

MLAs and Constituency Representation in Two Manitoba Ridings

By

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Abstract

Representation is a multi-faceted process that is integral to the Canadian democratic system. The process of representation relies on continuous negotiation between the elected representative and their constituents. It is through this process of building and maintaining connections with constituents that politicians develop their own representational strategy. This thesis examines two case studies—Manitoba MLAs Ralph Eichler and Blaine Pederson—to consider how Manitoba MLAs represent their constituents. A participant observation methodology was used to familiarize the researcher with the representational practices of these case study MLAs. It was found that even though the two MLAs were descriptively similar, the approaches they employed to represent their constituents were significantly different. It was further found that these vast differences were mainly attributed to three influential factors: personal goals, constituency context, and formative experiences.

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Dedication

For my family.

MA Thesis

MLAs and the Representation of their Constituencies

Introduction

The Canadian system of government requires effective representation of its citizens in order to function optimally. This system uses representation by population and requires regions to be divided geographically into electoral districts (or, colloquially, ridings or constituencies) both federally and provincially. Canadian citizens rely on their elected members to represent their views, opinions and best interests within both the House of Commons and their provincial legislatures. Although political scientists have done much to reveal how MPs and MLAs represent their constituents through quantitative research such as vote monitoring in Parliament and representative win margins, very little close range qualitative research has been conducted on representation in Canada.¹

Recently, there has been a drastic decline in voter turnout across Canada in both federal and provincial elections.² The province of Manitoba is among the worst, reaching only 55.7% voter turnout during its last provincial election in 2011.³ This indicates a democratic deficit, or a disconnect between Manitobans and their provincial representatives.⁴

¹ Eagles, Munroe. "Constituency and Personal Determinants of MPs' Positions on Social Conservatism Issues in the 37th and 38th Canadian Parliaments." In *Parties, Elections and the Future of Canadian Politics*, eds. Amanda Bittner and Royce Koop (Vancouver, UBC Press: 2013) 68.

² Ibbitson, John. "The alarming decline in voter turnout", *Globe and Mail* (10/14/2011).

³ Kusch, Larry. "Province looks at lasting roll", *Winnipeg Free Press* (07/05/ 2013).

⁴ McLaughlin, David. "In Canada's damaged democracy, partnership has taken the place of trust", *Globe and Mail* (06/25/2013).

This democratic deficit exists because Canadian citizens do not feel that they have the ability to influence their representative or public policy.⁵ There is an increasing dissatisfaction among citizens with the democratic institution including a decline of trust in the representatives themselves.⁶ This growing feeling of discontent is due to the fact that citizens believe they cannot use their participatory opportunities in the democratic system to achieve responsiveness from elected officials, and therefore become disenfranchised.

To better understand this disconnect, it is critical to investigate *how* elected officials represent their constituents. This will enable Manitobans to get a sense of the quality of democracy that is taking place within the province, in order to gain a richer perspective and knowledge to address this problem.

This thesis addresses two research questions. First, how do Manitoba Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) represent their constituents? Second, why do MLAs differ in the overall representational strategies they adopt?

This work will be grounded in the research approach of American scholar Richard Fenno. It will address these research questions by observing, listening and talking to Manitoba MLAs in order to gain a deep understanding of how they represent their constituents both in the Legislature and in their constituency. Fenno has termed these qualitative research methods 'hanging around' and 'soaking and poking about' in his own research.⁷ It is by these methods

⁵ Lenard, Patti Tamara and Richard Simeon. *Imperfect Democracies: The Democratic Deficit in Canada and the United States*, (Vancouver, UBC Press: 2012) 2.

⁶ (Lenard and Simeon, 2012) 3.

⁷ Fenno, Richard. *Home Style*, (Boston, Little Brown and Company: 1978) xiv.

that Fenno was able to gain a rich understanding of the practice of representation in the United States.

Although Fenno's research takes place within the American political system, it is still relevant within a Canadian context. Both the American and Canadian political systems are representative democracies and as such require elected members to represent the views and opinions of their constituents within assemblies.⁸ In addition, both states employ geographically defined units of representation, and single-member districts which use the single-member plurality electoral system. These two states however, differ in terms of the strength of party discipline within their respective system of government. Party discipline in Canada tends to be particularly strong relative to the United States.⁹ Nevertheless, using the method developed by Fenno would make a valuable contribution to the Canadian literature on representation within the state.

This research is important because it illustrates the practice of democracy. Representatives are crucial to the democratic system because they represent the voices and viewpoints of their constituents. Given the indirect nature of representative democracies, elected members hold a significant amount of influence within their constituency, in that they have the ability to communicate the needs and wishes of their constituents to the government. Constituents desire representatives that are attuned to these needs and wishes, and are willing

⁸ Cullen, Gosnell, Lane Lancaster, and Robert Rankin. *Fundamentals of American Government: National, State, and Local* (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc.: 1957) 22.

⁹ Malloy, Jonathan. "High discipline, low cohesion? The uncertain patterns of Canadian parliamentary party groups", *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2003): 116-129: 119.

to communicate these issues within the legislature.¹⁰ Canadian citizens, however, are becoming disenfranchised with their elected members because they do not feel properly represented, which has resulted in exceedingly low voter turnout.¹¹ This democratic deficit is detrimental to the health of the political system because democracies rely on the participation of the people, without which their legitimacy is diminished. Close range research of elected members is necessary in order to gain a better understanding of the process of representation.¹²

Within the realm of political studies, there exists a dichotomy of structure versus agency. Structure refers to the recurrent patterned arrangements and institutions which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available, while agency is the capability of individuals to act independently and to make choices based on their own free will.¹³ It is typically held in the literature that Canadian representatives are bound by structures and institutions to behave and perform their duties in a certain manner.¹⁴ This thesis however, focuses on agency and the ability of the representative to make their own choices with regard to representation and connecting with their constituents.

Party discipline has also been a contributing factor to this democratic deficit. Politicians are strongly influenced by their political parties when it comes to representation. Some scholars would even argue that elected members are more interested in representing the views

¹⁰ Jewell, Malcolm. *Representation in State Legislatures*. (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982) 19.

¹¹ (McLaughlin, 2013).

¹² Fenno, Richard. *Watching Politicians*, (California, University of California: 1990) 2.

¹³ Callinicos, Alex. *Making History: Agency, Structure, and Change in Social Theory*, (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004) 3.

¹⁴ Soroka, Stuart, Erin Penner, and Kelly Blidook. "Constituency Influence in Parliament", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (2009): 563-591, 566.

of their political parties than their constituents.¹⁵ This thesis, however, falls for the most part outside the domain of party discipline and is grounded in the sphere of constituency representation. Research has shown that elected members tend to act and vote in a manner that is in the best interest of their constituency.¹⁶ This thesis aims to explore how this is accomplished.

The first chapter of this thesis is a summary of the existing literature on representation. Chapter two will outline the methodology used for the research. Specifically, the reasons for choosing participant observation as the primary research method. Chapter three is a discussion and analysis of MLA Ralph Eichler, and the research acquired from my time with him. Chapter four is a discussion and analysis of MLA Blaine Pedersen, and the research attained during my time with him. Finally, chapter five discusses conclusions and inferences made about MLAs and their representation strategies from the observation period.

¹⁵ (Eagles, 2013) 78.

¹⁶ Searing, Donald. *Westminster's World: Understanding Political Roles*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994) 122.

Chapter One

Literature Review

This thesis explores how Manitoba MLAs represent their constituents; however, this raises the question of what representation actually consists of. This section provides a review of the dominant scholarly conceptions of representation in modern domestic settings. This forms the scholarly context within which I will conduct my own research on representation in Manitoba.

The concept of representation has been the crux of substantial debate for many decades. Given the importance of representation both in theory and practice, the dialogue surrounding this topic widely varies. Since western democracies operate in an indirect nature, the notion of representation is exceedingly crucial.¹⁷ As the quality of representation deteriorates, so too does the quality of the democracy.

One of the most widely accepted conceptions of representation is held by Hanna Pitkin. In her description of representation, Pitkin distinguishes between *descriptive representation* and *substantive representation*. Descriptive representation refers to ‘standing for’ a given constituency, or the ability to symbolically represent them due to an external likeness.¹⁸ In contrast, substantive representation refers to ‘acting for’ a given constituency and involves observable actions that the representative engages in in order to represent the constituency.¹⁹ Substantive representation denotes what a representative ‘does’ and is measured by his or her

¹⁷ Goodin, Robert. “Democracy, preferences, and paternalism”, *Policy Science* Vol. 26 (1993): 229-247: 230.

¹⁸ Pitkin, Hanna. *The Concept of Representation*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) 142.

¹⁹ Blidook, Kelly. *Constituency Influence in Parliament: Countering the Centre*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012) 6.

actions, while descriptive representation indicates what a representative 'is', which can be determined by the aggregate of all of his or her attributes.²⁰

Pitkin views representation as an ongoing activity, "defined by certain behavioural norms or certain things a representative is expected to do".²¹ Representation is a continuous process and requires an element of connectedness with the represented to ensure effectiveness. Communication is therefore key to the process of representation. This view is shared by Malcolm Jewell, who insists that effective representation relies on the two-way process of communication between constituents and representatives.²²

A key aspect of representation is *focus*, which indicates who is being represented. According to Edmund Burke, a representative chooses between two main foci: local interests and national interests.²³ Heinz Eulau argues that a representative's focus is much more complex and tends to also be juggled between their political parties, constituencies and interest groups.²⁴ In addition, focus is also influenced by competition. Representatives from competitive ridings (where the elected member won by narrow margins) tend to focus more on their constituency's interests to try to ensure re-election.²⁵ Richard Fenno notes that a representative's focus is also influenced by district homogeneity or heterogeneity: the make-up of the constituency.²⁶ The more heterogeneous the constituency usually correlates to more divisive viewpoints among constituents. Fenno's model of focus consists of concentric circles

²⁰ (Blidook, 2012) 6.

²¹ (Pitkin, 1967) 113.

²² (Jewell, 1982) 76.

²³ Wahlke, John C, Heinz Eulau, William Buchanan, and LeRoy C. Ferguson. *The Legislative System: Explorations in Legislative Behaviour*. (New York. John Wiley and Sons Inc.,1962) 270.

²⁴ (Wahlke, Eulau, Buchanan and Ferguson, 1962) 270.

²⁵ (Wahlke, Eulau, Buchanan and Ferguson, 1962) 292.

²⁶ Fenno, Richard. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1978) 4.

similar to a bulls eye, which indicate a narrowing of connectedness to the representative; as the circles narrow so does the level of confidence with the representative²⁷

Considering a representative's focus helps to determine his or her *style* of representation because it indicates goal orientation, or what the representative is trying to accomplish. Style refers to a representational role; in other words how the elected member represents the electorate.²⁸ This is influenced by many different factors to varying degrees which include constituency, pre-political career and individual personality.

One of the most well-known models discerning representational roles or style was devised by Edmund Burke.²⁹ He recognizes two major representational role orientations: *trustee* and *delegate*. The trustee is a representative who acts as a 'free agent', using his or her own moral judgement in parliament on behalf of the electorate.³⁰ A trustee claims to follow what he or she considers to be right or just, in accordance with his or her principles.³¹ Many representatives tend to follow the trustee template due to the sheer size and heterogeneity of their constituencies. Since elected members cannot possibly represent the vast diversity of viewpoints within large and heterogeneous constituencies, they tend to use their own moral judgment when making decisions.

In contrast, the delegate template is a more mechanical conception of representation. A delegate should act primarily upon the opinions of the electorate and decisions should be

²⁷ (Fenno, 1978) 1.

²⁸ (Wahlke, Eulau, Buchanan and Ferguson, 1962) 270.

²⁹ Burke, Edmund. *Speech to the Electors of Bristol*. 1774.

³⁰ (Wahlke, Eulau, Buchanan and Ferguson, 1962) 272.

³¹ (Wahlke, Eulau, Buchanan and Ferguson, 1962) 272.

made based upon the aggregate expression of those opinions.³² Delegates do not use their own independent judgement as decision making premises. This type of representative however, varies in terms of whose views are being represented. Members can choose to either be a delegate to their party or to their constituents. In addition, they can switch between these depending on the issue at hand.

