are: the age of the candidate; the political experience the candidate has garnered; whether a candidate had a running mate(s) or not; the gender of the candidate; the political affiliation of the candidate; and whether the candidate ran in a rural or urban constituency. In attempting to further understand these variables impact on the 'friends and neighbours' effect, I will use the Pearson's coefficient – which I outlined in the previous chapter – along with a series of averages to get a wider picture. In addition, I will also use the SPSS software to control for certain variables within the dataset and provide a more rigorous examination of the data and allow more accurate conclusions.

The overall intention of this chapter – and indeed this research as a whole – is to provide a greater, deeper understanding of the 'friends and neighbours' effect in modern Irish general elections.

The Friends and Neighbours Effect – the overall picture

This thesis considers both the 2011 and 2016 general elections in Ireland and includes data on some 289 candidates across both elections. The candidates included represent the broad and diverse spectrum of Irish politics: those who define themselves as left-wing to right-wing, outgoing Taoisigh to first-time candidates, rural farmers and urban stockbrokers. Of the 40 constituencies these candidates come from, they range from the isolation of rural Kerry to the leafy suburbs of Dún Laoghaire. Thus, this data ensures a real, tangible insight into the way our politicians receive their votes: specifically, with a view to local voting, or the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

The analysis of the 'friends and neighbours' effect, for the purposes of this research in later sections, will consider six variables and their impact on the phenomenon. These variables are: gender, political affiliation, age, whether the candidate contested a seat in a rural or urban constituency, political experience and whether the candidate had a running mate(s) or not. All of these variables are important characteristics for each candidate, and the influence of these variables on the 'friends and neighbours' effect has yet to be fully understood. This research can provide an insight into their relationship with the 'friends and neighbours' effect, and thus lead to a greater understanding of the 'friends and neighbours' phenomenon.

The data reveals some interesting points, but the major one is this: despite a modernized, more diverse, fast-paced society, local remains key to Irish voters and Irish politicians. It is abundantly clear from this research that 'friends and neighbours' voting not only exists, but it exists to such an extent that it is a fundamental part of the electoral process. This is the case in rural constituencies – as one may have anticipated – but also in more urban areas. Overall, it provides a fascinating insight into how Irish elections continue to be dominated by the 'pull' of a local candidate.

While laborious, the data gathered for this research is quite extensive and thus allows a broader look at the 'friends and neighbours' effect than has been previously possible in an Irish context. In considering 20 constituencies from both 2011 and 2016, this thesis includes data concerning a total of 289 candidates – 148 from 2011, and 141 from 2016 – and has examined the vote each candidate received in each individual polling station in their constituency.

This allowed the calculation of a basic Pearson's coefficient, which examines the extent of the relationship between the distance to a polling station, and the vote a given candidate received in that polling station. All of this data was recorded.

Inclusion of the individual coefficient for each candidate would be much too protracted and difficult to interpret. Therefore, I have provided average figures for the various sub-headings which will follow, to present an initial insight before a more rigorous test of the data is undertaken in later chapters.

Does it exist?

2016: -0.3998271343

2011: -0.4424124968

The above figures are the overall Pearson coefficient averages, illustrating the relationship between distance and vote. What must first be pointed out is that both indicate that there is a connection between the two, and it does exist: the closer a candidate is to a polling station, the more likely he/she will gain a larger vote. The relationship is not overly strong, but 2011 in particular indicates a definite association between the two.

This – the fact that the 2011 figure suggests a stronger relationship in that election when compared to 2016 – is in itself somewhat of a surprise, given the fact that the 2011 election was marked out as unlike any other and that the campaign, and the lead up to it, was dominated by the virtual collapse of Ireland's economy and the significant economic adjustments that followed. Courtney and Weeks (2018) previously observed that party voting increased in importance in 2011 due to the perilous financial state the country was in, but the above figures suggest that the 'friends and neighbours' effect was still quite a major motivator for voting behaviour.

Table Six: Average Pearson's coefficients for chosen variables, 2011 and 2016

Variable	2011	2016
Rural constituency	-0.5249649981	-0.508769606
Urban constituency	-0.3230062002	-0.2674012742
Male candidates	-0.44406093	-0.4512524812
Female candidates	-0.4149371896	-0.2872582885
Incumbent	-0.3220644472	-0.413519992
Non-incumbent	-0.5390076418	-0.4020119161
FG and FF candidates	-0.439547	-0.3620252214
Others	-0.4383772206	-0.354368465
Two-county constituency	-0.6664980429	-0.6076880487
All other constituencies	-0.4018452859	-0.3663589551

Rural v Urban

Nuala Johnson's 1989 study of 'friends and neighbours' voting in an urban environment revealed that it did exist in such a context. Other studies prior to this (Parker 1982, Sacks 1970) had already helped reveal that the 'friends and neighbours' effect played a major role in rural constituencies. A comparison of the

two, however, has never been conducted – to what extent does this phenomenon impact elections in either context?

The basic correlations reveal that the 'friends and neighbours' effect was much stronger in a rural environment in both 2011 and 2016. This is not particularly surprising, as rural constituencies tend to cover a much bigger geographical area and therefore encourage local voting (Sacks 1970). While some have argued that Ireland, through modernization, is distancing itself further from its historical roots (Crotty, 1999), others have pointed out that many traditions and cultural tendencies have persisted: including the importance of local (Inglis 2008), particularly in rural settings. Nonetheless, there is still evidence of a 'friends and neighbours' effect in the more urban environments, though this weakened somewhat in 2016 when compared with 2011. Reasons for this may include the fact that many of those living in cities are not native of the area, as may be the case with the candidates in the field. This dilutes the sense of localism in relation to voting, as there is an absence of a sense of loyalty to one's local candidate who may indeed be a friend or neighbour.

The impact of gender

At an Oireachtas Joint Committee session on the Constitution in 2010, Professor David Farrell commented under questioning that the implementation of gender quotas could help 'dilute' the localised nature of politics in this country; the dilution of, as put forward by Fine Gael's Michael D'Arcy at the same meeting, that politicians have 'their own patch'. (2010)

It should be noted that gender quotas were in place for the 2016 general election, whereby parties were told to ensure that 30pc of their candidates were either male or female or run the risk of losing a portion of their state funding. All parties complied. However, there were no gender quotas in place for the 2011 election.

The table above shows the Pearson's coefficient average for both male and female candidates in both elections. What is noticeable immediately is the significant weakening of the relationship between distance and vote for female candidates in the 2016 election, compared with the 2011 figure. The male candidates figure remains relatively consistent in both elections. Of the 148 candidates included in this research in 2011, only 23 were women, representing a total of 15.5pc. Of the 141 candidates included from the 2016 election, 39 were women: representing a total of 27.7pc.

The increase in the correlation for female candidates relating to the 2016 election is interesting. Writing post-2016, Brennan and Buckley (2017) said that gender quotas 'somewhat mollified informal and gender norms.' (2017:33) An initial observation from the figures above would validate this statement: female candidates show less of a relationship between their vote and distance, and this contributed – though may not have been the sole reason for – a decrease in the Pearson's coefficient in an overall sense in 2016.

A more thorough examination of the data may go some way to explaining this discrepancy. In 2011, of the 23 women who were included in this research, only three entered the election holding no political office: Aine Collins (FG) in Cork North West, Mary Lou McDonald (SF) in Dublin Central and Marcella Corcoran Kennedy (FG) in Laois-Offaly. However, of the three, only Aine Collins had never previously held any office of any kind: Mary Lou McDonald enjoyed a high profile as a Dublin MEP from 2004 to 2009, and Marcella Corcoran-Kennedy served as a councillor for the Ferbane electoral area on Offaly County Council for ten years between 1999 and 2009.

