DYNAMIC AND STATIC COMPONENTS OF POLITICAL SUPPORT IN BRITAIN

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Comparative electoral research has repeatedly demonstrated the strong association between socioeconomic attributes such as class, religion, region, language, etc. and voting behavior [Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Alford, 1963; Rose, 1974]. These correlations have provided useful profiles of typical party voters and a mode of comparison for patterns of support across several nations. Some attention has been paid to the behavioral explanations behind these correlations, but all too frequently the different ways in which the social structure influences electoral behavior have been lumped together and empirically ignored. More importantly, while most analyses acknowledge the role of party strategy and voter response -- the "endogenous" component of party support -- few have attempted to link structural and political factors within the same framework. The result has been that socioeconomic structural explanations of electoral behavior have been excessively static, and that rational, neo-Downsian models have ignored the group processes which contribute to stable electoral cleavages.

This paper will consider a model of the British electorate which tries to account for both exogenous structural and endogenous political factors. The specification of the proposed model will be discussed in some detail and compared with the Butler and Stokes

paradigm, which places almost exclusive emphasis on exogenous structural factors. The estimates obtained from a multivariate regression are then used to measure the relative impact of structural and political components on individual preferences and to draw inferences about the sources of electoral change in Britain. We will then confront the other half of the problem; namely, can a model which incorporates a significant endogenous component successfully account for electoral stability. The estimates of issue and lagged partisan components from a second set of regressions will form the basis of some observations about the stability of preferences across individuals in this model.

THE PROPOSED MODEL

The structure of the proposed theory is as follows:

$$A_0^x = bU_0^x + dB_0^x + u_1 \qquad (1)$$

$$A_t^x = n(U_t^x - U_{t-1}^x) + mA_{t-1}^x + u_2 \qquad (2)$$

where

A_0^x = the assessment of party x at the time of entry into the electorate

A_{t-1}^x = the assessment of party x at time t-1

A_t^x = the assessment of party x at time t

B_0^x = background and family socialization pressures at the time of entry into the electorate

U_0^x = the utility derived from party x at time of entry into the electorate

U_{t-1}^x = the utility derived from party x at time t-1

U_t^x = the utility derived from party x at time t

b, n, d, m = the weights assigned to components of the model

u_1, u_2 = the error terms of the equations

At the moment of entry into the electorate, this model suggests that an individual's party assessment of party x will be a function of the perceived utility of that party's policies and of background factors. The variable B_0^x represents those stable socialization components such as family and social peer group acceptance which create in an individual a predisposition towards one party apart from considerations of issue proximity. In England, the variable B might be represented by class and family membership, but in other countries, membership in a religious, ethnic, agrarian or linguistic group may create the comparable social pressure. These conformity effects can be explained within either a rational-utilitarian or sociological framework. The Downsian might want to call them non-issue utilities since there can be high costs to holding preferences which are different from those of one's parents, peers or co-workers and benefits to be derived in terms of esteem and respect from conformity. From a social-psychological standpoint, these pressures can simply be explained as role expectations. However described, the first way in which the social structure influences political preferences in this model is through the

creation of group loyalties and pressures independent of an individual's attitudes.

It is also possible that background factors are important in the transmission of information and the formulation of political attitudes as well. Clearly, a variety of factors affect and change individual attitudes, but one important source is that an individual's position in the socioeconomic structure causes that person to assess the impact of policies on his utility from a different perspective than a person in another socioeconomic situation. To take an obvious example, the interests of a worker in a steel mill are affected differently by a deflationary, high unemployment policy than are those of a pensioner on a fixed income. At the same time, the formulation of opinions is more complex than a simple identification of material interest. Most troublesome is the possibility that parties through the emphasis of their platforms and propaganda influence individual attitudes. While there is only suggestive evidence of this in the British case [Blumler and McQuail, 1968], more systematic evidence from American data shows that party identification has a descernible causal impact on issue evaluations, even though less than the impact of either exogenous factors on issues or of issue evaluations on party identification itself [Jackson, 1975, pp. 161-185]. It is also likely that television and the press partly determine as well as reinforce opinion, particularly in the cases of highly media-exposed, uncertain or "weakly motivated" individuals [Blumler and McQuail, 1968],

and on issues about which the public has little direct knowledge [Lippman, 1922; Ure, 1968]. The implication is that individual preferences are not fixed, but vary by some function involving self-interest, exposure to the media, personality and a stochastic error component.