A third representational role, called the *politico* was later conceived by Wahlke and colleagues.³³ The politico style of representation is a combination of both the trustee template and the delegate template.³⁴ The politico requires the use of both independent judgement and mandate. This representational style exhibits flexibility and allows representatives to adapt to their situations or even create new methods for representation.³⁵

An elected member's representational style is most often influenced by two major interests: their political party and their constituency. These two components often have competing expectations for representational behaviour.³⁶ According to Munroe Eagles, party discipline is the strongest influence when Canadian representatives are in the House of Commons.³⁷ Party competition however, is less important for questions of constituency representation. Under the realm of constituency representation, elected members act and vote in a manner that is in the best interest of their constituency whenever possible.³⁸ In addition, representatives feel that their main job is to redress the grievances of their

³² (Blidook, 2012) 7.

³³ (Wahlke, Eulau, Buchanan and Ferguson, 1962) 277.

³⁴ (Wahlke, Eulau, Buchanan and Ferguson, 1962) 277.

³⁵ (Wahlke, Eulau, Buchanan and Ferguson, 1962) 278.

³⁶ (Blidook, 2012) 8.

³⁷ (Eagles, 2013) 78.

³⁸ Docherty, David. *Mr. Smith Goes to Ottawa: Life in The House of Commons*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997) 192.

constituents, not only to 'keep in touch' with ordinary citizens, but also as a strategy to ensure re-election.³⁹

Since constituency work forms such a significant part of a representative's responsibilities, the electorate often judges them on the basis of their *responsiveness* to their constituencies. Responsiveness refers to the ability of a representative to respond to the needs and wishes of the constituency.⁴⁰ A representative's responsiveness to the constituency expands across a multitude of different aspects, but can typically be divided into three categories: *policy responsiveness*, *service responsiveness*, and *symbolic responsiveness*.⁴¹

Policy responsiveness is the ability of the legislator to represent the policy views and opinions of their constituency within the political arena.⁴² The optimal relationship amongst these two actors is congruence between the expressed preferences of the constituents and the favoured position of the representative. Party discipline, however, can sometimes make policy responsiveness all but impossible.

Service responsiveness is a representative's proficiency for becoming an ombudsman to intercede with bureaucracies in order to rectify wrongs.⁴³ According to Jewell, service responsiveness is the most important duty for a representative because it demonstrates his or her effectiveness to their constituents.⁴⁴ In addition, assisting constituents with their struggles

³⁹ (Searing, 1994) 122.

⁴⁰ Price, Richard G. and Maureen Mancuso. "Ties That Bind: Members and Their Constituencies." In *Introductory Readings in Canadian Government & Politics* 2nd ed., eds Robert M. Krause and R. H. Wagenberg. (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1995) 211.

⁴¹ (Price and Mancuso, 1995) 211.

⁴² (Price and Mancuso, 1995) 212.

⁴³ (Price and Mancuso, 1995) 212.

⁴⁴ (Jewell, 1982) 162.

has the greatest positive affect on an elected member's likelihood of re-election because constituents feel connected to them.⁴⁵ Donald Searing asserts that a representative's constituency work will either relate to a Welfare Officer, whose primary focus is on individual constituents, or a Local Promoter whose focus is on the constituency as a whole.⁴⁶ Additionally, some representatives rely heavily on their constituency executive associations to complete constituency work and to 'stay in touch' with their constituents.⁴⁷

Symbolic responsiveness refers to a representative's capacity to communicate their activities with their constituents and to form a psychological bond with them.⁴⁸ This is often done through newsletters and websites as a way to 'keep in touch' with constituents. In addition, politicians attend special local events such as school graduations and neighbourhood meetings to maintain a visual presence within the communities. Through these forms of media and communication, representatives try to include personal touches, such as announcements of constituents' accomplishments within the community, in order to feel connected with the constituency.⁴⁹

In addition, representation involves building and maintaining connections with constituents. According to Richard Fenno, representation can best be described as a process of both constructing and maintaining connections.⁵⁰ These connections are essentially relationships of responsiveness and accountability between elected officials and their

⁴⁵ (Blidook, 2012) 22.

⁴⁶ (Searing, 1994) 124.

⁴⁷ Koop, Royce. "Party Constituency Associations and the Service, Policy and Symbolic Responsiveness of Canadian Members of Parliament." *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (2012): 359-378: 374.

⁴⁸ (Price and Mancuso, 1995) 211.

⁴⁹ (Price and Mancuso, 1995) 211.

⁵⁰ Fenno, Richard. *Going Home: Black Representatives and Their Constituents*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003) 5.

constituency.⁵¹ He insists that there are four main types of significant connections that effective representatives must make within their constituency: symbolic connections, policy connections, personal connections, and organizational connections.⁵² Symbolic connections require a representative to build connections with specific groups or sects within the constituency that they are trying to relate to, while policy connections denotes congruence between constituency policy preferences and votes cast by the representative in the legislature.⁵³ Personal connections are the psychological bonds made between the elected member and the constituents. Fenno also maintains that constituents must feel connected to the political party in order to achieve organizational connections and re-elect the representative.⁵⁴ Sustaining strong member - constituency linkages is not only important for a member to uphold symbolic responsiveness with their constituency, but also for re-election prospects. Therefore, the process of developing and preserving linkages with the constituents is critical for effective representation.

In one of his more recent publications, *Going Home: Black Representatives and Their Constituents*, Fenno argues that all elected representatives have their own *personal goals* when they come into their position, which relate back to their reasoning for entering elective politics in the first place and what they wish to accomplish through this endeavour.⁵⁵ It is these personal goals that influence an elected member's *representational strategy*, or the choices

⁵¹ (Fenno, 2003) 2.

⁵² (Fennos, 2003) 5.

⁵³ (Fenno, 2003) 5.

⁵⁴ (Fenno, 2003) 5.

⁵⁵ (Fenno: 2003) 255.

they make.⁵⁶ Even though all politicians tend to have mixed personal goals and representation strategies, each tends to have one that is dominant and more prevalent than the rest. In *Going Home*, Fenno observed four different African American Members of Congress: Louis Stokes from Cleveland, Barbara Jordan from Houston, Chaka Fattah from Philadelphia, and Stephanie Tubbs Jones from Cleveland. From these case studies, he was able to identify four different representational strategies that each relied on a specific type of connection: group-interest intensive, influence intensive, policy intensive, and personal intensive.⁵⁷

Group-interest intensive strategies aim to promote and protect the interests of one particular group within a constituency. Fenno explains that Louis Stokes employed group-interest intensive strategies through the use of symbolic connections in order to protect the interests of the 'black community'.⁵⁸ Since Stokes represented a district that was mainly black, he felt that it was his duty to represent their interests above others in the constituency.⁵⁹

The intentions of the influence intensive strategy are to gain recognition and sway within the legislature. This is often accomplished through organizational connections, in particular a member's constituency organization and the constituents.⁶⁰ Fenno demonstrates that Barbara Jordan adopted an influence intensive strategy in order to work towards racial inclusiveness in her black minority district.⁶¹ By becoming an influential player within the

⁵⁶ (Fenno, 2003) 255.

⁵⁷ (Fenno, 2003) 256.

⁵⁸ (Fenno, 2003) 16.

⁵⁹ (Fenno, 2003) 19.

⁶⁰ (Fenno, 2003) 256.

⁶¹ (Fenno, 2003) 76.

legislature, she could gain recognition and shape legislation in a manner that would best serve her constituents.

In the case study of Chaka Fattah, Fenno identifies his representative strategy as policy intensive because he used policy connections with his constituents as a method to bridge the gap between their large economic differences.⁶² Even though Fattah's district was 60% black, it comprised some of the poorest and most affluent people in Philadelphia. He therefore used policy adoption as a means to combat this discrepancy by supporting policies that the majority of his constituency favoured.⁶³

The final representational strategy that Fenno identifies is personal intensive which requires copious personal connections between the representative and the constituents.⁶⁴ Fenno defines Stephanie Tubbs Jones' representational strategy as personal intensive because "She was deeply embedded in the black community and the black experience".⁶⁵ She strove to make psychological connections with her constituents in order to enhance their trust in her and create a communal atmosphere.

All of the aspects described touch upon one aspect of legislators' ability to represent their constituencies. Elected members are subject to many different influences at a time and to

⁶² (Fenno, 2003) 121.

⁶³ (Fenno, 2003) 120.

⁶⁴ (Fenno, 2003) 255.

⁶⁵ (Fenno, 2003) 207.

varying degrees in order to perform their duties. Furthermore, just as no two constituencies are alike, no two representatives are alike thus adding more variability to the mix.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, it is apparent that representation is an adaptable process. Elected representatives must adapt their behaviours to best handle all of their competing pressures.⁶⁷ By this account, representatives must be in what Fenno terms 'a forever state of motion and flux' in order to meet the needs of all of their influences.⁶⁸

When considering how others have conceived of representation, a few themes can be drawn. Firstly, representation is a very complex process, with many different aspects making up members' representational strategies. Second, representational approaches are influenced by a range of variables including focus, pre-political careers, and personal goals. In addition, it is an all-encompassing process, in which every action, reaction, and influence contributes to the overall picture. Furthermore, representation relies heavily on a series of connections, not only between the elected member and their political party, but also between the member and the constituency. More research is necessary to better understand the importance of such connections in the representation process.

This thesis employs Fenno's notion of representation as a process of connecting and connections as a primary theoretical framework. The research for this thesis will be similar to that of Fenno in that it will consist of participant observation and seek to explore how MLAs

⁶⁶ Norton, Phillip. "The Growth of the Constituency Role of the MP." *Parliamentary Affairs* (Oct. 1994) 705-720: 705.

⁶⁷ Blidook, Kelly and Matthew Kerby. "Constituency Influence on 'Constituency Members': The Adaptability of Roles to Electoral Realities in the Canadian Case." *Journal of Legislative Studies*, (2011) Vol. 17, No. 3, 327-339: 337.

⁶⁸ Fenno, Richard. *Senators on the Campaign Trail: The Politics of Representation*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996) 18.

represent their constituents through both the development and maintenance of constituency connections. I will be shadowing two MLAs in Manitoba for a period of time in order to observe how they represent their constituents, and why these representational styles differ in the ways they do. Given that Fenno's research is based in the U.S., this research aims to provide a Canadian context which is currently missing in the literature.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The framework for this research was strongly influenced by Richard Fenno's work, specifically *Going Home: Black Representatives and Their Constituents*. As explained above, Fenno denoted that there are four main types of connections that representatives use to relate to their constituents: symbolic connections, policy connections, personal connections, and organizational connections.⁶⁹ These four different connection types form specific patterns for each representative to make up their unique representational strategy.

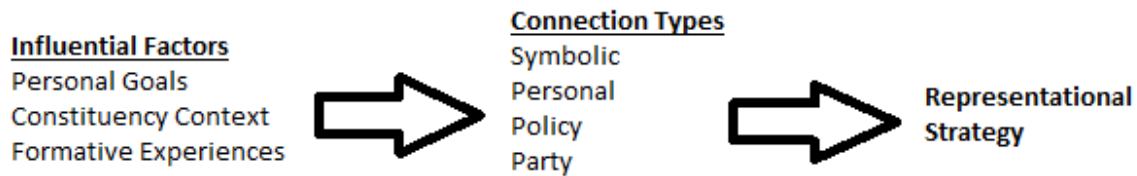
Given that Fenno conducted his research on American representatives, it was necessary to adapt his framework for a Canadian, specifically Manitoban, context. For a Canadian setting, I used the following four connection types: symbolic connections, policy connections, personal connections, and party connections. The first three types of connections are the same as Fenno's connections, but I replaced his organizational connections with party connections for the purposes of my research. This is because political parties and more specifically, party discipline plays a much larger role in Canadian politics than it does in American politics.⁷⁰ Therefore, while Fenno's organizational connections can refer to connections with the political party or alternative establishments that the representative is associated with, party connections strictly refer to connections with the representative's political party.

⁶⁹ (Fennos, 2003) 5.

⁷⁰ (Malloy, 2003) 119.

Akin to Fenno's work, I abided by the theory that both internal and outside influences affect representational strategy. That being said, this research concentrates on three influences: personal goals, constituency context, and formative experiences. Figure 1 below depicts how these influences and connection types create a politician's representational strategy.