The female candidates included in the 2016 data set were considerably less experienced. Of the 39 included, 11 entered the election holding no political office, or having no prior experience. Therefore, it is not unfair to assume that they had neither the experience nor resources to establish a strong local base as a sitting

office holder may have had – and this may go some way to explaining the weaker relationship for women in 2016 between distance and vote received.

Incumbency

Connected to the impact of gender is the issue of incumbency, and the perceived benefit of being an incumbent at election time. Several academics have noted this as a major obstacle to female candidates being elected – because so few are incumbents (Galligan 2009; Galligan Laver, Carney 1999; TJ White 2006).

The benefits of incumbency are significant: an increased profile, a seat at the table, the ability to make decisions, extra resources and, most importantly in this context, an opportunity to build up a base locally. In this regard, incumbents are well placed to benefit from a 'friends and neighbours' effect if they have experienced time in office and have worked to establish a strong local bailiwick. However, this can also work the other way: if a candidate is an incumbent, he/she is the TD for the whole constituency strictly speaking, not just a certain area. Therefore, particularly if he/she is the only party TD in the constituency, the local TD has an opportunity to build a constituency-wide profile and network, which could serve to extend his/her ability to win votes across the constituency, as opposed to just in their local area.

The correlation averages for both elections reveal an interesting trend. The 2016 election shows little or no discrepancy: incumbent or non-incumbent, the 'friends and neighbours' effect was similar for both incumbents and non-incumbents, on average. The 2011 election differs in this regard, however. It is clear here that non-incumbents showed a much stronger relationship between distance and vote than incumbents.

Of the 76 non-incumbent candidates in 2011, 57 were local county councillors. The work of a councillor is intensely local and is focused on a more local area than that of a TD. Presumably aware well in advance that they would be contesting the

general election, local councillors may have attempted to shore up support locally and their own local base before seeking votes further afield. This may partly explain the discrepancy between the two figures above, as opposed to the 2016 figures where only 39 of the non-incumbents entered the election as local councillors.

The 'big two' versus the rest

The traditional political battle in Ireland has always been between the two parties that emerged after the Civil War: Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. No government in the history of the state has not included either of these parties – and whoever was not in government led the opposition. Simply put, these parties have dominated Irish politics.

Along with dominance at government level, both parties have established strong local bases around the country. They have branches, or cumann, in virtually every local area, along with a strong network of local councillors in local government. A tradition in activity locally across the county from both Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil means their local organizations are much more active, and more effective, than those of other parties.

What all of this may suggest is a greater ability on the part of these two parties to cultivate a local vote, given the strength of their organizations on the ground. However, this does not appear to impact on the relationship between distance and vote.

Interestingly, both years show relatively no difference between the relationship between distance and vote for either grouping. Indeed, the major difference that appears in the table is the lower figure for both cohorts in 2011 when compared with 2016. On the basis of these figures, there is no tangible difference in the relationship between distance and vote for Fine Gael or Fianna Fáil candidates when compared with candidates from other parties.

Geographical considerations – the importance of county lines

The formation of Irish constituencies for elections – local, general and European – can change from time to time following recommendations from the Constituency Commission. Generally speaking, changes to constituencies occur based upon CSO Census figures, which indicate an increase or decrease in the population of various areas. This forms a central part of the constituency commission's decision process.

The change of constituencies is subject to much debate, and often public anger. Of particular angst to voters, judging by reaction historically, is their county being partitioned to make up part of another constituency. A recent example of this is the Sligo-Leitrim constituency, which, as well as including both Sligo and Leitrim in their entirety, now incorporates part of south Donegal and north Roscommon. The inclusion of the wider Boyle area in Roscommon was described as 'outrageous butchery' by sitting Roscommon-Galway TD Eugene Murphy (2017).

The anger that meets such decisions reinforces the importance of boundaries – and particularly county boundaries – in Irish culture generally. Generations old, county lines signify the end or the beginning of something important: local government administration, health services, sporting affiliations, and so on. The question I ask here is what impact this has on the 'friends and neighbours' phenomenon.

To do this, I have examined the Pearson's coefficient for the constituencies that contain two counties in their entirety, and nothing else: in 2016, this was Cavan-Monaghan and Longford-Westmeath; in the 2011 database, this included Longford-Westmeath and Laois-Offaly.

There is a clear distinction between the two sets: in the constituencies with two counties, there is a far greater indication of a relationship between distance and vote as compared to other constituencies around the country. Why is this the case?

Voters vote along county lines, and parties often adhere to this rule by running a candidate in either county in order to effectively manage their vote. It is clear from the data I have gathered that very few candidates receive any sort of significant vote in these constituencies outside of their home county. The data echoes the sentiment expressed by former Senator and close confidant of former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds, Micky Doherty, who, when discussing vote transfer patterns in the old Longford-Roscommon constituency, noted that 'votes don't swim' across the River Shannon, which separated the two counties. (McGee, 2015)

This shrewd observation, colorfully conveyed, was entirely accurate and can be applied to most two-county constituencies. First preference votes rarely cross the county boundary, and transfers too can be of a similar persuasion. It is clear from the average correlations that the 'friends and neighbours' effect is much more pronounced as a result.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to provide an initial insight into the data using a basic Pearson's coefficient average for the various subheadings outlined in Table Six.

The initial impression suggests that the 'friends and neighbours' effect was an important part of the general elections of 2011 and 2016, and in some cases was particularly strong. Significant differences also emerge with regard to certain variables: it appears stronger in the case of rural constituencies as against urban constituencies; female candidates, in 2016, display a weaker relationship compared to their male counterparts; and constituencies included that contain two counties show a much stronger 'friends and neighbours' effect than other constituencies.

While a more rigorous analysis – which follows in the coming chapter - is required to add weight to these figures, the initial indications provide an interesting

perception of the ‘friends and neighbours’ effect at the 2011 and 2016 general elections.

The intricacies of 'Friends and Neighbours' voting

Age

The impact of age on the 'friends and neighbours' effect is somewhat of an unknown quantity. Given the lack of young TDs over the lifetime of Dáil Éireann, it could well be the case that young candidates struggle to get elected because they have not had the requisite time or resources that their older colleagues may have had to expand their political base. This leads to a highly concentrated local vote – in an area where the young candidate is well-known – but they fail to generate sufficient support outside of that area, and thus the relationship between vote and distance for younger candidates appears stronger than the comparable figure for older candidates. That is one such theory that I would expect to be borne out in the course of this research. Similarly, it should be expected that older candidates will show less of a relationship, as most of those in that cohort have established themselves within their own constituencies and are not first-time candidates, and therefore have more of a capability to gain votes from outside of their own 'friends and neighbours'.

As an initial observation, the table below investigates the relationship between the 'friends and neighbours' effect – this being the given candidate's Pearson's coefficient for same – and the age of the candidate.

Table Seven: Pearson's coefficient for age and the 'friends and neighbours' effect

Year	Correlation between 'Friends and Neighbours' and age of candidate
2011	0.07053124
2016	-0.006281

As is evident, the correlation reveals there to be little or no relationship between the two in either 2011 or 2016. There is a minor change between the two elections which would suggest a slight move towards a stronger relationship, but overall it is clear that age plays very little role in what sort of a 'friends and neighbours' effect a candidate manages to win.