While social structure is related to attitude formation, the impact of changes in the social structure on party preferences is by no means simple. This is so because party preferences will vary with the perceived proximity of individual attitudes to party positions and will not depend on individual issue attitudes alone. If Q is defined as a vector of individual i's preferred positions on a set of issues $q_{i1},...,q_{in}$ and X is a vector of perceived party positions $x_{i1},...,x_{in}$, then the value of U_t^x will be greatest when Q = X. The common mode of expressing the utility of party preference in cases where Q ≠ X is the loss formulation. The logic behind the loss formulation has been exhaustively discussed elsewhere and need not be replicated in great detail here [Riker and Ordeshook, 1968; Davis et al., 1970]. Briefly, this concept suggests that voters are typically confronted with alternatives which are less than ideal. This can be expressed as:

$$L_t^x = I - U_t^x$$

where

U_t^x is the utility to individual i from party x's policies at time t

I is the normalized value of U_t^x when $Q = X$

L_t^x is the loss to individual i at time t from party x

The problem which confronts the voter is choosing that alternative with the minimal loss. In early spatial models, the calculation of loss was usually given a quadratic form:

$$L_t^x = (Q - X)'A(Q - X)$$

where

A is a vector of weights assigned to each issue by the voter

Q is the vector of preferred positions

X is the vector of party positions

An individual with no predispositions or biases will prefer party x to party y if $U_t^x > U_t^y$ implying that $L_t^x < L_t^y$.

A change in an individual's socioeconomic position may alter that person's views on a set of issues X or on the importance he/she assigns to those issues, but any corresponding increase or decrease in perceived utility loss will depend on Q as well. This demonstrates an important distinction: the causal path of the social structure on party preferences through role expectations is direct while the impact of social structure on party preferences through attitudes is conditional on the behavior of other actors in the political system. It is possible for an individual to change his/her issue position, but experience no change in partisan

evaluation simply because the position of the party shifted in the same direction, or for an individual to keep the same issue position but still experience an increase in loss, because the party position shifted in the opposite direction. The wider implication is that by incorporating an endogenous political component, a model of electoral choice can account for changes in the distribution of party support in the absence of cataclysmic social change, or, for that matter, can account for stability in the distribution of party support despite measurable social mobility, economic growth or demographic shifts. The former is particularly important for the study of British politics since the decline of major party support and the rise in the number of Liberals and abstainers in the period 1970-74 cannot be attributed to any significant change in the social structure [Crewe, 1974]. In models which rely exclusively on static socialization components, the forces of habit and conformity are so great that the political system automatically gravitates to a pattern of stable support. Only major social or international upheaval can jar the system from its equilibrium, and then once again gravitation towards stability begins. In spatial models, support is affected and maintained by party policies and behavior in office; it is not automatic, and can be augmented or dissipated by political strategy. Since political change in the proposed model can come endogenously from within the political system as well as exogenously from the social structure or international system, no single cataclysmic trauma need precede a realignment

in the electoral system. This will hopefully provide a more flexible explanation of political change, capable of accounting for anomalies in more static theories such as the Butler-Stokes model.

POLITICAL STABILITY AND ENDOGENOUS COMPONENTS

If the pitfall of socialization models has been an excessive emphasis on the structural determinants of individual preferences, early rational theories were less able to account for stable group and personal party loyalties. Political scientists have discovered that party preferences tend to be more stable than attitudes and that some individuals are more immune than others to changes in their voting behavior [Campbell et al., 1964; Butler and Stokes, 1974]. One interpretation of the party identification literature is that voters enter an electoral period with biases accumulated from the past, and that these biases contribute to the overall stability of the electoral system. In the framework of a rational paradigm, this amounts to saying that individuals utilize information and judgments formed at earlier periods as well as current knowledge when making choices. The proposed model must, therefore, incorporate the notion of partisanship and explain the relationship between adjusting and lagged components of voting decisions.