Figure 1



From this illustration we can see that the three influential factors of personal goals, constituency context, and formative events have a direct effect on the connection types that a representative chooses to embrace. The representational strategy is determined by the prominent types of connections that the elected member chooses to adopt.

This project was based on Fenno's theory, pictured above. Once this project began however, it became clear that the research was informing and altering the theory, in essence creating a conversation between theory and data. Fenno's original theory of influential factors is composed of the following three elements: personal goals, constituency context, and experimental learning. During my research however, I found that formative experiences played a larger role in determining representational strategy than experimental learning. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, I replaced experimental learning with formative experiences.

From this research, I was able to observe two Manitoba MLAs, that appeared to be very similar when considering external factors such as constituency setting, party, gender, and duration of political career. These two representatives however, proved to have very different representational strategies which were attributed to the influences depicted above.

The four connection types discussed in this thesis are: symbolic, personal, policy, and party. Symbolic connections are a representative's ability to embody characteristics of the riding in general and connect to constituents in a manner that is representative of their distinct needs. Personal connections refer to a representative's ability to form bonds with constituents on an individual basis. Policy connections involve relating to constituents through shared policy concerns, and party connections entail a strong association with and within a representative's political party.

This thesis intends to replicate the research method of Richard Fenno within a Canadian context. Fenno, an established American scholar examined how elected members of Congress represent their districts.⁷¹ For this research, I shadowed two Manitoba MLAs in their constituencies and the Legislature for a period of about four days each. This qualitative research project is based on participant observation or an interactive observation style of research which involves gaining close familiarity with politicians and their practices by talking to them, watching them, and following them around.⁷² In addition, I collected secondary information such as householders, Question Period transcripts, and newspaper articles for this research.

⁷¹ (Fenno, 1978) xi.

⁷² (Fenno, 1990) 113.

Most of the existing Canadian literature on politicians and representation tends to be quantitative and focuses on a member's policy voting habits.⁷³ In addition, this existing research is both small and quite recent. Although this is valuable information, there is a severe lack of close range qualitative research of elected members in the literature.⁷⁴ This research is particularly beneficial because it has the potential to start to fill this knowledge gap. Due to the methodology, this research will produce a more full bodied perspective of politicians and their styles of representation.

Since I am basing this research on Fenno's methods, four days observing and interacting with each politician is appropriate. Fenno spent eighty hours over the course of many years with his deepest case and was able to produce two books from his findings on this single participant.⁷⁵ Due to the size and scope limitations of an MA thesis, four days with each of the two members is suitable to achieve an understanding of how they represent their constituencies.

Participant observation is an advantageous research methodology for this project because it allows the researcher to get very close to the data/individual.⁷⁶ Through this method the researcher is able to see the correlation between what is said by the politician and what is actually done. By this account, participant observation grants the researcher a very rich, inside perspective of the process of political activity and representation.⁷⁷

⁷³(Blidook and Kerby, 2011) 328; (Soroka, Penner, and Blidook, 2009) 564; (Eagles, 2013) 69.

⁷⁴ (Fenno, 1990) 1.

⁷⁵ (Fenno, 1990) 11.

⁷⁶ (Fenno, 1990) 114.

⁷⁷ (Fenno, 1990) 114.

Participant observation is a more appropriate method for this research than interviews because the researcher is able to spend a longer period of time with the participant and view them under real world conditions.⁷⁸ In addition, during interviews, participants may not always answer questions truthfully or may answer in a way that puts them in the best light. Participant observation allows the researcher to use multiple sources of evidence to observe correlations between what the participant says and what he or she actually does. By these measures, the researcher is able to gain a deeper understanding of the participant which better enables them to address a 'how' question.⁷⁹

This methodology is also more suitable than surveys because the researcher is not restricted by a standard set of questions. It gives the researcher the freedom to ask questions that are relevant to the situation at hand.⁸⁰ Participant observation takes into account contextual conditions, which enables the researcher to develop a richer perspective of the participant and political situation as a whole.⁸¹

A few drawbacks of participant observation research are that there is a loss of control over the research process, a few details may be missed due to human error, and the researcher must operate in an unfamiliar context.⁸² There is a loss of control over the research process because the observer can only go where the subject allows them to go; see what the subject allows them to see; and hear what the subject wants to share. In addition, this research is subject to human error because there are only so many aspects an observer can absorb in a

⁷⁸ Yin, Robert. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York, The Guilford Press: 2011) 7.

⁷⁹ Gray, David. *Doing Research in the Real World 2nd ed.* (London, SAGE Publications: 2009) 247.

⁸⁰ (Yin, 2011) 8.

⁸¹ (Gray, 2009) 338.

⁸² (Fenno, 1990) 114.

new environment. Some details are bound to be missed. Since the researcher is operating in an unfamiliar context, their ability to observe all aspects of their surroundings may be compromised. These difficulties however, can be managed with adequate guidance and a short adjustment period.

Case Selection

Prior to conducting this research, I had intended on attaining three Manitoba MLAs of varying characteristics in order to gain a diverse view of representation in the province. I approached a number of MLAs and some expressed interest in the research. Nevertheless, I ultimately selected two MLAs that were very similar in standard characteristics such as gender, political party, age, and (I thought at the time) constituency setting. By holding these typically divisive characteristics constant, I was able to get a better sense of other influences that affect their representational strategy. In addition, I was better able to isolate my two research questions stated in the Introduction. (How do Manitoba Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) represent their constituents? And why do MLAs differ in the overall representational approaches they adopt?).

For this research, my participants were Ralph Eichler from the constituency of Lakeside, and Blaine Pedersen, from the constituency of Midland. Both of these MLAs are members of the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba, and both are from rural ridings. Since this research was based on participant observation, I was able to spend time with each MLA, both in their constituency and the Legislature. With Ralph Eichler, I spent two days in his constituency and two days in the Legislature, for a total of twenty six hours. With Blaine Pedersen, I spent

one very long day in his constituency and two days in the Legislature for a total of twenty three and a half hours. Although I had originally intended to spend forty hours with each MLA, while observing these politicians, it became apparent that there was a critical point after which additional observation proved less fruitful. I was thus able to retrieve ample information from the time I spent with each MLA.

During these observation periods, I was able to see these MLAs in a variety of situations. In both cases, I was able to observe formal and informal meetings, both in their constituencies and the legislature. I had the opportunity to attend events with these individuals and sit in on council meetings. I observed them in the legislature, both preparing for Question Period, and partaking in Question Period. In addition, I spent time in their constituency offices and was able to chat with their constituency assistants about the workings of the offices. While traveling with each MLA in their constituency, we spent a significant amount of time engaging in 'travel talk'. It was during these period that I was able to ask the MLAs questions about various topics including their riding, their party, and the events I had observed. This 'travel talk' proved to be a significant source of information in my research.

I chose the province of Manitoba for my research because it is easily accessible and convenient given that I attend the University of Manitoba. As well, this research may help to address the democratic deficit that currently exists within the province.⁸³ Voter turnout was considerably low during the last provincial election at 55.7%, which could indicate low

⁸³ Preprost, Matt. "Turnout Remains Flat", *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 5, 2011, <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/turnout-remains-flat-131123948.html>.

satisfaction with the democratic assembly by constituents.⁸⁴ This research aims to shed light on how members represent their constituencies, which has the potential to enlighten citizens and help correct this deficit.

The following chapters describe these MLAs in detail and my experiences with them both in their constituencies and the Legislature.

⁸⁴ Kusch, Larry. "Province looks at lasting roll", *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 5, 2013, <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/voters-list-province-looks-at-lasting-roll-214349441.html>.

Chapter Three

Ralph Eichler: Policy and Party

Introduction

The first time I heard Ralph Eichler speak in public was at the council meeting in the Rural Municipality (RM) of Rosser. Upon our early arrival, he removed his overcoat and gently draped it over his arm to reveal a tailored charcoal suit. He immediately introduced himself to the receptionist sitting at the front desk and exchanged pleasantries before taking a seat in one of the chairs in the waiting area. He removed a black, leather organizer out of his briefcase, and began to review his notes and speaking points.

Once inside the council chambers, Eichler sat at the table in the center of the room, which faced all five councilors. He stood up to present his annual update to the RM in which he gave an overview as to what his party (the Progressive Conservative Party) had been up to during the past year, and reviewed the actions that both he and his party had taken to address the policy concerns of the riding. He made specific reference to the actions of the party leader, and the steps he was taking to combat the recent policies that were implemented by the provincial government that were having/would have a negative impact on the people of Lakeside. Eichler concluded his speech by asking if the councilors had any questions or concerns for him to answer, which then led to a discussion of these policy concerns amongst the group of representatives.

This meeting with the councilors of Rosser summarizes Eichlers representational strategy which I have named *Policy and Party*. This strategy entails a heavy emphasis on the

maintenance of both policy and party connections. By choosing to focus on policy and party concerns in his yearly meeting, Eichler appeared to reveal to me what he believes to be the most important parts of his job as a provincial representative.

Ralph Eichler was not born and raised in the constituency of Lakeside, although he grew up on a family farm, and always had a deep passion for farming. He moved to the constituency in 1969 and has remained in the constituency ever since.

Eichler's background is in both banking and business. He moved to the constituency of Lakeside in 1969, and has resided there ever since. In 1974, he took up a position with the Interlake School Division. He served as the Administrator of the Interlake School Division from 1974 until 1982, at which point he started his own business. Eichler was the owner/operator of Prairie Farm and Ranch Supply, a major manufacturer and importer/exporter of livestock handling equipment, and the owner of Ray's Auction service. In 1999, he sold the agriculture supply business and started to pursue politics in 2003. He still maintains his auction business.

Considering Eichler's pre-political careers are significant because they help to explain his representational style. With a history in banking and business ownership, Eichler's task-oriented approach to representation seems to have translated from his previous careers. He is very organized and regimented in his scheduling which likely comes from years of business ownership.

Interestingly, Eichler had never been a card carrying Progressive Conservative member until he ran for the party nomination in 2003. Notes Eichler, "No, I was never a member until then, but I'd been a long time donor to the party." With regard to party membership, Eichler is

not that different from many other politicians in Canada. Many Canadian representatives only join a political party just before running for the nomination.⁸⁵ After selling his farm and ranch supply store in 1999, Eichler had 'semi-retired' (having only the auction house to worry about), until he was recruited by a group of locals to run in the nomination race for Lakeside's PC candidate position.

By this point, Ralph Eichler had become an influential member of the community. Not only had he owned two local businesses, but he was a member of many local committees and boards including the Teulon and Area Lions Club and the Stonewall Royal Canadian Legion Branch 52. He served as Board Director of the Prairie Implements Manufacturers' Association (PIMA), Board Chairman of Neicom Developments, an original Director of the Teulon Green Acres Park Board, President of the Interlake Riding Club, supporter of the Handivan Committee, Treasurer of the Teulon Kinsmen Club, member of the Interlake Community Foundation Board and Treasurer of the Teulon Golf and Country Club.

"I had a team of forty-two, when I first ran [for the nomination spot], and I went in three weeks before the election," Eichler recalled about his first nomination race in 2003. During this first nomination contest, there were four individuals running for the PC candidate position. A key factor in this nomination race was selling memberships, but "I was careful about who I sold them to. I wanted to make sure they showed up (to vote for me)". Eventually one of the contestants dropped out, and threw their support behind Eichler, which led to his victory as the PC candidate for Lakeside for the 2003 provincial election. Since then, Eichler has never been

⁸⁵ Young, Lisa and William Cross. "Incentives to Membership in Canadian Political Parties", *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (2002): 547-570, 552.

faced with renomination challenges, which he chalks up to 'doing his job'. "Incumbents have the advantage of support, if they do their job," Eicher argues. "You only lose if you don't do your job, and don't listen."

Eichler was first elected as the MLA for Lakeside on June 3, 2003, with 52.71% of the vote. He was then re-elected in 2007 and 2011 with 55.93% and 65.64% of the vote, respectively. Additionally, his win margins (the difference between the percentage of the vote received by the winning candidate and the percentage of the vote received by the next highest candidate) have steadily increased with each election, ranging from 14.04% in 2003 to 39.8% in 2011. Needless to say, Eichler feels that he has never had any significant challengers in his riding besides his first nomination race in 2003.