In order to further understand the impact of age on the 'friends and neighbours' effect, however, a deeper insight into the various age categories is required.

The tables below illustrate the various average Pearson's coefficient figures for six different age groupings. Some are more densely populated than others – for example, the dataset only includes one candidate over the age of 70 in 2011, that being Mary O'Rourke (FF). While this somewhat hinders the drawing of weighty conclusions in regard to certain categories, it nonetheless offers a deeper insight into the 'friends and neighbours' effect for candidates of a various age.

Table Eight: Age group breakdown and the 'friends and neighbours' Pearson's correlation, 2011

Age group	Number of candidates	Correlation average
Under 30	9	-0.5423212289
30-40	28	-0.5212347453
40-50	48	-0.4838657316
50-60	45	-0.476086814
60-70	17	-0.3157790765
70 plus	1	-0.6952924

Table Nine: Age group breakdown and the 'friends and neighbours' Pearson's correlation, 2016

Age group	Number of candidates	Correlation average
Under 30	10	-0.363113082
30-40	31	-0.4097823877
40-50	46	-0.4015703409
50-60	25	-0.3654574556
60-70	26	-0.435572446
70 plus	3	-0.4306952333

The level of difference in both elections when one views the above tables is quite staggering. In 2011, there is quite a distinct pattern where, as the candidates become older, the relationship between vote and distance becomes weaker. However, the 2016 figures offer little in the way of a pattern – and contrast quite substantially with the 2011 figures. For example, the group with the strongest correlation in 2011 is under 30s (excluding the 70-plus group, which includes just one candidate), yet the group with the weakest correlation in 2016 is under 30s. The figures for this age cohort, and the 70-plus cohort, should be taken with some degree of caution due to the low number of total candidates in each.

The bulk of candidates are congregated between the ages of 30 and 70, and a trend can be observed amongst these candidates in both elections. The closer a candidate was to 70, the weaker the relationship between vote and distance became, except in the case of 2016 when the 60-70 cohort shows a strengthening of that relationship, relative to the other categories. Nonetheless, it does appear to be the case that candidates of a lower age profile gain a significant local vote, relative to the total vote they receive.

Why is this the case? It could be argued that younger candidates are less well established, and thus receive more votes locally than elsewhere simply because they received so few outside of their home area. Older candidates are likely to be more experienced candidates – this will be discussed in the next sub-heading – and therefore have a bigger profile and thus less of a reliance on a local vote.

Political experience

The influence of political experience on the 'friends and neighbours' effect should be significant. Similar to age, the more political experience a candidate has earned should benefit him/her in terms of the building up of a local base and establishing a constituency-wide profile. The importance of incumbency, particularly in an Irish context, has been the subject of much academic discussion with most concluding

that being an incumbent brings significant electoral advantage. (Buckley, Mariani and White 2014; Galligan 2009)

An alternative view could also credibly be advanced: that because a candidate lacks experience and profile, similar to that of age, he/she earns a strong 'friends and neighbours' vote because, through lack of experience, he/she does not have the ability to win votes from outside of their home bailiwick.

In order to gain an initial insight into the impact of experience, the table below considers years of experience with the Pearson's coefficient for the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Table Ten: Average's Pearson's coefficient and the political experience of a candidate, 2011 and 2016

Year	Correlation
2011	0.06165016
2016	-0.030019

As with age, it does not appear that years of experience has any major bearing on the 'friends and neighbours' effect, with the correlation between experience and 'friends and neighbours' showing little or no relationship in either 2011 or 2016, though there does appear to be a slight shift towards a strengthening of that relationship in 2016. Nonetheless, it is interesting that the above figures show the lack of a relationship between the two: and reveals that, in these two elections at least, whether one had no experience or had previously served for 30 years, it had little impact on the 'friends and neighbours' effect. There is a way in which this could be interpreted: new candidates with little or no experience get a 'friends and neighbours' vote because their profile is strongest locally, and they do not have the resources or a track record of service in other areas to win their votes; established candidates win a strong local vote because they have a track record of service locally and a well-known face.

To discuss these points further, I have manipulated the data to break it down into averages for eight experience brackets – from those who entered either election as a first-time political candidate having never held office, to some of the longest serving politicians the country has ever had. The 'years of experience' category considers any time in any office, not specifically as a TD, councillor etc.

Table Eleven: Years of experience and the 'friends and neighbours' effect, 2011

Years of experience	Number of candidates	Correlation average
0	12	-0.4969026092
1-5	25	-0.5450151104
5-10	30	-0.353218254
10-15	44	-0.4795641463
15-20	5	-0.48257724
20-25	14	-0.3938383793
25-30	11	-0.5708154364
30 plus	7	-0.3429694671

Table Twelve: Years of experience and the 'friends and neighbours' effect, 2016

Years of experience	Number of candidates	Correlation average
0	17	-0.2197866663
1-5	17	-0.4435668553
5-10	31	-0.5246603806
10-15	23	-0.3858793561
15-20	27	-0.4234683126
20-25	6	-0.2308198233
25-30	7	-0.4092511429
30 plus	13	-0.4465992462

The above tables show no discernable pattern. In fact, there are many contradictions: for example, for candidates who entered the election having held no political office, the relationship between distance and vote for these candidates contrasts significantly: in 2011, it is very strong, but it is the weakest category in 2016.

Some interesting trends can be observed. In 2011, the trend is as anticipated, generally speaking: the more experienced a candidate was, the weaker the relationship between distance and vote was, except for the 25-30 category which showed the strongest relationship. In 2016, there is no trend: there is no indication of any pattern. The fact that candidates with no experience entering the election show the weakest relationship is a surprise: these candidates would be expected to have a stronger correlation given their lack of profile compared to those already in office heading into the election. What this could potentially indicate is a change in campaigning techniques by this cohort – for example, a greater emphasis on social media campaigning could partly explain this trend.

Table Thirteen: Office held going into the election and the 'friends and neighbours' effect, 2011

Office held	Number	Correlation average
Outgoing TD	60	-0.3376997822
Senator	11	-0.4189301765
Councillor	67	-0.5066581112
Candidate	10	-0.423655224

Table Fourteen: Office held going into the election and the 'friends and neighbours' effect, 2016

Office held	Number	Correlation average
Outgoing TD	73	-0.4154718223
Senator	6	-0.5908285167
Councillor	42	-0.460664345
Candidate	20	-0.1962377085

The above tables take into consideration the office held by the candidate – if any – prior to the election. This is the role that the candidate would have fulfilled in the lead up to the election, which would have had a major bearing on their standing with the electorate, and their ability to cultivate a personal vote.

In both cases, the outgoing TD shows a weaker relationship than most categories between distance and vote. This is unsurprising: TDs enjoy a high profile through media, holding clinics and generally going about their legislative and constituency work enables the cultivation of a larger, constituency-wide profile. The role of Senator is also a national role though with perhaps less media coverage, and there is a major contrast in the average figure for these politicians between 2011 and 2016. It should be noted that only six senators are included in the data base in 2016. Nonetheless, in conducting interviews for this research, one senator admitted that her work in the Seanad over the five-year period was largely directed towards winning a Dáil seat – and therefore she constantly carried out work in the chamber on behalf of constituents. This may go some way to explaining the strong correlation for Senators here: while its purpose is to scrutinize legislation, oftentimes the Seanad becomes a miniature Dáil with former TDs rehabilitating having lost their Dáil seat, or aspirational TDs looking to advance their careers.