After the point of entry into the electorate, the assessment of parties at any time t can be depicted as a shift from the previous assessment at t-1 based on a recalculation of

utility in the period t-1 to t. As we have seen, the assessment of a party x at any time t can be expressed as:

$$A_t^x = bU_t^x + dB_t^x + u_t$$

An assessment at t-1 assuming stable parameters over time and across the population will be:

$$A_{t-1}^x = bU_{t-1}^x + dB_{t-1} + u_{t-1}$$

Consequently, the difference between them will be:

$$A_t^x - A_{t-1}^x = (bU_t^x + dB_t) - (bU_{t-1}^x + dB_{t-1}) + (u_t - u_{t-1})$$

If the value and parameter of B are stable over time, then the expression can be simplified to:

$$A_t^x - A_{t-1}^x = b(U_t^x - U_{t-1}^x) + A_{t-1}^x + (u_t - u_{t-1})$$

$$A_t^x = b(U_t^x - U_{t-1}^x) + A_{t-1}^x + u_2$$

The expression $(U_t^x - U_{t-1}^x)$ represents the most recent calculation of policies while the lagged component A_{t-1}^x stands for past calculations of utilities as well as stable background factors. Downs [Downs, 1957], and more recently Fiorina [Fiorina, 1975], have suggested that since different levels of uncertainty are associated with different types of information -- past, future, past hypothetical, etc. -- information should be accordingly weighted. For example, the performance of an incumbent is a "harder" piece of information than competing party promises, and

consequently ought to be weighted more heavily. A detailed
examination and estimation of these discount weights is not intended
here. For the limited purposes of this discussion, we expect a
coefficient m on A_{t-1} to be different from that on $(U_t^x - U_{t-1}^x)$ where
A_{t-1} is the summary measure of these lagged spatial and nonspatial
effects:

$$A_t^x = b(U_t^x - U_{t-1}^x) + mA_{t-1}^x + u$$

Theories of socialization also demonstrate that party
evaluations begin at some point in childhood rather than starting
from a point of indifference and impartiality with each election,
but imply falsely that a political preference at any point in time
is simply the earlier judgment plus a random error component
[Butler and Stokes, 1974, pp. 33-46]:

$$A_t^x = A_0^x + e$$

The assumption in theories of socialization that
$A_t^x = A_0^x + e$ would hold true if U_0^x did not change (since it is quite
plausible to assume that $B_0 = B_t$), or at least fluctuated randomly,
such that $E(U_t^x) = U_0^x$. If, on the other hand, $E(U_t^x) \neq U_0^x$ then the
assumption will not hold. It is of course possible that for some
individuals fluctuations of issue distance are random and the
cumulative effect of these changes is zero. However, if we
believe that changes in U_t^x are responses to the relative distance
from party policies, and that party strategy itself is not purely
random, then we can expect to find nonrandom changes in individual

party preferences: that is to say, the continuity and trend of
party policies and economic conditions ought to be reflected in
party evaluations.

The notion of lagged assessment has important implications
for the theory of the rational voter. A voter is said to be
rational when he/she responds to government policies -- subject to
the constraints of information -- with an appropriate recalculation
of preference. An individual at time t with a high previous
assessment of party x and a low previous assessment of party y will
not change the order of his previous assessment unless there has
been a sufficient shift in the differential loss in the period t-1
to t. It is possible therefore for a rational voter to continue
preferring party x even though the loss in the last electoral
period from party y was slightly less than the loss from party x.
In general, we would predict that an individual would prefer party
x if:

$$m(A_{t-1}^x) + b(U_t^x - U_{t-1}^x) > b(U_t^y - U_{t-1}^y) + m(A_{t-1}^y)$$

And moreover that an individual will continue to prefer party x
if the difference in assessments at t-1 exceeds any opposite change
in recalculated utility:

$$m(A_{t-1}^x) - m(A_{t-1}^y) > b(U_t^y - U_{t-1}^y) - b(U_t^x - U_{t-1}^x)$$

An individual would be indifferent at t if the difference in
assessment is approximately equal to any opposite change in
recalculated utility:

$$m(A^x_{t-1}) - m(A^y_{t-1}) = b(U^y_t - U^y_{t-1}) - b(U^x_t - U^x_{t-1})$$

Finally, an individual will alter his order of preference if the difference in assessment at t-1 is less than an opposite change in recalculated utility:

$$m(A^x_{t-1}) - m(A^y_{t-1}) < b(U^y_t - U^y_{t-1}) - b(U^x_t - U^x_{t-1})$$

In this sense, the lagged assessment variable in this model resembles the concept of partisan identification for Butler and Stokes and that of party identification in the American voting literature. If A^x_{t-1} were to reach a sufficiently high level, the marginal impact of recent utility adjustments would be quite small. A high assessment of party x as the result of reinforcing past utility calculations and nonspatial predispositions could then be defined as a high level of partisanship. The voter's probability of voting for party x would be very high: the pattern of voting over time would be stable and small changes in evaluations would not be reflected in voting behavior.

There are then three sources of stability in the proposed model. First, the solidity of the underlying social structure will contribute to stable individual attitudes over time. This point should be viewed with some caution, however, since (1) any model of attitudes must be more complex than a simple identification of socioeconomic self-interest and because (2) the proximity of individual attitudes to the parties in the electoral system will depend on the behavior and statements of the parties

in and out of office. Vote maximizing party behavior is, therefore, the second source of stability in the proposed model in the sense that parties will shift their positions in response to change in the underlying distribution of opinions. Finally, the accumulation of background biases as well as information and opinions acquired over the years serves as a buffer against the insecurity of instantaneous changes in voter affiliations. The fact that parties can draw on the accumulated credit of their partisans gives them a predictable base of support to build on.

A TEST OF THE THEORY AGAINST THE BUTLER AND STOKES MODEL

It might be illustrative to compare the proposed theory with the Butler-Stokes paradigm [Butler and Stokes, 1974, pp. 1-12]. Their study attempts to explain the correlation of class with party in Britain by means of social-psychological concepts. Butler and Stokes claim that enduring alignments are founded on cleavages and maintained by secondary processes such as the transmission of parental affiliation and the immunization of party preferences in older voters. They acknowledge that the connection of class to party can occur through either of two routes: either voters perceive that the parties are "diffusely" representative of class interests, or issues intervene in the perception. They conclude, however, that issues only wear at the fringes of a cleavage maintained primarily by psychological mechanisms, because the level of knowledge about the ends and means of specific policies is very low in the British electorate [Butler and Stokes, 1974, pp. 181-195].

The misunderstanding that being well informed on a wide range of issues is essential to spatial models of voting behavior is based on the false notion that issues ought to be weighted equally by the voter in the assessment of parties. If this were true, then it would certainly be irrational for voters not to know where the parties stand on each policy matter. If on the other hand, voters weigh issues unequally -- perceiving some to be more important to their welfare or conscience than others -- then the rational individual need only be informed about salient issues since the marginal gain from the increment of knowledge on less relevant areas might well be less than the costs of acquisition. The University of Essex electoral unit analyzing the February 1974 election found that ceteris paribus people were more likely to have preferences and to be able to distinguish between the parties on issues which they regarded as important [Alt et al., 1974]. Moreover, they found that the level of accurate perception on major issues was very high even without controlling for salience.

Therefore, this model takes issue with the Butler-Stokes argument that alignments in Britain are maintained primarily by social-psychological processes and maintains instead that parties must continually reinforce voter predispositions through specific policy positions. Neglect on issues which are salient to its supporters will wear down party loyalties despite the psychological processes of parental transmission and immunization, as Hindess has shown in his study on the Labour Party and its working class constituencies [Hindess, 1971]. The empirical question then is can we construct a test which will tell us whether the primary determinants of party preference are the independent effects of class and family, or rather of issue evaluations. At the same time, we will want to incorporate the notion that issue positions are not fixed and must be identified since they may be determined by a complex simultaneous equation involving the social structure, the influence of elites, partisanship and perhaps other factors.