These figures are important to consider because they form part of the context in which Eichler has developed his representational approach. Eichler has been the MLA for Lakeside for eleven years, and appears to be in the protectionist phase of his political career.⁸⁶ He believes that he knows what his constituents are looking for in an MLA and has an accurate sense of how to fulfill their expectations.

Throughout his many years in politics, Eichler had held many positions and critic roles in the PC party including: Caucus Chair, Government Services; Communities Economic Development Fund; Cooperative Development; Industry, Economic Development & Mines, Conservation, Water Stewardship; Aboriginal and Northern Affairs; and Agriculture, Food and

⁸⁶ According to Fenno, during the protectionist phase of a political career, the representative becomes less interested in building supportive constituencies and more concerned with keeping electoral support. (Fenno, 1978) 173.

Rural Initiatives. Currently, he is the Caucus Whip, the Critic for Municipal Government, and the Critic for Manitoba Hydro.

Of his work in the Legislature, he is particularly proud of passing his private members bill in 2012 for specialty license plates for firefighters. With this initiation, current and retired firefighters in Manitoba (both on salary and volunteer) may purchase specialty license plates at a cost of \$70 per plate. Not only can these plates be used as an identification mechanism by the public in cases of emergency, but \$30 from each plate goes to charities that help Canadian Firefighters: the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the Firefighters Burn Fund. Eichler was also behind the initiation of the veteran's license plates, a similar scenario that was implemented in 2004.

Riding Context

When Ralph Eichler looks at his constituency, he sees a mixture of different people and interests. Lakeside is full of small business owners, farmers, and commuters. I first met Eichler at his constituency office in the Town of Stonewall on a particularly blustery Tuesday morning in February. After some friendly introductions and pleasantries with his office assistant, Eichler and I made our way to the Rural Municipality (RM) of Rosser for a council meeting. As we drove along the highway in the blowing snow, Eichler relayed the policy concerns surrounding the people of Rosser. The most concerning issue seemed to involve the new CentrePort Canada. CentrePort is a large inland port to be used international trade.⁸⁷ This facility, which has already been in the works for eight years, will be a major port in Canada and create many

⁸⁷ CentrePort Canada, last modified June 25, 2014, <http://www.centreportcanada.ca/>.

jobs in the RM of Rosser. However, the project is turning out to be more problematic than initially projected in terms of sewage and water systems given that CentrePort will be partially located in Rosser and partially located in Winnipeg. “It’s a big problem” said Eichler when discussing the issue. He then continued to explain that Rosser’s next biggest issue was the recent PST hike, which took a toll on farmers and small business owners in the area, which, notably, is a policy issue that is not particular just to residents of Rosser.

Eichler’s first depiction of the communities in his riding was driven by their policy concerns. He sees these communities in terms of how they are affected by government policy, and how he can work to change policies for the better in his constituency.

Eichler’s constituency of Lakeside is located immediately northwest of Winnipeg, Manitoba. It’s bordered to the north by Interlake, to the west by Portage La Prairie, to the south by Morris and to the east by Gimli. The constituency of Lakeside was first created in 1886 and is now home to over 20,000 Manitobans.⁸⁸

Even though the constituency is technically rural, there is a large and rapidly growing population of commuters since it is situated so close to the city. A growing number of residents in Lakeside work in Winnipeg, and commute back and forth every day. According to Eichler, “People want the services of living in the city with the space of the country and that’s difficult to accommodate.” In light of this, there tends to be significant cost sharing in the southeast part of the constituency between city and non-city residents for services such as police patrol and firefighters. Nevertheless, Eichler pointed out that problems of jurisdiction often arise

⁸⁸ Elections Manitoba, “Historical Summary”, last modified 2012, <http://www.electionsmanitoba.ca/downloads/HistoricalSummary.pdf>.

especially with regard to police and whether areas should be dealt with by the Winnipeg Police Service or the RCMP.

The constituency of Lakeside is made up of six different Rural Municipalities: Rosser, Woodlands, Armstrong, Coldwell, Rockwood, and the Town of Stonewall. The three largest towns in the riding are Stonewall, Teulon, and Warren. To this end, Eichler set up his constituency office in Stonewall, even though he resides in Teulon.

The riding of Lakeside seemed to have two different faces, those in the Town of Stonewall, and those that are outside the Town of Stonewall. Stonewall itself seemed to be full of commuters, people that work in the city but still want the country feel. Driving around the town revealed that it looks and feels much like a relatively new suburb, even though it's approximately 25 kilometers north of Winnipeg.

The other face of Lakeside lies in the rural areas. These people tend to be agriculture oriented, producing beef, hogs, poultry, and some grains. According to Eichler, the residents of this part of Lakeside prefer their rural lifestyles and more traditional values, that is, work hard, and reap the rewards.

While driving to an RM council meeting in Inwood, Eichler explained that in his riding there are eleven different Hutterite colonies, some vote and others don't. When asked whether the women in these colonies vote, his response was "It's funny, most women in the colonies will vote, or they'll tell their husbands and sons how to vote." Although each colony holds its own rules with regard to voting, all of them tend to hold more conservative values

than typical rural communities. Nevertheless, Eichler maintained that majority of the colonies support him. This is noteworthy because it illustrates the rural face of the riding.

Much of the economy in Lakeside is based in agriculture and agribusiness. Although there is some land in the constituency used for crop production, most is used for farming cattle, hogs, and poultry. It is home to one of the largest turkey hatcheries on the prairies, which employs many people in the constituency. It also contains the largest bison ranch in Manitoba. In addition, there are trout farms in the riding, making this product more accessible to people on the prairies.

There are a handful of manufacturing operations in the constituency which mainly produce agriculture equipment. “We are quite strong financially” said Eichler about the riding, which is due to the diversity of industries. As well, small businesses keep the rural towns lively with shops and restaurants.

Like many ridings in Manitoba, Lakeside has its share of major concerns. These issues tend to be quite localized and significant to the constituency. These big concerns were well-known to Eichler.

Given that many residents in the southeastern part of Lakeside commute to the city daily for work, a major concern for Eichler is the road conditions, particularly in the winter. The roads going north and south tend to be kept in better conditions than the roads going east and west. As well, there are many ‘extreme curves in the highways’ that pose a large risk to drivers even in the best driving conditions, given the speed limit and narrowness of the curve. I got to

experience this first hand while driving with Eichler through blizzarding snow. Not only could we barely see the road, but we narrowly avoided a semi-truck coming in the opposite direction.

Another one of the major concerns in the riding is Bipole III, a new high voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission project, which will convert DC energy into AC energy. This project includes creating large hydro lines to span across the greater part of Manitoba. As the Conservative Caucus' Hydro Critic, Eichler is very passionate about the Bipole III issue and the risks it poses not only to his own constituents, but to the Manitoba treasury as well.

CentrePort is also a major issue in the riding. As previously mentioned, this large national port would provide many jobs. Given its location however, (partially in the city of Winnipeg and partially in the Rural Municipality of Rosser) the distribution and allotment of costs for the development have become contentious.

There is a growing concern in the riding that too many young people are leaving their rural roots to pursue greater opportunities in the city and not returning. This has resulted in an aging population in small rural towns, and a lack of funds and support to create seniors facilities within these towns. Therefore, seniors that are in need of these facilities must leave their towns and travel to more urban areas for the proper care. This is problematic for spouses and families who now must travel long distances in order to visit their loved ones in seniors facilities. Eichler notes, "Folks in smaller towns have to leave their communities to go to Selkirk or elsewhere. It's hard on the families."

The policies and issues that Eichler deals with vary widely. For the purpose of this analysis, these issues can be categorized as either *underlying* or *topical*. Underlying issues are

concerns that are constant in the constituency. These issues and the policies that address them are consistent and usually relate to major industries in, or the geography of, the riding. Topical issues are sporadic and tend to be major concerns. They develop and are usually dealt with over a period of time and then dissipate.

In Eichler's rural constituency of Lakeside, major topical policy issues are the Bipole III hydro development and the CentrePort development. Although these projects have both been in progress for many years, they are not steady problems in the riding. Underlying policy issues in the constituency tend to be road conditions, farm land conditions, taxes, and the lack of care facilities for seniors because they are steady and continual problems for Lakeside constituents.

Lakeside is one of Manitoba's oldest electoral ridings. When the constituency of Lakeside was first created in 1886, the constituents elected Liberal MLA Kenneth McKenzie. The riding has jumped back and forth between the Liberal and Conservative parties since its conception. This constituency also elected Manitoba's longest standing MLA, Douglas Campbell, from the Progressive Party of Manitoba. He served for forty-seven years and eventually became the Premier.

When asked to describe the voters in his constituency, Eichler remarked "People in Lakeside don't like change. You do your job and you stay in. However, once the momentum for change has started, it's hard to stop." Lakeside therefore, can be described as having long, stagnant periods with waves of change. "People here tend to vote for similar moral values rather than a particular party banner." Eichler explained that Lakeside constituents tend to be committed to their representatives if they are being adequately represented. If not, then the

need for change tends to be felt throughout the whole constituency and another representative is elected.

There are two major newspapers in Lakeside, the Stonewall Argus, and the Tribune. Eichler gives interviews to both papers when they request them and puts small ads in them periodically throughout the year.

At this point, he does not use social media although he does think it could be a useful tool for the party, “We must be very careful with things like Facebook and Twitter, but still learn how to capitalize off them.”

Policy Connections

After spending some time with MLA Ralph Eichler in both his constituency and the Legislature, his representational strategy gradually revealed itself. When we were in the constituency, he focused on discussing policies and how they affect Lakeside residents. In addition, he often spoke of the Conservative Party and their plans for helping, not only his constituents, but Manitobans in general.

I have coined Eichler’s representational strategy to be ‘Policy and Party’ which entails a strong emphasis on both policy connections and party connections. Policy connections are particularly important to Eichler. They involve connecting with constituents through shared policy concerns.⁸⁹ In fact, it tends to be his main focus both when he is in the constituency and when he is in the Legislative building. It is through policy work that Eichler feels he is best able to serve his community and province as an MLA.

⁸⁹ (Fenno: 2003) 120.

In order to illustrate the importance Eichler places on maintaining policy connections as part of his overall representational strategy, I have provided four examples from my time with the MLA to provide evidence to this end.

The first example involves Eichler's activities with respect to Manitoba Hydro's Bipole III development. Bipole III is a lengthy hydro line that is to span across the greater part of Manitoba, converting DC energy into AC energy. The original pathway of Bipole III however, has been recently altered by the Government, and the new route is not only more costly, but also interferes with a greater number of rural farms than the original.

This contentious issue has been a main concern of Eichler's since our first encounter. Not only does he feel that the new route for Bipole III is too expensive given the projected return on investment for the province, but also the impact that it will have on farm land, and families residing on that farm land, is unfavorable. "They (the Government) need to realize how they're affecting people. . . It's a big issue," Eichler insisted, when we drove past one of the Bipole structures in his riding.

Bipole III is a major policy concern for Eichler. Not only did he expand upon it in every one of his Rural Municipality council meetings on the day I spent with him in his riding, but he communicates this policy concern in his franking/mailout pieces as well as in the House during Question Period. Given that he is the Hydro critic for the Opposition, this issue is of increased importance to him. He uses the concerns surrounding Bipole as a means of connecting with not only his constituents in Lakeside, but with Manitobans in general. By initiating or debating policy, Eichler feels engaged, and that he is 'doing his job'. Bipole III illustrates how he adopts a

policy oriented approach to representation in which Eichler feels that his main duty as a representative is to enact or debate policy.

A second example of importance of policy connections for Eichler is the contents of his speeches at the RM council meetings in his constituency. During my time spent with Eichler, I was able to tag along to three RM council meetings. These meetings were in the RM of Rosser, the RM of Woodlands, and the RM of Armstrong.

For each of these three meetings, Eichler would walk into the office, promptly remove his coat, lay it over his forearm and introduce himself to the receptionist at the front desk. This would usually be followed by small talk on various topics and then Eichler would open his black organizer and go over his notes. Once called into the council chambers, he would give a speech, and although slightly different for each council, the main focus of these speeches was policy issues. Not only would he recount the policy concerns of the Opposition, but he would also address his own policy initiations as well as policy concerns pertaining to the riding. He would then move on to discuss his own activities, as well as the activities of the party, and the party leader in the past year. This was always followed with a discussion between the councilors and the MLA about the policy concerns of the riding and the issues they were experiencing.