The most surprising aspect of the above figures is that of the candidates who held no office prior to the 2016 election: this category registered, by some distance, the

weakest relationship between distance and vote – in fact, the average correlation would indicate little or no relationship between the two. A further breakdown of the figure may explain why this is the case: 12 of the 20 candidates came from parties outside of the traditional triumvirate of Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Labour, and thus may not have had the benefit of strong local support through cumanns or branches. The 2016 election revealed many new campaigning opportunities – social media, for example, was widely used by candidates across the board. It may have been the case that these candidates, in breaking with traditional campaigning methods, placed more of an emphasis on online canvassing and promotion as opposed to traditional vote-seeking methods.

Running mate or not?

The PR-STV Irish electoral system provides parties with an opportunity to run more than one party candidate in the same constituency in an effort to win more than one seat. This creates a somewhat unique dynamic, with intra-party competition often fiercer than the competition for votes with other candidates (Gallagher, Suiter 2017). There is an element of opinion that because of the PR-STV system, constituency work – as opposed to legislative work - is encouraged in order to stave off internal party competition within one's own constituency (Gallagher, Suiter 2017).

The effect of a running mate(s) on the 'friends and neighbours' effect, all things considered, should be quite significant. In an effort to ensure the party vote is maximized, political parties will carve up constituencies into bailiwicks or areas which certain party candidates can canvass exclusively. This is usually an area surrounding the candidate's hometown or area. Therefore, the expectation is that candidates with no running mate display a lesser 'friends and neighbours' effect, because they are allowed canvass constituency-wide and are not confined to one designated area around their base. The following tables provide an average Pearson's coefficient for candidates with a running mate, and also those without. For the purposes of this table, Independent candidates have been included as being

a candidate with no running mate, with two notable exceptions for the 2016 figure: The Healy-Rae brothers, Michael and Danny, are considered running mates given the fact that they specified a very clear vote management strategy; and in Longford-Westmeath both Kevin 'Boxer' Moran and James Morgan ran as Independent Alliance candidates, which was a grouping of Independent candidates under the same banner.

Table Fifteen: The impact of a running mate on the 'friends and neighbours' effect, 2011 and 2016

Year	Running mate	No running mate
2011	-0.5031307421	-0.3621409183
2016	-0.407076214	-0.3870181454

The Pearson's coefficient average figures confirm the expectation that having a running mate increases the importance of the 'friends and neighbours' effect. In both 2011 and 2016, the addition of a running mate ensured a more pronounced 'friends and neighbours' effect. However, it is interesting to note that the difference between the two averages is far more significant in 2011 than 2016. These averages consider any candidates with a running mate – the number of running mates is not specified.

Table Sixteen: The impact of multiple running mates on the 'friends and neighbours' effect, 2011 and 2016

Year	No running mate	One running mate	Two or more running mates
2011	-0.4372377838	-0.3805419474	-0.6099852458
2016	-0.3870181454	-0.3639269621	-0.5274399168

In Table Sixteen, we can see the quite obvious impact of having more than one running mate. The figures reveal that in both elections those with no running mate registered a Pearson's coefficient that indicated a stronger 'friends and neighbours' effect than those with one running mate. This may partially be explained by the fact that Independent candidates were included as candidates with no running mate. Independent candidates are more likely to have a stronger local effect, as in many cases they do not have a support structure outside of their own local area. When the Independent candidates are removed from the calculation, the following are the average figures:

Table Seventeen: The impact of multiple running mates on the 'friends and neighbours' effect, excluding Independents, 2011 and 2016

Year	No running mate	One running mate	Two or more running mates
2011	-0.3774141093	-0.3805419474	-0.6099852458
2016	-0.3324145959	-0.363926621	-0.5274399168

When Independent candidates are excluded, a very definite pattern emerges: the addition of running mate marginally increases the 'friends and neighbours' effect, and the addition of two or more running mates substantially increases the 'friends and neighbours' effect. This is not surprising – when three candidates run in the same constituency of the same party, it would be foolish of party strategists not to implement some sort of vote management strategy to avoid internal conflict – which may arise irrespective of any pre-arranged strategies – and an unbalanced spread of the vote whereby one candidate is too far behind another to benefit sufficiently from party transfers. In the case of parties fielding more than two candidates in a constituency, only two engaged in this practice: Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil. Fine Gael did so in seven constituencies out of 20 in the 2011 dataset, and five out of 20 in the 2016 dataset; Fianna Fáil did so in three in 2011, and three again in 2016. This is reflective of both parties' popularity whereby they felt there was sufficient support for the party to win more than one seat in a given

constituency. Indeed, the fielding of three or more candidates usually occurs in big, sprawling constituencies: Galway West, Longford-Westmeath and Laois-Offaly are just some examples of such cases in this study. However, aside from party instructions, it is likely that in a congested field, candidates themselves would focus their efforts on their own home area where they would have a ready-made advantage over other candidates.

The above tables also underline the effect an electoral system has on voter behavior. If Ireland used a system with single seat constituencies, such as 'First Past the Post', for example, presumably the 'friends and neighbours' effect would be less, as is the case in the 'no running mate' column which shows the weakest relationship between distance and vote. While other variables must be taken into account before making such a conclusion, it is fair to say that for party candidates, the inclusion of one running mate or multiple running mates intensifies the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Gender

Gender has been a regular topic in Irish electoral analysis, particularly in recent years due to the introduction of gender quotas for the 2016 election, which stated that parties must ensure that the minority sex makes up at least 30pc of their total number of candidates – be it male or female, as the case may be - or run the risk of losing state funding. The introduction of gender quotas was largely an effort to promote more females in politics and led to more female candidates than ever before and more female TDs than ever before – 35 female TDs took office following the 2016 election. (Buckley et al, 2016)

The question for this research is what impact gender has on the 'friends and neighbours' effect - if any. In concluding their analysis of the first gender quota election, Brennan and Buckley observed that gender quotas 'somewhat modified

localism' (2016). While this may have been directed more toward the case of candidate selection, it also applies to the way in which candidates sought and received votes. The aim of this research is to examine the role gender plays with regard to the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Table Eighteen: 'Local' vote averages (percentage) for male and female candidates, 2011 and 2016

Year	Male	Female
2011	24.1	17.9
2016	23.1	17.3

The above table takes into consideration the vote received by candidates in their 'local' boxes. For the purposes of this table, 'local' was deemed to be polling stations within a 15km radius in rural constituencies, and within 2km in urban constituencies. The figures included are average percentage figures for an individual box and offer an insight into the ability of candidates across the gender divide to win a local vote. This enables an examination of how the 'friends and neighbours' effect varies between men and women.

There is quite a clear difference in the local vote received by male candidates, as against their female counterparts. In both elections, male candidates appear capable of earning a far more significant share of the vote in their immediate local area – in both cases, the gap between the two averages is approximately 6pc.

The expectation that because female candidates are generally less experienced they would win a stronger local vote as they have little profile outside of their home area is exposed here as being a flawed assumption. Clearly, male candidates, on average, secure a higher local vote. The reality that many female candidates are not natives to the areas in which they live, having moved there to live with a spouse, should also be considered. This may limit their ability to penetrate the 'local' vote, due to them not being a local, strictly speaking.

In speaking with candidates – both male and female – it is not the case that their campaigning methods differ greatly, or that they are treated differently by their party or grouping in terms of areas to canvass etc.