To compare properly the relative impact of issue and background components, it is necessary to specify both effects in the same equation. This gives us a regression equation which implies that a voter's assessment of the parties in 1974 was a function of that person's evaluation of specific issues in 1974 and of direct class and family socialization effects. This is specified as follows:

$$A_{74}^{x} = B_1 + B_2C + B_3F + B_4L_{74}^{x} + u$$

where

A_{74}^{x} is the assessment of the Conservative and Labour Parties in 1974 as measured by a feeling thermometer score

C is the respondent's class as measured by an occupation scale

F is the father's partisan preference weighted by the intensity of his political preference

L^{x} is the summary loss or issue distance measure

The data is taken from a 1974 general election survey by the

University of Essex. The variable for class in an interval scaling (i.e. 1 to -1) of the standard A, B, C_1, C_2, D, E occupational code frequently used in British survey research. The family variable is a dummy for the reported affiliation of the respondent's father weighted by another variable measuring the father's recalled interest in politics. The proxy for issue evaluations in 1974 is the weighted sum of losses or distances across a set of seven issues where a loss is defined as the absolute value of the difference between the respondent's own position and the perceived party position multiplied by the salience measure:

$$L_{74}^x = \sum_{j=1}^{n} a_{ij} |p_{ij} - x_{ij}|$$

where

p_{ij} is individual i's view on issue j

x_{ij} is individual i's perception of party x's position on issue j

a_{ij} is the measure of importance or salience of issue j to individual i

The strictly linear form of the loss variable implies that rate of loss is constant at all distances on the issue scale. Clearly, other assumptions are possible, but experimentation revealed the linear form to be empirically superior.

Strictly speaking, only five of the issue variables were constructed in this manner -- devolution, taxation, social services,

the Common Market, and nationalization -- while the prices and strikes variables followed a slightly modified form. Downs argued that where an issue involved the relative competence of two opposing parties rather than some clearly defined ideological difference, the voter had to calculate his current party differential on the basis of his comparative assessment of how the government handled the particular problem in question and his expectation of how the opposition party would have handled the problem had it been in office [Downs, 1957, pp. 36-50]. Economic questions are often thought to fall into this valence category [Butler and Stokes, 1974, pp. 238-242]. It seemed useful, therefore, to construct the prices and strikes variables in a manner that would take into account the respondent's differential assessments and expectations. The 1974 questionnaire asked the respondents to rate how well the Conservative Government handled prices and strikes in its four years in office, and how well they thought the Labour Party would have handled the problem had it been in office during this period. These responses were then combined to give the judged utility difference:

$$\text{Strikes} = a_{is}(p_{is}^{Con} - p_{is}^{Lab})$$

$$\text{Prices} = a_{ir}(p_{ir}^{Con} - p_{ir}^{Lab})$$

where

p_{is}^{Con}, p_{ir}^{Con} are the respondent's assessments of how well the Conservatives handled prices (r) and strikes (s)

P_{is}^{Lab}, P_{ir}^{Lab} are the respondent's assessments of how well the Labour Party would have handled prices (r) and strikes (s)

a_{is}, a_{ir} are the salience weights

These two basic forms of information about the voter's attitudes are combined in a manner such that we expect a positive coefficient for the issue evaluation measure in the Conservative equation and a negative coefficient for that in the Labour equation, but in both cases the implication is that as losses decrease on the five position issues and the differential increases on the valence (i.e. prices and strikes) issues, the party assessment will rise.

In the estimation of the model, the class and family variables were treated as exogenous, but the issue evaluation measure is treated as endogenous. The justification for this follows from the discussion earlier about the danger of treating issue attitudes as fixed and also from the obvious possibility that measured proximity could be primarily the result of respondents making preferred party position and their own revealed position on any or all issues congnitively consistent. This could be characterized as a simultaneous equation bias. To correct for this bias, the issue variable was identified by a set of attribute variables in a two stage least squares procedure [Johnston, 1973, PP. 278-284; Jackson, forthcoming].

The estimated equations are shown in Table 1. It would appear from the results that the coefficient on the variable measuring the direct effects of class socialization is insignificant

TABLE 1

THE GENERAL MODEL WITH LINEAR LOSS VARIABLES 1974

	A_{74}^{Con}	A_{74}^{Lab}	$A_{74}^{Con} - A_{74}^{Lab}$
Class	-.02 (.06)	-.10 (.07)	.03 (.10)
FCon	.56* (.13)	-	.43* (.20)
FLab	-	.24 (.13)	-.22 (.18)
FLib	-	-	-
L_{74}	7.99* (.47)	-10.47* (.56)	19.77* (.91)
Constant	6.70	6.57	.27
R^2	.36	.30	.52
SE	2.10	2.40	3.14
Type of Estimation	2SLS	2SLS	2SLS

at the conventional 5 percent level in both the Conservative and
Labour equations. Perhaps even more damaging from the standpoint
of the Butler-Stokes theory is the result that the family variable
is significant in the Conservative case only. If the transmission
of political loyalties through the family is truly the backbone of
the British party system, then at the very least we ought to be
able to reject the null hypothesis on the family coefficient in
both equations: the fact that we cannot seriously challenges the
credulity of their theory.