Eichler typically visits each RM council once a year for an annual update. Due to unforeseen events at the Legislature however, he was unable do so last year, making these meetings increasingly important. Therefore, it is very telling that, for all three of these RM council meetings, he chose to focus on policy issues. In choosing to focus on policy issues for

these annual meetings with the RMs, he is revealing his tendency to build and maintain policy connections with his constituents.

Communication between an elected member and their constituents is fundamental to the process of representation. My third example of the ways in which Eichler uses policy connections looks at how he communicates with his constituents. Besides meetings and town halls, another way MLAs communicate with their constituents is through mail-outs or franking pieces. MLAs distribute franking pieces periodically throughout the year, and will often focus on key elements that are important to them and their constituents.

When I spent some time in Eichler's constituency office, I had the opportunity to examine some of his previously distributed franking pieces. I quickly noticed that every one of his previous franking pieces focused on some major policy issue, ranging from tax increases "the NDP are sending signals a tax increase is in the works," to the Bipole III development:

You may have heard Greg Selinger has directed Manitoba Hydro to build our next major power line down the longer west side of the province instead of the shorter, safer, and more environmentally friendly east side, at a cost of more than \$640 million extra.

\$640 million is a lot of money, especially in tough economic times. That's enough to build 10 hospitals, 30 high schools, a university campus, or erase the year's deficit.

Given that MLAs are only allowed to send out a limited number of franking pieces per year, the information they choose to display on them is key to determining what they feel is important. The majority of Eichler's franking pieces that I was able to evaluate dealt with major policy issues. Choosing to focus on policy issues reflects the importance Eichler places on policy initiatives and policy connections within the riding.

The fourth example that illustrates Eichler's aptitude for policy connections is Question Period. While in the Legislature, the Opposition questions the Government when they sit in the House during Question Period. The Opposition members with large critic portfolios and the party leader question the Government on a variety of topics including policy concerns, constituent concerns and recent events. Since Eichler is a member of the Opposition, he is able to question the Government. This, however, does not happen every day that they are in session, so when the opportunity to pose a question arises, the subject of that question is chosen carefully.

During my time with Eichler at the Legislative building I witnessed him preparing questions for Question Period as well as asking them in the House. On each of these separate occasions, his questions were pertaining to major topical policy issues, specifically the Food Safety Act and Bipole III. These major issues are of importance to not only his constituents, but to the province as a whole. He questioned the Food Safety Act's effectiveness in rural Manitoba community events. For the hydro development he questioned both the cost and its effectiveness for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, the sponDP government has spent more than a billion dollars on Bipole III. This dictatorship government is putting every tax-payer at risk by spending willy-nilly with no negotiations with landowners, no approvals from the PUB.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Hydro: What is this sponDP government thinking? The members on that side of the House are smarter than the experts and the rest of all of Manitobans. Talk about dictatorship.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, "DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS: Official Report (Hansard)", March 24, 2014, http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/business/hansard/40th_3rd/hansardpdf/34.pdf.

Eichler's topic choices for his questions exemplify his representational strategy as 'Policy and Party' because he focused on major policy issues. Given the limited number of questions Opposition members are permitted to ask, the topics of these questions reveal what they hold to be truly important, and for Eichler that proved to be major topical policy issues.

Party Connections

Party connections are also an important aspect of Ralph Eichler's overall representational strategy. Party connections entail a strong association with and within a representative's political party. Party connections are very important to Eichler. As an elected member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba for eleven years, he has held a variety of portfolios of increasing impact including the critic for hydro and the Caucus Whip.

In order to illustrate the importance of maintaining party connections to MLA Ralph Eichler's overall representational strategy, I have provided three examples from my time spent with him to provide evidence to this end.

My first example occurred during my first day at the Legislative building with Eichler. After finding his office and going over the schedule for the day, I accompanied him around to various offices as he made a concerted effort to introduce me to many of his fellow longtime Progressive Conservative MLAs.

Later in the day, we went down to the cafeteria for lunch. There, we met up and ate lunch with Eichler's fellow PC MLAs, including the party leader. Eichler made sure I was introduced to everyone and included in their friendly conversations. On other occasions when I

was with Eichler in the Legislature, similar behavior occurred. He made sure that I was promptly introduced to and acquainted with other party members

This occurrence is important to consider because it provides a clue as to who he thought were the most important people for me to meet in the Legislature: his fellow party members and their senior staff. Given my limited time at the Legislature, he felt that a significant aspect of his position for me to observe and interact with was his party colleagues. He did not spend as much time introducing me to NDP MLAs, ministers, and general staff in the Legislature. This signifies the importance Eichler places on party connections. The network of the Progressive Conservatives is imperative to his representational strategy.

The second example to demonstrate Eichler's tendency to use party connections as one of his prominent representational strategies is the time he spends on party tasks in the Legislature versus in the riding. When the provincial government is not in session, Eichler stated that he spends much of his in his constituency. Once the government is in session however, he rarely leaves the Legislature except occasionally on the weekends for special community events, or to spend time with his family.

Since he is an MLA with eleven years of experience, Eichler holds significant positions and seniority within the PC party ranks. Therefore, when he is in the Legislature, much of his time is occupied with party tasks. When I was in the Legislature with Eichler, a significant portion of the day was spent going over policy issues for the party as well as taking casual walk-in meeting from other PC MLAs seeking his advice on various issues and political tactics. In addition, he is also involved in recruiting and interviewing potential PC candidates for future

elections. These party tasks occupy a significant portion of Eichler's time while he is at the Legislature.

All of this involvement within the Progressive Conservative party provides excellent networking opportunities, which leads to utilizing party connections as a representational strategy. Since he is so involved in the workings of the party, he is able to relate this to his constituents, which significantly contributes to his overall representational strategy. He also discussed his party activities during his council meetings in Lakeside to relay them back to his constituents.

The last example that demonstrates Eichler's affinity for party connections pertains to his communication in his constituency. From my time spent with Eichler in his constituency, I witnessed his communication with constituents through RM meetings and a collection of his previous franking pieces.

During his meetings with the RM councils, Eichler focused on policy concerns, but he also focused on party matters. More specifically, he focused on the PC party's position with regard to prominent policy issues, as well as the opinions (and work) of the party leader. In addition, in his franking pieces, Eichler focuses on policies that are of major concern to the party as a whole. He generally uses the mail-outs to address the key topical policy issues of the Progressive Conservative party.

Given that these communication opportunities within the constituency are limited, it is significant to note that Eichler chose to address party concerns and updates. He uses his party connections in his constituency to contribute to his representational strategy.

Personal Connections

Personal connections are the ability of the representative to form bonds with constituents on an individual basis. While observing Eichler, I noticed that the frequency in which he employed personal connections was far less than either policy or personal connections. I have therefore resolved that personal connections are of medium importance to Eichler's overall representational strategy.

The following illustrates two examples of MLA Ralph Eichler forming personal connections with constituents.

The first example occurred while out and about with Eichler on my first day in the Lakeside constituency. We stopped for lunch at a local restaurant in Stonewall after a long morning of council meetings. Patrons were scattered throughout the diner, but there was one table in particular that caught Eichler's attention.

This table was occupied by a group of local seniors and Eichler stopped to chat with them for a bit. He chatted with one friendly elderly lady in particular for a while about families and events in the community. When he returned to our table, he looked back at the seniors as they were leaving and sighed, "Ah, those are good people".

This is important to note because when the opportunity arose, he seemed to take the time to talk with people in the community on a casual basis. He seems genuinely interested in their wellbeing.

My second example of personal connections for Ralph Eichler occurred during my second visit to his constituency. On this particular day, I spent time in his constituency office 'soaking and poking' about. His office assistant showed me around and explained how things are handled and the workings of the office.

In addition, she described Eichler's general procedure for appointments with constituents. While most MLA's have their constituents make an office appointment when they wish to discuss an issue, his assistant explained that, when possible, Eichler prefers to go to the constituent's place of residence to hear their concerns. Since a large portion of constituent issues have to do with agriculture, Eichler prefers to go to them, so he can actually see the problem and get a better sense of how to help.

Upon first inspection, this may not seem significant; however it is noteworthy because he is making the effort to go to his constituents. By travelling to them to hear and see their problems, he is 'going the extra mile' and is building a connection with his constituents that goes beyond an MLA. He is building personal connections.

During the time I spent with Eichler, it was apparent that even though he does go around making personal connections, he doesn't do so in any systematic or focused way, as is the case with policy and party connections. Since his affinity for personal connections is not as strong as for policy or party connections, I have concluded that they are of medium importance to his overall representational strategy.

Symbolic Connections

Symbolic connections refer to a representative's ability to embody characteristics of the riding in general and connect to constituents in a manner that is representative of their distinct needs. Of my time spent with Eichler, symbolic connections were not particularly prominent in his representational strategy. In fact they barely factored in. Therefore I have concluded that symbolic connections are of low importance to Eichler's representational strategy.

The following illustrates the only example of symbolic connections that I witnessed while observing Ralph Eichler. This example took place mid-morning on my first day in the constituency of Lakeside. Eichler and I had just left the council meeting in the RM of Woodlands and we were driving back towards Stonewall for lunch when I began to ask him about his role as the Caucus Whip.

He explained that even though he has this prominent role within the Opposition that requires getting his party members to vote in a certain manner, he would never vote for a policy that wasn't beneficial to his riding. He further maintained, "you have to remember who put you there (in the representative position). . . I always say, governments defeat themselves. It happens when you stop listening (to constituents)".

I observed that symbolic connections are the least pronounced representational strategy for Eichler. He did not build the kind of strong psychological connections that others do; he does not focus on ensuring that his constituents see him as one of them. Hence, I have established that symbolic connections are of low importance for his representational strategy.

Throughout my time with Ralph Eichler, his representational strategy of policy and party were well established. To reiterate, this representational strategy emphasizes both policy and party connections. Policy connections involve connecting with constituents through shared policy concerns, while party connections require a strong association with and within a political party as a means of relating to constituents. Eichler frequently used these connection types to connect to and communicate with his constituency.

Chapter Four

Blaine Pedersen: A Man of the Community

Introduction

In the morning of my first day with Pedersen in the constituency of Midland, we stopped at a local railway company in the town of Manitou, population 808.⁹¹ Pedersen said that we couldn't leave the town without at least stopping by this local business to say 'hi'. Once inside the large warehouse full of farm and railway equipment, we headed to the owner's office where we were met by the owner and a (well known) local farmer.

They greeted each other as old friends, and Pedersen introduced me to them as a university student from the city, doing some job shadowing. "She's a city girl," he commented, to which the others smiled and nodded in understanding. It was at this point that Pedersen said, "So.... What's new?" and the three of them chatted about local issues, most of which dealt with farming, crops, and the transportation of crops.

This phrase "So.... What's new?" proved to be a key phrase of Pedersen's when talking with locals in the communities of his riding. It was a way of initiating conversations, and finding out how constituents were doing, the problems and concerns they were having, and information about the community in general. In other words, this was his way of connecting

⁹¹ Government of Canada, "Statistics Canada", last modified April 28, 2014, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=4604035&Geo2=PR&Code2=46&Data=Count&SearchText=Manitou&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom> .

with constituents one on one, in a way that was both personal and approachable in rural Manitoba.

This meeting with locals in the constituency encapsulates Pedersen's representational strategy. He is a "Man of the Community". This representational strategy entails heavy emphasis on and maintenance of both symbolic and personal connections. Pedersen feels that his most important duty as an MLA is to represent the people of Midland and to be the ultimate promoter for the community and opportunities in it.

Pedersen also relies heavily on personal connections with his constituents. He explained that Midland relies greatly on word of mouth, so it's important that he sees the influential people in the riding so that word spreads that he's staying 'in touch'. "It's important to be present at these (community) events. Even if I can't talk to everyone, at least people will see me, and then later on when they're chatting to so-and-so, they'll say 'oh yeah and I saw the MLA at the event last night'. . . That's how you stay connected in rural Manitoba."