However, former Fianna Fáil cabinet minister Mary Hanafin did suggest an interesting difference between first-time candidates and those seeking re-election, which may feed into this discussion. In conversation with the author with regard to this research, Ms Hanafin suggested that in her experience, it was important that first-time candidates stood on a more national platform, so voters saw them as prospective TDs. Interestingly, Ms Hanafin went on to say that local issues and 'friends and neighbours' voting becomes more important when one is seeking re-election. Given the fact that, in 2011, only a third of female candidates included in the dataset (8/24) were incumbents, and even less in 2016 (11/39), Ms Hanafin's claim may reveal a different approach on the part of female candidates and new candidates generally, and thus go some way to explaining the above discrepancy between male and female candidates.

Table Nineteen: The average 'local' vote (percentage) for successful and unsuccessful female candidates, 2011 and 2016

Year	Female elected	Female not elected
2011	23.5	12.2
2016	24.7	15.3

Brian Hayes, Fine Gael Director of Elections 2016: *'In the immediate local area, you'd really want to be getting 35-45pc'.*

The importance of earning a strong 'friends and neighbours' vote has been stated by numerous academics and politicians – including FG's Brian Hayes who offered the author the above observation – as being crucial to the success of the candidate. Given the fact that the first table indicates a distinct gap between males and

females when it comes to the 'friends and neighbours' effect, it may highlight another barrier to female candidates being successful at election time.

The above table considers the 'local' vote of female candidates in total, dividing them by whether they were elected or not. Unsurprisingly, those candidates who succeeded earned quite a substantial local vote when compared with unsuccessful candidates. What this does confirm is the importance of a strong 'friends and neighbours' effect for both male and female candidates: it does play a major role – potentially a decisive role - in being successful. The lack of success of female candidates across the board may reveal an area in which female candidates need to improve in order to increase their representation, even with gender quotas in place.

Party vs Independents

Examining the apparent decline in party attachment when it comes to voting behavior in Irish elections, Courteney and Weeks (2018) observed that voters are now more likely to vote for candidates as opposed to parties. This has also been illustrated in election exit polls, when voters were asked about reasons for casting their vote the way they did. (RTÉ, 2016)

The detachment of voters from parties has coincided with a period of unprecedented success for Independent candidates. Independents currently command significant authority on both the government benches and in opposition, with a number of Independents currently holding Ministerial roles in government.

Independent candidates often run on local issue platforms, and therefore, one could assume, will benefit greatly from the 'friends and neighbours' effect as they are capable of drawing votes from all types of voters who may vote for a certain party but, with a local candidate in the race of no particular political persuasion, may be convinced to vote for the local Independent.

Table Twenty: Independent and party candidates Pearson's coefficient averages, 2011 and 2016

Year	Independent	Party
2011	-0.5343492643	-0.4016991276
2016	-0.5576049667	-0.4282494882

The above table shows the Pearson's coefficient for the Independent candidates compared with candidates of a certain party. While there are more party candidates present in the data set, it is clear here that Independents had the ability in both elections to win a stronger 'friends and neighbours' vote. This, of course, involves both push and pull factors: Independents may be restricted to seeking votes just in their own local area due to a lack of resources and profile, but they may also focus their resources on getting a strong local vote to benefit from the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Table Twenty-One: Top five 'local' vote winners, 2016

Candidate	Number of stations	Vote (avg %)	Total vote (%)
Michael Fitzmaurice (Ind - Ros-Gal)	8	61.3	21.4
Denis Naughten (Ind - Ros-Gal)	13	55.3	30.1
Eamonn Ó Cuiv (FF - Gal West)	6	52.1	15.3
Kevin 'Boxer' Moran (Ind – Long-Wmeath)	14	52.1	13.4
Sean Canney (Ind – Galway East)	11	51.3	18.9

Table Twenty-Two: Top five 'local vote winners, 2011

Candidate	Number of stations	Vote (avg %)	Total vote (%)
Brendan Griffin (FG – Kerry South)	6	63.3	20
John O'Mahony (FG – Mayo)	3	54.8	11.7
Denis Naughten (FG – Roscommon-South Leitrim)	12	54.2	21
Enda Kenny (FG – Mayo)	21	54	23.6
Eamonn Ó Cuiv (FF – Galway West)	4	52.1	12.6

Tables 21 and 22 illustrate the highest 'local' vote getters in both elections. 'Local' is considered to be within 15km of their base in a rural constituency, and within two kilometres in an urban constituency. What is interesting to note is the prominence of Independent candidates in the table for 2016 (Independent candidates are highlighted in bold text), as against the 2011 table where there are none in the top five. This in some ways underlines Weeks and Courteney's (2018) assertion that the 2011 was an election where electors voted for parties more so than candidates, due to the dire economic circumstances of the time. However, a clear shift to Independents in 2016 benefitted several candidates, including those in the above table.

If we look closer into the figures of those aforementioned Independents in 2016 and look solely at their most 'local' box – ie. The box closest to their home, we see a further indication of the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Table Twenty-Three: 2016 top Independent 'local' vote winners – their vote in their nearest polling booth (percentage)

Candidate	Distance and polling station	Vote (%)
Michael Fitzmaurice	1.1km – Glinsk NS	82.4
Sean Canney	2.8km – Belclare NS	73.9
Denis Naughten	3.8km – Drum Hall	72.1
Kevin 'Boxer' Moran	2.2km - Cornamaddy NS	56.6

The table shows a huge local vote for all four of these candidates in their most 'local' boxes in 2016. All of the candidates benefitted from a variety of factors in securing such significant local backing: only in the case of Kevin Moran, an Athlone-based candidate, were there other candidates in the immediate vicinity vying for the same local vote.

Michael Fitzmaurice's 'friends and neighbours' effect is the strongest across both elections and all 289 candidates included in this research. In order to further understand how he was able to garner such a local vote, I put it to him that he must have focused heavily on local issues to earn such a high proportion of his 'friends and neighbours' support.

"You'd probably do that [focus exclusively on local issues] if you were parish pump, but I'm not that. Of course, I'm involved locally, but my campaign was about general stuff – roads and that – but every national issue is a local issue as well. I'd say it was about a 50-50 balance between local and national. I think people who vote in the General Election want to see that you can do the national. Some politicians in the Dáil are very local, but not everyone is. Maybe down the road I will suffer or others will suffer from not specifically focusing on local issues, but I don't do it really."

"I've been asked to go to a meeting in Tipperary in two weeks, and I'll go. I'm asked a lot of place all over Ireland. People are asking me from all over – Donegal to Cork. If I was solely looking for votes, I wouldn't be doing it. But what you do nationally, and right, is good for the local. Like, if a post office closed in my area, it's the same as a post office closing somewhere else in Ireland. It's about local communities."

The approach of Fitzmaurice echoes the sentiments expressed by Mary Hanafin that voters look for a candidate capable of performing on national issues. If that is the case, and the candidate is local, it appears that the 'friends and neighbours' effect is greatly enhanced.

All in all, it appears that Independents, intentionally or unintentionally, received a greater 'friends and neighbours' vote than that of party candidates in 2016. This is for a combination of reasons, but the main one being that they are well-known in their own local area and are capable of drawing votes from across party lines in the immediate vicinity. Doing so for Independent candidates helps to offset their inability to win votes outside of their immediate area that many party candidates are capable of winning due to their party affiliation.

Rural or Urban?

Interestingly, the previous sub-heading in considering the highest 'local' vote received by candidates in a certain polling station shows that the highest votes received all came in what would be described as rural constituencies and counties: Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Kerry, Longford and Westmeath.