An important feature of both equations is the large size
and significance of the issue evaluation coefficients as compared
with those on class and family. Not only is the coefficient on
I_{74} significant in each major party equation, but the size of the
coefficients, even allowing for the standard errors, is quite
remarkable. This point can be illustrated by comparing the effect
on partisan evaluations of changes in the socialization components
of the model with the effect of small changes in issue evaluations
in a simulation using the estimated coefficients from the
regression and hypothetical values. There are two issue conditions
to manipulate in this simulation: the distance or loss between
an individual's preference and the perceived party position, and
the importance which the voter attaches to that issue. If a unit
loss is defined as that amount by which individual and party
positions are separated from each other on an interval scale, then
by taking the estimated issue coefficients, it is possible to

calculate the amount of change in Conservative and Labour
evaluations produced by the increment of each unit loss for all
three salience conditions. These values are shown in Tables 2 and
3. In this exercise, we want to compare the degree of change in
partisan evaluation caused by a small increase in perceived loss
between self and party as opposed to that induced by a substantial
alteration in socialization factors. Moreover, we distinguish
between degrees of concern for the issues, and estimate different
amounts of partisan shift for various levels of salience.

Comparing across the tables generally, it appears that
small changes in loss (i.e. one unit) produce estimated shifts in
evaluations of .75 for Labour and .57 for the Conservatives in the
cases of salient concerns, and .37 for Labour and .28 for the
Conservatives in the cases of moderately important issues. How do
these scores compare with large changes in background factors? In
the Conservative equation, changes in class status -- no matter
how large -- will not significantly affect an individual's
assessment of the Tories, but a shift from a background of total
apathy to one of strong pro-Conservative Family interest causes a
predicted change of .56 in that person's Conservative evaluation.
This is slightly less than the change that would accrue from an
increase of one unit loss on a salient issue, or a two unit loss on
a moderately salient issue. In the Labour equation, neither the
family nor the class variable had significant coefficients, implying
that it is likely that neither produces significant changes in
Labour assessments. Even if the family variable were significant,

TABLE 2

CHANGES IN LABOUR EVALUATIONS

	Intense	Moderately Intense	Not Important
1 unit loss	.75	.37	0
2 unit loss	1.49	.75	0
3 unit loss	2.24	1.12	0
4 unit loss	2.99	1.49	0

TABLE 3

CHANGES IN CONSERVATIVE EVALUATIONS

	Intense	Moderately Intense	Not Important
1 unit loss	.57	.28	0
2 unit loss	1.14	.57	0
3 unit loss	1.71	.85	0
4 unit loss	2.28	1.14	0

however, its maximum effect on Labour evaluations would be .24, which is considerably less than the effect of a unit increase in an issue distance of a salient issue -- i.e. .75 -- and even less than the effect of a unit increase in distance of a moderately salient issue -- i.e. .37.

The conclusion seems to be, therefore, that small changes in issue calculations produce as great or greater shifts in party evaluations as do large -- even improbable -- shifts in background factors. The implication of this finding is very important for models of the British electorate. It indicates that a significant variability in party evaluations -- and hence, a significant variability in voting behavior -- will result from small changes in issue proximity, and that socialization factors per se will not have as much impact. The British electorate is thus extremely issue responsive, the larger meaning of which for macropolitical models of political change in Britain is that even drastic changes in the consistency of family backgrounds or in the patterns of social mobility will not have the same impact on party evaluations that increases or decreases in issue distance across the population will have. Any rate of change in the social structure which is less than drastic will probably have no significant direct impact on voting behavior.