Unlike Eichler, Pedersen was born and raised in the Midland constituency. He was born on April 26th, 1954 in Carman Manitoba and grew up on a farm southeast of Elmcreek. He went to school in Elmcreek and left in 1972 to pursue various jobs until he finally bought a farm in 1975. He farmed cattle and grain on his plot of land until 2005. At this point, he sold the farm and retired until he was elected as the MLA for Midland in 2007.

Pedersen's background and pre-political career are important because it is what ultimately connects him so tightly to the community. He was born and raised in Midland, settled down and raised his family in Midland, and still resides in Midland. He feels that he

knows the riding through and through because it's where he's always been. This type of connection with the riding is indicative of the deep symbolic connections he has as an MLA.

In addition, residing in the constituency all of his life has enabled him to easily make personal connections one of his main priorities. Pedersen, like many other Midland residents, grew up and remained in the constituency, so he has essentially grown up with many constituents. Having these personal connections with constituents makes it easier to incorporate this into his representational strategy.

Before he was the MLA of Midland, Pedersen volunteered with a number of local committees, including: the Elm Creek Co-op Board of Directors, the Elm Creek 4-H Beef Club, and the Elm Creek Kinsmen Club. He has been a longtime supporter and card-holding member of both the federal and provincial Progressive Conservative Parties. He served on the Manitoba Progressive Conservative local association for a few terms. In addition, he was the president of the federal riding of Portage-Lisgar when now provincial PC leader Brian Pallister, served as the constituency's Member of Parliament.

Considering Pedersen's involvement in committees and boards in the community is important because this too helps to inform his representational strategy. He was associated with the Progressive Conservative party both federally and provincially, prior to being elected which indicated that he has a deep rooted connection with the party in his riding. In addition, these associations would have helped him to form acquaintances and personal connections with people in the community.

Pedersen was a long time members of the provincial PC party, and was first nominated for the candidate position in Midland in 2004. He explained that he challenged the twenty year incumbent because there was a growing feeling in the constituency that the MLA was not doing his job and listening to the constituents. This resulted in a heated two and a half year nomination battle between Pedersen and the incumbent, which Pedersen eventually won on November 16th, 2006. He was the official PC candidate in 2007, and was elected as the MLA for Midland on May, 22nd.

When Pedersen was first elected to the constituency of Carmen (which was renamed as Midland for the 2011 election), he received 57.96% of the vote and had a win margin of 36.25%. He was then re-elected in 2011, receiving 69.17% of the vote and a win margin of 45.61%. Besides his first election in 2007, Pedersen hasn't faced another nomination challenge, and his increasing win margins indicate that he is still in the protectionist phase of his political career⁹², "You can never assume anything, but I have good support."

These figures are important to consider because they help to explain his representational approach. Receiving a higher percentage of the vote in 2011 than in 2007 hints that he has gained support in his riding over the years and that his connection choices seem to be effective. Pedersen has been the MLA for Midland for seven years. Given his background in the community with regard to agriculture and his upbringing, he knows how to connect with the constituents, which seems integral in southern, rural Manitoba.

⁹² (Fenno, 1978) 173.

Throughout his years as the MLA, Pedersen has held different critic roles including critic for Rural Initiatives, Lotteries and Gaming, as well as the Deputy Caucus Whip. He is currently the Caucus Chair and the critic for Agriculture. However, he feels that his biggest accomplishments as an MLA have been to serve his constituents and to help them with any issues they have, as best as he can, “(being the MLA) is the ultimate in serving your community.” Unlike Eichler, who emphasizes passing legislation to help his constituents, Pedersen emphasizes *directly* helping his constituents in his constituency.

This chapter will be a case study of the representational strategy of the MLA for Midland constituency, Blaine Pedersen. After spending some time with him in both his constituency and the Legislature, I have determined his representational strategy to be that of “a Man of the Community”. This strategy entails a heavy emphasis on symbolic connections and party connections

Riding Context

I first met Blaine Pedersen on a particularly frigid day towards the end of January at a rural gas station/coffee shop, just outside the borders of his rural constituency of Midland. As we rode together down the rural highways, Pedersen pointed out every farm that we drove by. He knew who they were, what they produced, and who supported him. “That guy over there doesn’t vote for me, but his wife does,” he said, pointing to a large farm house on the right. He knew where every semi-truck that drove by was going, and what they were hauling. Pedersen, it is clear, is very detail oriented when it comes to Midland. He appeared to view his riding in a dualistic manner. On the one hand, Pedersen sees the riding in terms of individuals and

individual needs, as exemplified by his ability to remember details about constituents. On the other hand, he views Midland in broad strokes; in terms of the big interests of the riding as a whole such as rural and farming interests.

The Midland Constituency is located in south central Manitoba approximately 100 kilometers southwest of Winnipeg. It is outlined by the following communities: Fannystelle in the northeast, Cypress River in the northwest, Manitou and Crystal City in the southwest down to the USA border. There are eight Rural Municipalities in Midland: Dufferin, Thompson, South Norfolk, Grey, Victoria, Louise, Pembina, and Roland.

Midland is made up of many small rural towns surrounded by fertile farmland. On the surface, these small towns seem to be very similar; however, upon second glance it is clear that they assert their own unique identity. This is mirrored by the fact that on my first day in the constituency, we visited many small towns all across Midland. Each town wants to be autonomous from the rest, and just as important to Pedersen as the next.

The constituency mainly consists of farmers, small business owners, and agribusiness workers. Many of the residents have lived in the constituency their whole lives and through multiple generations. Therefore, family names are a significant connecting mechanism for locals.

The largest town in Midland is Carman, which is where Pedersen's constituency office is set up. The town is over 100 years old and is home to over 3000 residents. Even though Carmen is the town with the highest population, by no means does it define the constituency. To the contrary, Midland consists of many small, towns and villages, each with their own

character, and drive to remain autonomous and distinct from the rest. These people have formed their own communities under the commonality of belong to the same town or village. Each of these villages and small towns have developed into very tightly knit communities.

There are approximately seventeen Hutterite colonies in Midland. Pedersen noted that, they are mainly involved in agriculture and agriculture manufacturing, and even though they don't particularly like to, they do come out and vote. "They (mostly men) come in staggered, as not to draw attention to themselves" said Pedersen, and they always vote conservative because they want small government.

According to Pedersen, "Agriculture and the light industry form the backbone of the constituency". He further explained that light industry refers to manufacturing with 10-40 employees, as opposed to heavy industry. Other industries in the riding include agriculture manufacturing and wind power. Agriculture in Midland mainly consists of livestock, wheat, canola, potatoes, soybeans, corn, hogs, turkey, and grains. Fertile farmland is plentiful, which is evident by the number and variety of crops produced. Midland mainly consists of farmers, small business owners, and agribusiness workers. Pedersen explained that the key to the agriculture industry in Midland is rail lines, not only because they can move commodities more efficiently than trucks, but because they allow the rural riding to preserve the conditions of its roads, which are problematic enough in the brutal Manitoba winters.

Given the nature of the rural riding of Midland, there are issues that they have to contend with. During my winter visit, of particular concern to the MLA was the condition of the roads and highways. Snow drifts were high, and pavement was slick. Pedersen commented

that the provincial government doesn't concern themselves too much with snow clearing outside the city. Not only did these poor road conditions make it difficult for residents to get to work, but it slows the progress of industry and is bad for his local farmers and business people. "Trucks can't get through; they can't make money when they're parked and not moving their load".

In addition, like most rural areas, there is concern over losing their 'young people' to the 'big city'. While driving through the town of Manitou, after giving a talk about government to a grade four class, Pedersen remarked that after high school, a lot of their younger generations will go to Winnipeg for post-secondary education, but very few of them return to their home communities. Fewer and fewer are interested in farming and the rural lifestyle.

Related to that is the concern of physicians in Midland, or lack thereof. These rural communities fund the development of hospitals and treatment centers, yet they cannot convince Manitoba physicians to remain and work there. Instead, these communities are forced to hire physicians on contract from other countries to run their care facilities. Even these physicians however, only remain in the communities until their contracts expire, and then move to a major city. This has been an ongoing issue for Midland for many years.

Like Lakeside, Midland is also affected by the Bipole III development. The power lines are set to cut through the farmlands of many constituents, not only decreasing their property value, but also posing risks to farmland and landowners alike.

Perhaps the biggest concern in the Midland riding is the newly proposed legislation to amalgamate small rural towns that do not meet a set population criteria, in order for the

provincial government to reduce administration costs.⁹³ Many of the small towns in the riding have deep seeded rivalries with one another, and have grown accustomed to being autonomous. Pedersen maintains that these ‘forced amalgamations’ are creating turmoil between the towns and villages of the riding.

Midland has always been a Conservative riding given its rural location and traditional values.⁹⁴ The riding however, has altered for Pedersen as a result of redistribution. When he was first elected in 2007, the riding was known as Carman. In 2009, the constituency transformed as a result of provincial redistribution, in which it gained the Rural Municipalities of Pembina and Louise. As well, during this time, the name of the constituency changed to Midland.

During our travels, Pedersen and I stopped for lunch at a small local restaurant in the village of Somerset. It was during this time that he explained that the whole constituency has always been Conservative, and that the only real competition was for the Conservative nomination in the riding.

There are five local newspapers in Midland: the Trehern Times, the Valley Leader, the Western Canadian, the Centennial Courier, and the St. Claude Gazette. Like Eichler, Pedersen gives interviews or statements to the papers when asked and will occasionally contribute an ad or an article, including his signature “View from the Leg”, which he contributes about once a month while in the MLAs are in session at the Legislature. In these articles, he discusses the

⁹³ The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, “Bill 33: THE MUNICIPAL MODERNIZATION ACT”, last modified 2014, <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/40-2/b033e.php>.

⁹⁴ Elections Manitoba, “Historical Summaries”, Last modified 2012, <http://www.electionsmanitoba.ca/downloads/HistoricalSummary.pdf>.

debates that have been going on in the Legislature as well as the events he's gone to and how he's represented his constituency's concerns.

Pedersen does not use social media such as Facebook or Twitter because he feels that his statements could easily be taken out of context on these venues. "I'm not on Facebook or Twitter", he says. "Things get taken out of context when you only have so many characters to work with." In addition, he doesn't feel that most of his constituents access these sites, so he ultimately doesn't feel it will help connect him to his constituents.

Symbolic Connections

I have coined Pedersen's representational strategy to be 'Man of the Community' which requires a strong emphasis on both symbolic connections and personal connections. Symbolic connections are particularly important to Pedersen. He tends to focus on symbolic connections whenever he can, both in the constituency and in the Legislature. It is through being an enthusiast of the community that Pedersen is best able to serve as an MLA.

Midland is a constituency made up of small rural towns, with generally traditional values. The people have very deep seeded connections to their towns and the riding in general. Therefore, symbolic connections in Midland, require that you are 'of the community', or 'one of their own'. Blaine Pedersen is 'of the community'. He was born in the constituency and raised on a family farm in the community. His wife is also from the constituency, and together, they raised their family on a cattle farm in the community. Pedersen has lived his life in the constituency, which he believes has enabled him to understand the people, as an outsider

would not. It is through these foundations that Pedersen is able to form symbolic connections with constituents, because he understands them and he understands Midland.

In order to illustrate the importance Pedersen places on maintaining symbolic connections as part of his overall representational style, I have provided four examples from my time with the MLA to provide substantiation to this end.

My first example to illustrate Blaine Pedersen's propensity for symbolic connections occurred when I was with him in the Midland constituency. It was in the evening and we were off to the council meeting in the Town of Notre Dame. Upon arrival, we waited in the lobby until we were called into the council chambers. Once inside Pedersen shook every councillor's hand, then sat in a chair around the table and uttered his signature phrase, "So. . . what's new?"

He used this phrase multiple times throughout my time with him in the constituency. It was his way of connecting with the constituents. It opened a dialogue to which he was able to get a sense of the concerns and issues in the riding, as well as just general information. At this particular meeting in Notre Dame, the major issue was forced amalgamation. Given the small size of the town, Notre Dame was to be amalgamated with two other nearby towns in order to increase efficiency and lower council operating costs. To an outsider, this may not have seemed like a large problem, but not to Pedersen. He understood the value the people of these small towns place on their autonomy. For years, these towns were unique and independent, and constituents identified themselves alongside their town. Pedersen understood that to amalgamate these towns would also mean to alter the identities of their residents.