Previous research in this area has focused predominantly on rural areas – for example, Parker (1982) and Sacks (1970) focused their efforts on constituencies in Galway and Donegal respectively. While Johnson (1989) advanced the study of 'friends and neighbours' voting in an urban context, there does appear to be a presumption that it is much more of a consideration in a rural environment. Sacks

(1970) went so far as to say there were different political cultures in different parts of the country.

Earlier, the initial data suggested a far greater significance in the relationship between distance and vote in a rural constituency as opposed to an urban one. However, further analysis is required before making a final conclusion.

In order to achieve a greater insight into the difference between rural and urban, a comparative analysis is necessary. In order to compare urban and rural, I have one rural and one urban constituency to examine the 'friends and neighbours' effect in both. The constituencies used for this purpose are 1) Mayo, a rural constituency in the west of Ireland, which elected five TDs in 2011 and four TDs in 2016 and 2) Dublin Central, an urban constituency in Dublin City which elected four TDs in 2011 and three TDs in 2016. Interestingly, these are the largest (Mayo) and smallest (Dublin Central) constituencies in the country, judging by square kilometres. (Kavanagh, 2016)

To examine the 'friends and neighbours' effect in its most authentic form, this analysis will first investigate the vote received by candidates in either constituency in their most 'local' box – that is, the polling station that is closest to them in geographic distance. This ensures that it, quite literally, considers the vote candidates received from their own friends and neighbours. This data is included in the tables that follow.

Dublin Central

Table Twenty-Four: Dublin Central candidates – local box, local box percentage vote, overall percentage vote, 2011

Candidate	Polling station	Distance	Vote (%)	Total constituency vote (%)
Aine Clancy (Lab)	St Francis Xavier	0.35km	8.3	10.2
Joe Costello (Lab)	St Gabriels NS	0.16km	27.4	18.2
Pascal Donohue (FG)	St Peter's Club	0.6km	31.8	20
Mary Fitzpatrick (FF)	Christ the King NS	0.19km	12.5	10.3
Mary Lou McDonald (SF)	St Joseph's NS (Cabra Road)	0.75km	18.1	12.9
Maureen O'Sullivan (Ind)	St Joseph's NS (East Wall)	0.75km	27.7	11.6

Table Twenty-Five: Dublin Central candidates – local box, local box percentage vote, overall percentage vote, 2016

Candidate	Polling station	Distance	Vote (%)	Total vote (%)
Christy Burke (Ind)	North Strand PH	2.1km	19.5	10.2
Joe Costello (Lab)	St Gabriels NS	0.16km	14.3	8.6
Pascal Donohue (FG)	St Peter's Club	0.6km	30.7	13.7
Mary Fitzpatrick (FF)	Christ the King NS	0.19km	14.9	10.6
Gary Gannon (SD)	St Francais Xavier NS	0.22km	12.3	9.4
Mary Lou McDonald (SF)	St Joseph's NS (Navan Road)	0.65km	30.6	24.5
Maureen O'Sullivan (Ind)	St Joseph's NS (East Wall)	0.4km	18.3	8.5
Cieran Perry (Ind)	St Gabriels NS	0.9km	3.4	5.3

Table Twenty-Six: Mayo candidates - local box, local box percentage vote, overall percentage vote, 2011

Candidate	Polling station	Distance	Vote (%)	Total vote (%)
Dara Calleary (FF)	Sean Duffy Centre	1.7km	29.8	11.5
Enda Kenny (FG)	Breaffy NS	3.8km	59.9	23.6
Michael Kilcoyne (Ind)	Family Centre	1.7km	14.5	5.3
Michelle Mulherin (FG)	Ballina BNS	1.2km	44	11.9
John O'Mahony (FG)	Kilmovee NS	6.6km	57.6	11.7
Michael Ring (FG)	Westport Quay NS	1.4km	54.7	17.8

Table Twenty-Seven: Mayo candidates - local box, local box percentage vote, overall percentage vote, 2016

Candidate	Polling station	Distance	Vote (%)	Total vote (%)
Dara Calleary (FF)	Sean Duffy Centre	1.6km	47	14.6
Lisa Chambers (FF)	Ballintubber NS	2.4km	37.7	12.8
Rose Conway Walsh (SF)	Binghamstown NS	4km	54.1	9.9
Jerry Cowley (Ind)	Mulranny NS	0.9km	58.1	5.3
Enda Kenny (FG)	Breaffy NS	3.8km	49.5	20.7
Michelle Mulherin (FG)	Ballina BNS	1.2km	30.5	12.2
Michael Ring (FG)	Westport Quay NS	1.6km	53.2	17.5

Dublin Central and Mayo contrast significantly with regard to the 'friends and neighbours' effect. It is clear that, despite the fact that in Dublin Central all bar one candidate across both elections lived within a kilometre of a polling station, they failed to receive as significant a vote in the station closest to them as candidates in Mayo did. Indeed, the gap is very significant between the two – the average vote in Dublin Central over both elections is 19.5pc; in Mayo it is 45.3pc.

As expected, the 'friends and neighbours' effect is more of a factor in a rural constituency such as Mayo. Primarily, the reason for a bigger 'friends and neighbours' effect in rural constituencies is a question of geography. In a sprawling county such as Mayo, local takes on a different meaning to local in Dublin Central.

For example, it could be the case in north Mayo that people there in villages such as Ballycastle, Crossmolina and Bonniconlon regard the Ballina candidates Michelle Mulherin (FG) and Dara Calleary (FF) as the local candidates because they are from that broad area. Yet in Dublin Central, it is likely to be the case that local is someone who lives in the same housing estate or along the same road because the constituency is much more condensed than Mayo. Similarly, electors in Dublin Central may dismiss the 'local' factor altogether because it does not really play a role: all candidates are within walking distance, literally speaking, of anywhere in the constituency. It would be very easy for these candidates to canvass the whole constituency. The same cannot be said of Mayo, where it is some 103 kilometres, for example, between Charlestown in the east of the county and Belmullet in the west. This geographical obscurity, as referenced by Sacks in his study on Donegal (1970), is most certainly a relevant factor in attempting to understand why the 'friends and neighbours' effect is more significant in rural areas.

The political approach of parties also differs in these two constituencies, and has a major impact on the prominence, or lack thereof, of 'friends and neighbours' voting. In the case of Dublin Central, only one party ran two candidates: that being the Labour Party in 2011 with sitting TD Joe Costello having a running mate in local councillor Áine Clancy. What this means is that vote management was virtually non-existent in Dublin Central, as all parties (bar the aforementioned example) had just one candidate in the field and therefore that candidate was able to canvass the whole constituency, instead of having to follow a party directive to stick to particular areas in order to balance out the party vote.

Mayo, in this case, could not be more different: Fine Gael ran four candidates in 2011 and three in 2016, and on both occasions employed a strict vote management strategy. Similarly, Fianna Fáil also employed a vote management strategy in both elections. This has the impact of creating a somewhat false 'friends and neighbours' effect, in so far as candidates are forced to focus their efforts on their own local area, broadly speaking, because the party has directed them to do so.

Regression analysis

A regression analysis will consider the level of significance of the six variables with regard to the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Before engaging in this analysis, it should be set out how these variables were measured given that not all were measured in the same way. The measurement of the age of the candidate was straightforward and is measured in years. No calculation was taken in regard to months over ie. If a candidate was aged 40 years and 6 months, they were considered for this analysis as 40 years old. In terms of the political experience analysis, experience was considered to be any time spent in a political office of any description. This was measured in years. Therefore, a candidate contesting an election for the first time was considered to have 0 years of political experience.