A TEST OF THE STABILITY OF MODELED PREFERENCES

Can a model which depends so heavily on endogenous political factors successfully explain electoral stability? In

addition to the stabilizing effects of party behavior and the
social structure, it has been argued that voters enter an electoral
period with predispositions as the result of background factors and
accumulated judgments. In this sense, voters are in varying degrees
"partisan" and their choices at time t are made with different
amounts of preformed bias. As the biases build, voters will be
less responsive to current party strategy and policies and will
resemble what political scientists call a party identifier.
The crucial question, therefore, is to what degree were the
calculations of voters in 1974 a function of (1) their preferences
in 1970 and (2) of recalculations of issue utility as the result
of information acquired during the period 1970-74. The proposed
test is an equation specifying an individuals assessment in 1974
as a function of the previous assessment in 1970 and the
recalculation of utility from 1970 to 1974. The lagged previous
party assessment becomes a summary measure of an individual's past
issue calculations and socialization biases, and the issue
evaluation variable becomes a measure of the amount and direction
of recalculation:

$$A^x_{74} = B_1 + B_2 I_{74} + B_3 A^x_{70} + u$$

where

A^x_{74} is the respondent's feeling thermometer rating of
party x in 1974

A^x_{70} is the respondent's feeling thermometer rating of
party x in 1970

I^x_{74} is the measure of issue evaluations in 1974

To estimate this equation, both I^x_{74} and A^x_{70} are treated
as endogenous variables, and an instrumental variables procedure
applied. An instrument for the issue evaluation measure is needed
for the reasons enumerated earlier: namely, that issues are
measured with error and may interact with partisan preference. The
lagged feeling thermometer is also treated as an endogenous
variable since there is good reason to expect correlation between
the error term of the implicit equation for the lagged assessment
and unspecified explanatory factors which fall into the stochastic
term u. The variables used to create the instruments are again a
set of exogenous attribute data. The data for these equations come
from a 1970-74 panel begun by Butler and Stokes and continued by
the electoral research unit at the University of Essex. The issue
evaluation measure consists of five issues -- i.e. the social
services and devolution questions are missing -- coded on an
interval scale and weighted by the appropriate salience measures.
The implication of this coding is that individuals with high
positive partisan scores will favor the Conservatives and those
with high negative scores will favor the Labour Party. This
measure is less general than the loss specification, but, for the
purposes of the simulation argument which follows, it gives us a
better measure of the ideological component of support.

The results of the estimation are shown in Table 4. The
coefficients on the issue evaluation variables are significant in

TABLE 4

AN ESTIMATION OF CHANGING PARTISAN ASSESSMENTS 1970-74

	A_{74}^{Con}	A_{74}^{Lab}	$A_{74}^{Con} - A_{74}^{Lab}$
I_{74}	3.51* (.79)	-6.09* (.89)	7.30* (1.42)
A_{70}^{Con}	.06* (.01)	-	.06* (.01)
A_{70}^{Lab}	-	.05* (.01)	-.07* (.01)
Constant	2.14	3.18	.60
R^2	.50	.51	.64
SE	1.84	1.87	2.78
Type of Estimation	2SLS	2SLS	2SLS

all cases, and the signs are in the appropriate directions: thus, the null hypothesis can be rejected for both components of the model. The coefficients on issue evaluations are large in all cases, but the ratio of the issue evaluation component to the lagged assessment coefficient is substantially larger in the Labour than in the Conservative equation.

It was argued earlier that the implication of this model was that the order of an individual's preference will not change unless there has been a sufficient offsetting recalculation of utility. Individuals with high previous assessments of a given party will require a greater degree of contradictory information before their preferences change than individuals with low previous party differentials. In this sense, high partisanship as defined in the proposed model resembles the notion of party identification frequently found in the literature of American and comparative politics. High partisanship means that an individual brings a substantial predetermined bias to an electoral decision at any time t: the greater the amount of predetermined bias, the more immune an individual's preference will be to change induced by rational responses to immediate issues.