Blaine Pedersen's rootedness in the riding equips him to understand these underlying issues in a way that a newcomer may not be able to. Since Pedersen has spent his life in Midland, he recognizes how contentious and problematic this issue is for his constituents. This would not be the case of an outsider.

A second example of the importance of symbolic connections for Pedersen transpired while I was with him at the Legislature. On this particular day there were choirs from many different Manitoba schools, ranging from elementary to high school, singing in the main foyer. The foyer was filled with students, teachers, parents, and legislature workers, all shuffling about to try and get a better view of the young performers.

As I followed Pedersen to his office, he informed me that a school from his riding was performing shortly so we'd be returning to watch their performance. A little while later, we came back to the foyer and Pedersen made sure that he was front and center in the audience for his school's performance. Afterwards, he took his school group aside to chat with them all and congratulate them on a job well done. This was followed by pictures with the MLA, likely for newsletters or householders, and the distribution of bookmarks and legislative pins.

This is noteworthy because even though he was busy, he made every effort to see his constituents and be visible for them. He wanted to 'be there' for his students. As well he took the time to talk with them and make them feel valued. According to Pedersen, the constituency works on word of mouth. "It's important to show up and be visible." Therefore, the parents of the students will know how he took care of them at the Legislature, and that's important.

My third example is set on the morning of my first day with Pedersen in Midland. We drove out to an elementary school where he was scheduled to give a talk to the grade four class because they were studying a unit on the workings of government. During the drive out, Pedersen revealed that he gives this talk to the grade fours every year, and it helps him stay connected in the community.

When we finally arrived at the school, he was met by the principal who greeted the MLA with an acute familiarity and proceeded to speak to him about issues that she'd been experiencing as we all walked down the hallway to the fourth grade classroom. During his talk he was engaging with the students, answered their questions and asked his own. Afterwards, he explained that he likes to do these appearances because then the kids get to know him and go home to tell their parents about him.

By making these appearances at schools, Pedersen is able to stay connected with constituents. Even though the students can't vote for him, they will tell their parents that he came which will make a good impression on the parents. Since the constituency relies heavily on word of mouth, by making these appearances Pedersen is able to connect within the community.

There are many different ways that MLAs choose to communicate with their constituents. My fourth example looks at how Pedersen communicates with his constituents while he is away from the constituency and in session. Pedersen updates his constituents on his activities by writing and posting a monthly article on his website called "View from the Leg".

In these articles, Pedersen discusses his committee work, conferences that he has attended, and issues that have arisen at the Legislature. He also discusses the progress on policy concerns in his riding, updating his constituency on the status of contentious bills and initiations. Given that he is the Opposition's Agriculture critic, and agriculture is the life source of his constituency, many of articles focus on agriculture issues as they are a main connecting point for the riding. In a recent "View from the Leg" Pedersen wrote, "Regulations currently in place do not allow consumers to buy products from farm websites and farmers are not allowed to work with other producers to deliver their product to the consumer's door. This is a missed opportunity to strengthen the bond between the agricultural community and urban consumers. Bureaucracy at its best!".⁹⁵

This is noteworthy because even though he is away from the constituency at the Legislature, he is connecting with constituents, in a way that is accessible. He writes these "View from the Leg" articles specifically for his constituents so that they know what's going on and don't feel abandoned by their MLA. In this way, even though he isn't physically there, Pedersen still remains 'of the community'.

Personal Connections

Next to symbolic connections, personal connections are the second most evident connections of Pedersen's representational strategy. Personal connections require the representative to connect with their constituents on an individual basis. They provide the constituent with a sense of being understood. Personal connections are very important to

⁹⁵ Pedersen, Blaine, "View for the Leg" April 2014, <http://www.blainepedersen.com/news.asp?newsID=602> .

Pedersen. Since he was born and raised in the constituency, he believes he has a comfortable relationship with many constituents which makes it easier to connect with them on a personal level.

In order to illustrate the importance of maintaining personal connections to Pedersen's overall representational strategy, I have provided three examples from my time spent with him to serve as evidence.

My first example takes place in the Village of Somerset. During my travels with Pedersen in the constituency of Midland, we stopped in Somerset to grab a quick lunch at a local restaurant. After chatting with some of the folks at the restaurant, we walked across the street to the village council office just to make an appearance.

Inside the office was elderly woman whom Pedersen greeted knowingly, and used his key phrase of "So. . . What's new?" to start a casual conversation with her about the goings-on in Somerset. It was clear that this elderly woman was an influential resident and a key constituent for Pedersen to talk to. Pedersen later revealed that there are key, influential people in Midland which he relies on for information. In addition, that it is important to be seen and make an effort in the constituency because, "just making an appearance shows respect for the community."

This occurrence is important to consider because it is a prime example of Pedersen making person connections in his constituency. After lunch, we couldn't just leave the village without making a spot to visit the council office. Even if the councillors didn't see him there, they would be informed about his visit from the elderly lady, and that is considerable in the

riding. These small communities in the riding of Midland are bound together by small town politics, everyone knows everyone else and information is spread by word of mouth.

The next example occurred while in the Midland constituency office. I was able to witness Pedersen meet with a couple of constituents in his office to discuss some problems they were having. In order to try to conserve the couples' privacy, Pedersen and his office assistant set up portable partitions in the generally open-concept office before their arrival.

Upon arriving, Pedersen was quick to make them feel welcome and comfortable. Once they were seated, both he and his assistant grabbed notebooks to write down the details as the couple recounted their predicament. The couple was having trouble collecting disability from their employer and wanted to know of options available to them and the reason for the recently decreased EI cheques. Pedersen and his assistant listened intently to their story, and then asked questions for clarification. The couple spoke with Pedersen for over half an hour, during which time Pedersen decided that the best course of action would be for him to write a letter to the employer, requesting an explanation of the situation.

It is important to note that at the end of this meeting, the constituents genuinely felt heard and understood. Although helping constituents with their problems is one of the many jobs of an MLA, making them feel genuinely understood helps to build personal connections with them and trust. These personal connections can be made more easily with Pedersen because of his background and knowledge of the community.

My final example of Pedersen's use of personal connections occurred while near Swan Lake in the Midland constituency. It was mid-morning and we stopped at a school board office

building in the constituency to visit the superintendent. The superintendent was to retire shortly and Pedersen wanted to stop in to congratulate him in person and wish him a happy retirement.

Upon arriving at the building, Pedersen couldn't remember the superintendent's full name, so we sat in the vehicle until he could confidently remember. Once inside, he casually said hello to the receptionist before going into the back office to chat with the superintendent. They spoke for a while on a variety of topics including the schools systems, their families, farming, and the superintendent's future retirement plans. It was clear that this was not simply a political conversation, but a personal connection with an influential constituent. Pedersen was reinforcing a bond with the superintendent that was more than a political connection.

This example is significant because it reveals the personal connections involved with remembering names in Midland. This is the base of how personal connections are formed in Midland. It also implies the importance of maintaining relationships with constituents that go beyond the political. Midland requires a type of personal connection that is akin to friendship.

Policy Connections

Policy connections are the ability of the representative to relate to or connect with constituents through shared policy concerns. For Blaine Pedersen, policy connections are of medium importance for his overall representational strategy. During my time spent with Pedersen, I observed examples of policy connections far less than both symbolic and personal connections alike.

In order to illustrate the medium importance of maintaining policy connections to Blaine Pedersen's overall representational strategy, I have provided two examples from my time spent with him.

My first example occurred while I was in the Legislature with Pedersen. During this time, I witnessed him play a leading role in organizing a rally for his constituents in opposition to a particular policy issue. This particular issue was the Bipole III development that Manitoba Hydro is currently undertaking.

Many of Pedersen's constituents will be negatively affected by the Bipole III project. The power lines are set to span across many farms, which have the potential to not only affect crops, but the residents on the land as well. Therefore, numerous constituents in the Midland area are strongly opposed to the development, to the point where they organized themselves to take political action. A few of these individuals contacted Pedersen, via conference call and he was very supportive of their cause. Not only did he help plan their event, but he also organized their transportation from the riding and to the Legislature to continue their protest.

This is important to note because in helping his constituents, and taking an active role in organizing their rally, he is building a connection with them. He is able to relate to his constituents on a deeper level because of their shared concerns over Bipole III. In addition, by helping to organize this rally for them, he is gaining their trust.

My second example of Pedersen forming policy connections comes from his questions during Question Period at the Legislature. During the course of my research, I was able to see Pedersen in Question Period a few times and present a number of questions. The majority of

these questions were related to agriculture given that he is the Agriculture Critic for the Opposition; however, these questions also directly relate to his constituency given that its main industry is agriculture.

On one instance in particular he questioned the Minister of Agriculture on recent regulations which prevent farmers from directly selling their product to consumers in an unregulated manner. These issues directly affect his constituents since a large portion of them are farmers and could benefit from selling their wares directly to urban consumers.

“Mr. Speaker, an increasing number of consumers want to purchase food products directly from farmers who are producing for this niche market. These are relationships built on respect and trust, something this NDP government does not know anything about. This should be a win-win situation, except this NDP government continues to interfere with more and more rules and regulations”.⁹⁶

This example is important because it illustrates Pedersen’s ability to directly address policy issues that affect his constituents. He spoke to this policy issue on two separate occasions in Question Period during my time at the Legislature. He is able to protect the interests of his community by opposing policy that affects his constituents negatively.

When compared to his ability to achieve symbolic and personal connections, policy connections are less prominent in his overall representational strategy. Nevertheless, given his position as the Agriculture Critic for the Opposition, he is able to pose questions to the government that are of importance to his agriculturally based riding.

⁹⁶ The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, “DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS: Official Report (Hansard)”, April 15, 2014, http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/business/hansard/40th_3rd/hansardpdf/43b.pdf.

Party Connections

Of all four representational strategies, party connections were the least prominent for MLA Blaine Pedersen. Pedersen's riding of Midland has always been a strong Conservative constituency, and he has been a card holding member of the party for many years. Thus, it seems to be naturally assumed that the MLA will uphold the traditional values of the riding which are expected of the Progressive Conservative Party.

The following example illustrates one of the only examples of party connections that I observed during my time with Pedersen.

This example transpired while driving around in Midland with Pedersen. He explained to me that he had been a card holding member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba for many years. In addition, he has been, and still is, a card carrying member of the federal Conservative Party and donates annually to his MP's Riding Association.

He said that before the current leader of the provincial Opposition was in his position, he was the federal Member of Parliament (MP) for the federal riding that included Midland. During that time, Pedersen became connected with the MP through work in the riding. When this individual decided to run for the leadership position of the provincial PC party, Pedersen was an avid supporter, having previously been associated with him.

This is significant because he is connected to the party leader, and the leader has prior connections to the riding, being a former MP. In this way, they both have a similar understanding of Midland constituents.

Overall, Pedersen's tendency to use party connections in his representational strategy is weak compared to symbolic and personal connections. I have thus concluded that party connections are of the lowest importance to him out of the four connection types.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The close range research of this thesis has resulted in rich perspectives of the process of representation for both Ralph Eichler and Blaine Pedersen. I address two research questions. First, how do Manitoba Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) represent their constituents? Second, why do MLAs differ in the overall representational strategies they adopt?

A representational strategy is essentially the pattern of connections made by the representative. In order to examine an elected member's representational strategy, we must first look at how it is formed. Akin to Richard Fenno's work, I abided by the theory that certain influential factors affect representational strategy.⁹⁷

This research concentrates on three such influential factors: personal goals, constituency context and formative experiences.⁹⁸ Personal goals are the objectives the representative has for entering politics in the first place.⁹⁹ These goals may shift over time, especially for a representative who has served for many years. Constituency context refers to the ways in which the nature of the riding and constituents affect a politician's representational strategy.¹⁰⁰ Formative experiences are the significant past experiences of a politician that explicitly affect the ways in which they perform their duties as a representative. These three

⁹⁷ Fenno, Richard. *Congress at the Grassroots: Representation in the South, 1970-1998*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000) 5.

⁹⁸ (Fenno, 2000) 5.

⁹⁹ (Fenno, 2000) 5.

¹⁰⁰ (Fenno, 2000) 5.

influences are the independent variables in this research, while the dependent variable is the resulting representational strategy.