Three other variables were coded either one or two. The way in which this is applied is as follows: for gender, female was one, male as two; candidates with a running mate were one, and candidates without running mate(s) was two. Party affiliation was also coded: Independent was considered one, and party two.

The rural and urban constituency split required some decision-making in regard to what is termed as a rural constituency, and what would be considered urban. Ultimately, it was decided that any constituency that was solely based in an urban area – that is, not including a significant rural hinterland – was considered to be an urban constituency. Therefore, this included nine constituencies in both data sets that were in city-based environments: all of the Dublin constituencies along with Cork North Central, Cork South Central and Limerick City. Though the likes of Galway West and Waterford do contain major urban areas, it was decided that these be included as rural constituencies given the vast rural areas that also compose major parts of these constituencies. For the purposes of the regression analysis, an urban constituency was one and a rural constituency was two.

Table Twenty-Eight: SPSS analysis of the 'friends and neighbours' effect at the 2011 general election

Variable	**Unstandardized B**	**Standard Error**	**Standard Coefficients**	**T**	**Sig Value**
Age	.000	.004	.002	.016	.987
Political experience	.000	.005	.005	.042	.967
Gender	-.054	.072	-.060	-.743	.459
Running mate	.124	.065	.174	1.923	.056
Rural/Urban	-.228	.057	-.328	-3.967	.000116
Party/Independent	.096	.094	.092	1.025	.307
Constant	-.188	.222	-	-.845	-.400

(Note: n – 148)

Table Twenty-Nine: SPSS analysis of the 'friends and neighbours' effect at the 2016 general election

Variable	**Unstandardized B**	**Standard Error**	**Standard Coefficients**	**T**	**Sig Value**
Age	.003	.004	.091	.759	.449
Political experience	-.001	.005	-.031	-.240	.811
Gender	-.148	.065	-.192	- 2.266	.025
Running mate	-.014	.063	.019	.220	.827
Rural/Urban	-.216	.058	-.302	-3.693	.000322
Party/Independent	.149	.086	.155	1.739	.084
Constant	-.232	.313	-	-.742	.459

(Note: n – 141)

(Note: in both tables, the dependent variable is the first preference vote received in each box by each candidate)

The wide array of variables within this data set requires a more rigorous analysis, to identify if in fact any of them are statistically significant; that is that their effect is real.

To do this, I have applied a regression analysis which has resulted in the above tables. A regression analysis allows a deeper insight into the data by investigating the relationship between the dependent variable – in this case the correlation coefficient for each candidate indicating the relationship between distance and vote – and the independent variables; these are listed in the far left-hand column above. Using SPSS software, it is possible to assess how these independent variables impact the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

In order to ascertain the impact of these variables, it is necessary to pay close attention to the 'Sig value' (significance value) column of the far right. A figure of below .05 would indicate that the independent variable in question has a real effect of the dependent variable. Anything above the .05 threshold suggests that the independent variable is not statistically significant.

The results of the regression test reveal that there is no significant impact on the 'friends and neighbours' effect with regard to either age or political experience, which earlier analysis had already intimated. In both elections, the significance value registered for these variables is well outside the significance threshold of below .05. The fact that neither of these variables significantly affect the 'friends and neighbours' vote of a candidate is noteworthy development. Both age and political experience are closely linked – a candidate aged 25 cannot be overly politically experienced – and what this data tells us is that neither have a major bearing on the local vote. This is somewhat of a surprise: initial expectations were that for both a young candidate and/or a politically inexperienced candidate, the 'friends and neighbours' effect was expected to be stronger due to the fact that they would most likely be known better in their local area due to a lack of time to develop their political base over a wider area. However, this analysis suggests that

this is not the case and that if a candidate does register a weak or strong 'friends and neighbours' vote, it isn't because they of their age, or their political experience.

On the other hand, in the case of the impact of rural and urban on the 'friends and neighbours' effect, a very real significance is apparent. In both 2011 and 2016, the regression model shows that the significance value is well below .05 at .000116 in 2011 and .000332 in 2016. This analysis confirms the earlier insight into the 'friends and neighbours' effect in either setting, which revealed a clear increase in the relationship between distance and vote in rural areas compared to more urban areas. While it should be noted that this analysis does not state that there is no connection between distance and the vote a candidate receives in an urban area, it does reveal that the importance of the 'friends and neighbours' effect in a rural setting is far more significant. It is therefore fair to conclude that the 'friends and neighbours' effect is more of a factor in a rural setting, though it is not exclusively a rural phenomenon.

The gender variable reveals an interesting trend, that reinforces some earlier observations. In the 2011 dataset – before the introduction of gender quotas, importantly – the significance value is .503, which is well above the significance value of .05. However, this changes in the 2016 analysis: which shows that gender was a significant factor at .015. This is an interesting change in a five-year period, which can be attributed to a number of factors. As discussed earlier, female candidates within the dataset in 2016, as compared with 2011, were significantly less experienced – and therefore this may have impacted on the 'friends and neighbours' vote they were able to win. While it would be incorrect to say that there is a gender bias from the electorate towards female candidates in terms of localism, this analysis may reveal a change in approach from female candidates who focus less on local issues and more on broader political matters. Whatever the reason for the discrepancy, this research shows that female candidates in the 2016 election were likely to receive less of a 'friends and neighbours' vote than their male counterparts.

In terms of whether a candidate had no running mate, one running mate or multiple running mates, it was shown that the running mate variable does not come inside the threshold of .05 in either election. However, it should be noted that it is much closer to .05 in 2011 (.056) than it is for the 2016 election (.827). Earlier analysis showed a very clear trend in which the addition of one running mate made the 'friends and neighbours' effect more substantial for party candidates, and the addition of two or more running mates created an even stronger 'friends and neighbours' effect. Nonetheless, the level of significance is not met in either 2011 or 2016.

Conclusions

This chapter set out to analyze six stated variables – age, political experience, gender, political affiliation, rural and urban constituencies, and a running mate(s) – and their impact on the 'friends and neighbours' effect. Through use of the Pearson's coefficient, which considers the distance to a polling station and the vote received, plus a detailed examination of average percentage figures in local polling stations, this chapter has allowed the drawing of a number of important conclusions that provide a useful and new insight into the 'friends and neighbours' effect in Ireland.

The data revealed that the most likely predictor of whether the 'friends and neighbours' effect would be strong or weak was the type of constituency in which the candidate was to run: rural or urban. In both 2011 and 2016, all data however manipulated showed a very strong 'friends and neighbours' effect in rural constituencies. It should be noted that the 'friends and neighbours effect was also evident in urban areas too, but on a much less significant scale when compared with rural constituencies. There are many reasons for the difference between the two settings, including geographical obscurity, political approach and campaigning challenges. However, what this also could reveal is a political culture divide emerging between rural Ireland and urban Ireland. Further monitoring of this trend

should be undertaken in future elections to observe any potential indicators of this continuing.

Significantly, this chapter has shown that gender does influence the 'friends and neighbours' effect. In 2016 – the year in which gender quotas were first introduced – it was shown through the regression analysis that gender did indeed influence the 'friends and neighbours' effect, unlike 2011. This data also revealed that female candidates received less of a local vote than their male counterparts in both elections: this was the case with both the average Pearson's coefficient for female candidates when compared with the male candidates, and also with the average percentage vote received in 'local' boxes. However, a drilling down further into the figures revealed that female candidates who were successful in being elected succeeded in winning an average 'friends and neighbours' vote on a par with the average for male candidates – suggesting that in order to be successful, candidates both male and female need to ensure strong local support.