This point can be illustrated with the estimated model by setting the major party differential equation to 0 and solving for I_{74} given different values of A_{70}^{Con} and A_{70}^{Lab}. If we begin with the extreme case of the individuals who assessed the Conservatives in 1970 at 90 and Labour at 10, they are predicted to be indifferent between the parties in 1974 if $I_{74} = -.73$, to prefer the

Conservatives if $I_{74} > -.73$ and to prefer Labour if $I_{74} < -.73$. Since the mean of the sample is $-.01$, a score of $-.73$ represents a set of attitudes highly skewed to the left. To get a better idea of the degree of extremity and intensity of different scores, a table of prototypical one issue scores has been computed for the panel variable. These represent the scores an individual would have if he/she had one intense extreme issue concern or one fairly intense extreme issue concern, etc.;

	Intense	Fairly Intense
Extreme	$I_{74} = \pm.16$	$I_{74} = \pm.08$
Moderate	$I_{74} = \pm.08$	$I_{74} = \pm.04$

Clearly, individuals who previously rated the Conservatives at 90 and Labour at 10 would have had to develop substantial and intense disagreements with the Conservatives in the period 1970–74 on over half of the issues in the evaluation measure before the order of their preferences changes. Since we must presume that these individuals were previously quite close to the Conservatives -- a score of 90 implies considerable proximity to the Conservatives in 1970 -- it is fair to conclude that a shift in the order of preference for these individuals would require an almost inconceivable change in attitude orientation. Small disutilities from or indifference to the most recent Conservative policies would not significantly affect the preferences or behavior of these individuals. Consequently, they will exhibit the stable preferences

and behavior of the so-called party identifier.

The indifference values can also be found for less extreme cases. Some examples are shown in Table 5. The model predicts quite plausibly that individuals with low or indifferent previous assessments will change the order of their preferences in response to small changes in opinion. Such individuals resemble those who have traditionally been called "independents" in American voting studies and "non-identifiers" by Butler and Stokes. Their preferences will in general be less stable, and they will have a higher propensity to switch their vote or abstain.

The estimations show that as the margin of previous assessment increases, a greater amount of contradictory information in the most recent period will be needed to shift the order of an individual's preference. The limitations on change -- particularly at the highest levels of partisanship -- seem even more significant when it is recalled that (1) individuals are not likely to feel strongly or be informed about all issues, (2) that attitudes at any time t are unlikely to be different on every single issue from what they were at time t-1, and that, therefore, (3) any shift in attitudes sufficient to alter a high previous differential would involve an almost inconceivable reversal of attitudes. On the other hand, it is not difficult to see why there might be considerable volatility in the preferences of individuals in the middle ranges. Clearly, individuals are shown to have different degrees of vulnerability to change.

This analysis resists the temptation of classifying

TABLE 5

SIMULATED PARTISANSHIP

Cases	A^{Con}_{70}	A^{Lab}_{70}	I_{74}	Deviation from $\bar{I}_7$
1	100	0	−.91	−.90
2	90	10	−.73	−.72
3	80	20	−.55	−.54
4	70	30	−.37	−.36
5	60	40	−.19	−.18
6	50	50	−.01	0
7	40	60	.16	.17
8	30	70	.34	.35
9	20	80	.52	.53
10	10	90	.70	.71
11	0	100	.88	.89

individuals into discrete categories although it makes the distinction between levels of partisanship. Partisanship is likened to a predetermined bias having the form of a continuous probability distribution with different likelihoods of behavior at various points along the continuum rather than as identifiably distinct qualitative states. Voting is one type of behavior which will be a function of partisanship, but it is quite possible that partisanship affects political participation as well. The level of partisanship can change drastically or gradually over time in response to government and party behavior, but the impact of party behavior will not be uniform at all points on the partisanship distribution. The preferences of high and low partisans (i.e. those with either large positive or negative party differentials) will be less affected by unit shifts in attitudes than moderate partisans (i.e. those with small party differentials).

CONCLUSION

Clearly, it is possible to link socioeconomic and political components successfully in a single model of voter choice. It has been proved that the endogenous evaluation component has a significant impact and is far more powerful than the psychological factors which are so crucial to the Butler-Stokes theory. This raises the possibility that party systems can change as the result of factors within the political system: in particular, as the result of responses to party strategy and performance. The implication is that macropolitical models need not depend so

heavily on theories of social determinism. At the same time, the insights about group pressures and individual biases which political scientists have borrowed from psychology and sociology need not be discarded entirely. Rather, it is possible to incorporate them into the general model and use them to help account for stability within the political system.

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