The two distinct representational strategies that were identified and branded in this research were Policy and Party in the case of Ralph Eichler, and Man of the Community in the case of Blaine Pedersen. As previously mentioned, Eichler's Policy and Party representational strategy emphasizes both policy connections and party connections, while Pedersen's Man of the Community representational strategy emphasizes symbolic connections and personal connections. It is important, however, to consider how the three independent variables contribute to each MLA's overall representational strategy. The following section will analyze each of the three independent variables for both Eichler and Pedersen in order to provide a comparison of their representational strategies.

Comparison

The first independent variable to be reflected upon is personal goals. These refer to the ambitions and underlying motivations of an elected member and are particularly relevant to representational strategies as strategy choices are goal oriented.¹⁰¹ Given Eichler's tendencies towards policy and party connections, it became apparent that his defining personal goals were to form government for the purpose of affecting policy. In the eleven years Eichler has served as an MLA, it has always been as a member of the Opposition. Since greater restrictions are placed on an Opposition member's ability to introduce and pass bills in the House, this would be unsatisfying for an MLA with the propensity for policy enactment. As previously stated, I

¹⁰¹ (Fenno, 2003) 255.

had the opportunity to watch Eichler prepare for and debate during Question Period, both of which he executed with enthusiasm and zeal. He insists that he loves debating bills in the House and working with legislation. Being able to do these things makes him feel very proud; however, he would prefer to do so from the governing side because there are fewer restrictions on the bills that can be introduced and passed. Therefore, Eichler's personal goals are to form government because of the ease which would follow for policy implementation.

Like Eichler, Pedersen's representational strategy was shaped by his personal goals. His Man of the Community approach focused on symbolic and personal connections. From this it became evident that his defining personal goals were to represent 'his people' and bring their unique rural perspective to the 'big city'. Given Pedersen's lifelong connection with the constituency of Midland, his personal goals revolve around helping and promoting his community and 'his people'. In watching him interact with his constituents, it is clear that the connections he is trying to build with them are of a different nature than Eichler. He goes out of his way to check-in with all of the small towns and villages multiple times a year. As well, he makes personalized drop-in visits to influential members of these communities to get the local 'scoop', using his signature phrase of "So, what's new?" to initiate conversation. Pedersen maintains that information in Midland is spread by word of mouth, and he is adamant on talking with the locals and forming the personal connections to weave himself into the community. He is driven to maintain and enhance his relationship with constituents through personal contact. It is this goal, of representing 'his people' to Manitobans that helped to shape his representational strategy.

The second independent variable to be considered is constituency context which conveys how a representative's constituency affects their pattern of connections and overall representational strategy. Elected members interact with constituents within their ridings, and, as a result, the riding makeup sets conditions that influence the connection activities of the representatives.¹⁰²

On the surface, both Lakeside and Midland seem like similar ridings. They are both considered to be conservative rural ridings, yet upon closer inspection they are vastly different. Eichler's constituency of Lakeside is generally a rural riding, but with the large town of Stonewall located in the southern part of the constituency, the dynamics are significantly altered. The presence of this large town indicates the presence of an urbanizing population in the riding. In addition, since Lakeside is located close to Winnipeg, it has a significant population of commuters, who commute to and from the city every day for work. According to Eichler, these commuters are a unique mix in Lakeside because they want the urban city services with the rural lifestyle. It is this diverse population of rural, urbanizing, and commuter constituents that make Lakeside unique.

This diversity has also contributed to the development of Eichler's policy and party oriented approach to representation. Since Lakeside's population is diversified, Eichler is able to promote an array of policies from his party because the constituents are diverse in their needs and wants. I was able to watch Eichler promote policies that were not directly connected to Lakeside, but more the Progressive Conservative Party such as the Bipole III development.

¹⁰² (Fenno, 2003) 258.

Therefore, it can be inferred that the makeup of Eichler's constituency played an influential role in shaping his policy and party connection typography.

Unlike Eichler, Pedersen's constituency of Midland is situated well outside of Winnipeg, and is a classic rural riding, based firmly in the agriculture industry with many small towns and villages throughout. Being a resident in the town of Stonewall is very different than being a resident in the town of Carman. Generally speaking, Midland constituents are not seeking urban influence and seem to have an antagonistic view of 'the city'. Constituents are very loyal and protective of their small towns and rural lifestyles in a way that outsiders may not understand. Since Pedersen has lived in the constituency his whole life, he is 'part of the community' which likely influences his symbolic and personal connection tendencies. I watched as he stopped in to village council offices and local businesses to shake the hands of his constituents and listen to their concerns or just the local hearsay. I also found his propensity for remembering names and connecting constituents via family names noteworthy. These were valuable tools for relating to constituents and for Pedersen to demonstrate that he is 'one of them', a local. It is this emphasis Midland constituents place on being 'one of them' that has shaped Pedersen's symbolic and personal connection typography.

The third and final independent variable to be examined is formative experiences. This refers to the significant past experiences of a politician that impact the ways in which they perform their duties as a representative. Eichler was first elected as MLA in 2003, after the previous MLA retired. Prior to being elected MLA of Lakeside, he was a business owner in the constituency. This business background has influenced his representational strategy in that he

employs a results-oriented approach. He is focused on accomplishing goals for his constituents and his party, mainly in the form of policies. Therefore, he focuses on policy and party connections for his representational strategy.

Unlike Eichler, Pedersen defeated his incumbent in the Progressive Conservative nomination race in Midland. This event was a significant moment for Pedersen. He insisted that the previous MLA became complacent and lost touch with the community. Therefore, he has made it his mission to stay in touch with all of his constituents, to the best of his abilities. This is well portrayed during the time I spent with him in his riding. He made every effort to stop in to see as many people as he could, and talk with them about their concerns. In addition, Pedersen insisted that he tries to visit every community in his constituency “once a season”, in order to maintain the flow of communication. When his constituents come to the legislature, whether it is to sing in a choir or rally over the Bipole III development, he is sure to take the time to talk with them and maybe even take a few pictures. He tries to make sure there is never any doubt that he is ‘one of them’. Pedersen witnessed the fall of his incumbent because he didn’t stay in touch with the whole constituency. As a result, he doesn’t want to fall victim to the same mistakes as his predecessor. Therefore, in Pedersen’s mind, the key to representing Midland, is to stay connected with all of the communities and to be their promoter.

On the surface, both Midland and Lakeside seem relatively similar; both ridings are rural, and represented by Progressive Conservative males. Upon closer inspection, however, it is apparent that they are quite different and their MLAs represent their constituencies in

different ways. The point of this comparison is not that one strategic emphasis is any 'better' than the other, just that they are different. They appear under different conditions and influences, yet both represent their constituencies effectively.

The qualitative nature of this participant observation research provided a rich perspective of each MLA in a way that quantitative research could not. By immersing myself in the daily lives of these politicians and adopting Fenno's 'soaking and poking' method, I was able to develop a more holistic understanding of how they represent their constituents. There were, however, some limitations to this method. As an observer, I could only go where the MLAs allowed me to go; see what they allowed me to see; and was told what they wanted to share. The case selection of this research was also unique. In utilizing Ralph Eichler and Blaine Pedersen for this project, I was able to achieve a degree of similarity between the two cases. Both MLAs are from rural constituencies, from the same political party, male, and are of similar age. Holding these characteristics constant provided a clearer comparison of their representational strategies.

Method

One of the weaknesses of the case selection was that it is not a very rich sample given the number of MLA participants. A larger number of MLA case studies would have provided more opportunities to view similarities and differences in representational strategy and connection type amongst the participants.

Another weakness was the lack of diversity between the two individuals. Both Eichler and Pedersen are members of the same political party, from rural ridings, male, of similar age

and have been elected to their positions more than once. Having some diversity among the participants has the potential to reveal different, or even similar, representational strategies. This however, is a directional opportunity for future research.

What has been learned?

This study has examined the representational approaches of two Manitoba MLAs. It has assumed that representation is a process of negotiations and connections between an MLA and their constituents that is both complex and gradual. I have illustrated this complexity by exploring several types of connections previously mentioned. In using participant observation to undertake this research, a richer and multi-dimensional perspective of representation was developed and presented in narrative, case study form. It is this type of immersive qualitative research that has generally been lacking in the Canadian political science literature. This research is valuable because it provides a window into the careers of Canadian representatives and moreover, the actual process of representation undertaken by politicians.

Given the nature of this project, this research has led to suggestive findings rather than concrete answers. Therefore, my conclusions must be stated in terms of tendencies. The first question poses in this thesis was, how do Manitoba Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) represent their constituents? These cases suggest that MLAs represent their constituents in different ways, but do so in distinctive ways that reflect the unique constellation of factors (discussed above) that shape representational strategies. From these two cases, it can be proposed that the process of representation is both *diverse* and *flexible*.

The process of representation is based on a continuous series of negotiations, and as such, has the capacity to take on different forms and be carried out in different ways. It is in this way that representation is a diverse process. Representatives are not provided with strict guidelines as to how to adequately represent their constituents. Instead, they are shaped by other factors, including the three influential factors previously discussed, to decipher their own way of representing their constituents.

Since representation is a continuous process of negotiations between representatives and constituents, it is able to be dynamic and alter under changing circumstances and over time. Therefore, representation is a flexible process. Furthermore, representational strategies or the patterns of representation can alter over time as well and is a continuous process. This dynamic nature of representation may be guided by a range of factors.

The second question presented in this thesis was, why do MLAs differ in the overall representational strategies they adopt? From the two cases, it can be suggested that MLAs differ in their representational strategies due to many influential factors including the three independent variables: personal goals, constituency context, and formative experiences. These independent variables shape the ways in which members connect with their constituents and form their overall representational strategy. That is not to say however, that these are the only factors that affect representational strategy. These three factors were emphasized because they were presented as the basic elements affecting representational strategy both in the

literature and through the research itself.¹⁰³ Other factors that have the potential to influence representational strategy are, for example, pre-political careers, and individual personalities.

By undergoing this research, I was able to observe two Manitoba MLAs in action. What I observed however, seemed to contradict the commonly held conception that Canadian representatives are complacent and don't care about individual constituents. There seemed to be a disconnect between the popular accounts of the duties of an MLA and what they actually do. Throughout the entire observation period, both Eichler and Pedersen were extremely engaged. They were consistently busy connecting with constituents, researching policies, and performing their duties at the legislature. I also observed them helping constituents who reached out to them, in any manner they could. Additionally, if these MLAs couldn't directly help a constituent with an issue, then they would make every effort to see that the issue was directed to the appropriate institution. This research helps to unravel the democratic deficit by combating the commonly held misconceptions of the complacency of representatives.

This research is important given the significant position elected members have in indirect democracies.¹⁰⁴ Since direct democracies are impossible in western societies due to the sheer population size of nations, elected members are not only responsible for portraying the views of their constituents, but also hold power over them, since a member's voting behavior directly affects their constituency. By building knowledge about the processes of representation, this research will help politicians adapt their methods of representation to

¹⁰³ (Fenno, 2003) 6.

¹⁰⁴ (Goodin, 1993) 230.

better serve their constituents and improve citizens' attitudes towards democracy, which will in turn help to mend the health of the political system.¹⁰⁵

Shortcomings

Due to the resource limitations and time constraints of an MA thesis, the potential shortcomings of this research are the small sample size and the limited settings under which the participants were observed. Even though a larger sample size would have significantly extended the amount of time taken to complete this research, it would have been a more accurate reflection of the representational strategies of Manitoba MLAs. Given the limited time spent with each MLA, I was only exposed to certain situations. If the research would have continued over a number of years, there would have been more opportunity to observe political events that only occur in specific windows such as political crises and election periods. Observing these events may have altered each MLA's perceived representational strategy. Future research could study the change in representational strategy overtime and during election periods. In addition, these findings are not generalizable in the same way that a larger study likely would be. For this research I sacrificed generalizability for richness.

This research examined the representational strategies of two Manitoba MLAs, Ralph Eichler and Blaine Pedersen. Eichler's Policy and Party strategy focuses on policy connections and party connections, while Pedersen's Man of the Community strategy emphasizes symbolic connections and personal connections. By undergoing a qualitative approach to this research,

¹⁰⁵ (Fenno, 1990) 2.

we are able to develop a richer picture of representation and the individuals who represent Canadians.

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