The age of the candidate is shown to have little or no influence on the same candidate's 'friends and neighbours' vote. Though in the 2011 election there was a clear pattern where the younger a candidate was, the stronger the 'friends and neighbours' effect, this was not the case for the 2016 election where virtually no pattern could be observed. An overall assessment of age and local vote shows there to be no level of significance. Similarly, years of political experience, in whatever office, were shown to have little effect on the 'friends and neighbours' phenomenon for various candidates. Candidates who entered either election as a sitting councillor displayed a strong relationship in both elections, though all categories included revealed a 'friends and neighbours' effect. In terms of first-time candidates, who were expected to have the strongest relationship for reasons already outlined, they displayed the weakest relationship in 2016, perhaps indicating a change in campaigning methods ie. Social media.

Initial indications showed that Independent candidates across the board receive a more significant 'friends and neighbours' vote than those affiliated with a party. This is illustrated in the strong relationship between distance and vote for Independent candidates when compared with those of a party affiliation, and this is evident in both the 2011 and 2016 elections. There are push and pull factors involved in this trend: Independent candidates are sometimes forced to concentrate on their local area for vote-gathering, due to a lack of resources; at the same time, their exposure across the constituency is limited, often because of that lack of resources and an absence in many cases of a local branch network. When applied to the regression analysis, political affiliation does not meet the level of significance of .05. The same can be said in regard to the impact of a running mate(s), where the level of significance is not met. However, earlier data shows a clear effect on the 'friends and neighbours' phenomenon. The more running mates on the ballot paper along with the party candidate, the more influential 'friends and neighbours' voting becomes. It could be concluded, on the basis of the Pearson coefficient averages, that PR-STV encourages 'friends and neighbours' voting due to the allowance of multiple party candidates in the same constituency.

Ultimately, this chapter has provided a unique angle into the 'friends and neighbours' effect in the last two Irish general elections, and has shown both the rural or urban constituency, and gender, to be important variables when it comes to predicting the strength, or lack thereof, of the 'friends and neighbours effect. The influence of running mates also appears to be an important consideration. Given the outcome of this analysis, it is fair to say that a major change in the Irish political system – perhaps to a single-seat constituency electoral system such as 'first past the post – along with a higher threshold for the gender quotas, which is set to increase to 40pc in the coming years – may help to diminish the importance of the 'friends and neighbours' effect into the future.

Conclusion

This research sought to investigate the 'friends and neighbours' phenomenon in recent Irish general elections by establishing what influence, if any, certain variables had on the vote of candidates of a certain persuasion. In applying a rigorous analysis of the 'friends and neighbours' effect at both the 2011 and 2016 general elections in Ireland, this research contributes in several ways to the existing work in this area.

First of all, in a wider sense, this research shows that the 'friends and neighbours' phenomenon still exists in Irish electoral politics. This is an important point which suggests that despite the modern campaigning methods and advances, particularly, in social media and online advertising, local still trumps everything else for a significant portion of voters and candidates.

The investigation of the impact of certain variables on the 'friends and neighbours' effect is a new departure in the study of the phenomenon and provides for an important contribution to the existing literature. While the impact of some of these variables led to unsurprising results, this research suggests that whether a candidate lives in a rural constituency or an urban one is a decisive factor in terms of the prominence of the 'friends and neighbours' effect. Candidates in rural constituencies displayed a far greater relationship between distance and vote when compared with candidates in urban settings.

Thirdly, the difference between male and female candidates and their 'friends and neighbours' vote provided for the following conclusion: male candidates display a far stronger 'friends and neighbours' effect. This is a particularly notable insight given the introduction of gender quotas for the 2016 election, and the anticipated increase in the threshold for both genders on party tickets to 40pc in the next decade. What this data suggests is that more female candidates may lead to a dilution of the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

The investigation of the impact of multiple party candidates in the same constituency showed that the more party candidates there are, the more likely the 'friends and neighbours' effect will be stronger for these candidates. This is understandable, as parties will advise candidates to canvass certain areas only – usually around their home area or base – and candidates will also want to do this, to ensure they maximise their own personal vote in order not only to beat other party candidates, but also those of their own party.

Finally, a wider contribution that merits further investigation is the obvious fact that the 'friends and neighbours' effect appeared, across the board, to be far less prominent in the 2016 election compared with 2011. Whether this is a coincidence or part of a wider voter shift to other motivations for voting the way they did can only be understood when further studies are conducted on future elections.

These contributions will all feed into the future study of this topic and provide an important bookmark in the overall investigation of the 'friends and neighbours' effect. At the very least, this research sets the base for future studies to build upon: the impact of gender quotas on the 'friends and neighbours' effect certainly merits further investigation, perhaps with insight from both male and female candidates on their campaigning methods and ideological approach. Similarly, the apparent shift away from the 'friends and neighbours' effect in 2016 may be a once-off, but this can only be understood using data from future elections. In terms of the wider study of the 'friends and neighbours' effect, it would certainly benefit from a consistent approach whereby the phenomenon is the subject of research after every election. Only then can truly substantive conclusions be drawn.

This research is mainly based upon bivariate comparisons, but also includes multivariate analysis and case studies. Future studies may benefit from the inclusion of an approach based upon solely multivariate analysis, to provide more in-depth conclusions. While the case studies and bivariate analysis are key parts of

this research, the multivariate analysis is the most important insight into the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

Of course, the research would also have benefitted from an expanded regression analysis which controlled for various other factors with regard to the 'friends and neighbours' effect. Other factors could well be incorporated into future, expanded analyses of this topic.

Similarly, studies in the future could incorporate all constituencies for an even broader analysis. In the same way, potential studies could also include all candidates irrespective of the first preference vote they received. Of course, had the writer more resources at his disposal, this study would have taken these considerations into account, and would also have expanded the research to contemplate the 'friends and neighbours' effect in other democracies to gain an international insight.

The significant conclusion of the sharpening of the 'friends and neighbours' effect in constituencies where parties field multiple candidates reveals a grave shortcoming of the PR-STV system. In many cases – particularly four and five seat constituencies – the election becomes a glorified local election where candidates canvass intensively within a smaller area due to the crowded party ticket and vote management instructions from headquarters. The question needs to be asked: does this contribute to healthy political debate and behavior? It could be argued that political discourse in this country at election-time suffers due to the PR-STV system and the importance of the 'friends and neighbours' effect as a result of parties running multiple candidates in a constituency. A discussion should be held on the possibility of single-seat constituencies, which could lead to a more national-focussed agenda during general elections.

The goal of this research was to provide a greater understanding of the 'friends and neighbours' effect in modern Irish electoral politics and examine the impact of certain variables with regard to it. By undertaking an analysis of the data in this

way, it is now possible to state with some degree of certainty the influence of any of these variables on the 'friends and neighbours' effect.

The study of 'friends and neighbours' voting in Irish politics, and politics generally, will undoubtedly remain central to understanding the voting behavior of the electorate. As time moves on and society continues to change, it will be interesting to note the continued presence of the 'friends and neighbours' effect. What this study shows at this juncture is that the 'friends and neighbours' effect remains an integral part of the Irish electoral process, and it is influenced by several variables that parties and candidates of all persuasions would be advised to take note of.

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