

The Impact of the Mass Media  
on the Structure of Economic  
Perceptions: Britain in the 1980s

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Degree of Ph.D.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on two interlinked issues. First, whether citizens evaluate economic information on the basis of what it means to their families or immediate acquaintances (pocketbook theory), or what it means to the country, irrespective of the impact on their own economic situation (sociotropic theory). And second, how far such a distinction is related to alternative channels of communication, especially the mass media. The study attempts to elaborate the thesis that we need to focus on short run influences if we are to understand the nature of political support. It is also contended that we need to go beyond class models of voting behaviour and explore the strengths and weaknesses of the variety of techniques used in assessing the impact of fluctuations in the economy. The emphasis is on a model incorporating economic fluctuations and their appreciation by the electorate; important political events; and the role of the mass media.

The study begins with a critical review of some of the existing literature, with special reference to class and issue voting models. The substantive chapters derive from the position developed in this assessment : economic perceptions are significant even if the earlier models of economic voting are deficient. The initial thrust is comparative and tests an economic model of Government popularity against data from the regional domain. The results confirm the media dynamic behind popularity fluctuation. The thesis then develops the notion of the importance of general (or "sociotropic") perceptions in influencing Government popularity. Econometric techniques are employed to test and elaborate existing model constructions. The importance of general perception is confirmed, and the following analysis explores the structure of these perceptions using disaggregated public opinion poll data. The results specify more clearly the nature of the public's perceptual strata. We suggest that neither class groupings nor the unemployed have a distinctive set of economic perceptions. Furthermore, a group of media dependent individuals can be isolated. This dependency is unrelated to class, or to employment status, and the dependent group share a distinctive set of perceptions which are consonant with media influence.

The last section of the thesis explores data generated from a panel study conducted in Lewisham, South London. We highlight the importance of sociotropic perception, and related attributional inferences. We look at volatility in economic perceptions and the relationship between personal, local and sociotropic attitudes. Subject to the necessary qualifications, in conclusion we submit that economic perceptions have important rather than a determinant impact on voter preference. This impact is part of an incremental process leading to glacial shifts in political popularity - a process in which the media have a significant place.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The primary thrust of the study is an examination of the relationship, if any, between economic conditions, media representations of economic trends, and political preferences. The inspiration comes from recent developments in voting research and the contemporary reappraisal of the influence of the mass media. The fusion of these two strands necessitates the use of a variety of research techniques, from comparative and time series analysis to cross sectional and panel survey methods. It is hoped that the results will be of substantive and theoretical relevance to the debates on media influence and the integrity of the Downsian thesis (Downs, 1957).

The early post-war work on mass communication suggested that the media did not directly influence the audience (this countering the prevailing orthodoxy of the Frankfurt School). The primary function of the media was now seen as reinforcing pre-existent and entrenched attitudes, and rallying the faithful (Lazarsfeld et al, 1948 ; Berelson et al, 1954 ; Blumler and McQuail, 1969). Later studies have confirmed this with respect to overtly party-political material (Sears and Chaffee, 1979; Davis, 1982; and Sigelman and Sigelman, 1984). Yet even this new orthodoxy has been challenged. The most recent literature emphasises stronger influence - albeit exerted in a more indirect fashion. A number of studies suggest that the media lead the public agenda in many respects (McLeod, Becker and Byrnes, 1974; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Shaw, 1979). Noelle-Neumann has suggested that structure of media coverage is important. In a

media environment characterised by "consonance" in content (.."that is unanimous illumination, unanimous argumentation with regard to events, people and problems." pp.81, Noelle-Neumann, 1981) mass communication channels gain the potential for powerful influence as selectivity options are reduced (Noelle-Neumann, 1972; 1974; 1977).

Evidence has emerged which supports Noelle-Neumann's contention. Both Mosley and Adams hold that we can identify changes in the public's attitudes which take place in a context of (and as a function of) gross alterations in content across a variety of media (Mosley, 1984 ; Adams, 1984). Moreover, it has been suggested that the media are strongly influential in moulding the opinions of individuals on matters which are beyond the range of the individual's personal experience (Klapper, 1968; Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976; Miller, 1983). The media are seen as having a particular influence on perceptions of, and attitudes towards objects and events beyond the realm of personal experience. The significance of this becomes apparent if we look at recent developments in the analysis of voting behaviour.

Contemporary work in the field of voting behaviour suggests that this area may overlap with the analysis of mass media effects. This overlap is most apparent in the research done on the relationship between economic conditions and government popularity.

In the United States there is an extensive literature on the connection between economic indicators and government popularity. Kiewiet and Kinder maintain that,

**"By this evidence the political consequences of macroeconomic conditions are both pervasive and**

powerful." (Kiewiet and Kinder, 1981, p.129).

In the British context a similar, though more complex pattern seems to be evident (Whiteley, 1986). Mosley cites the work of Goodhart and Bhansali, of Frey and Schneider, and of Pissarides (Goodhart and Bhansali, 1970 ; Frey and Schneider, 1978 ; Pissarides, 1980) and notes of the rates of inflation, unemployment and growth,

.."that political popularity is significantly correlated with all these indicators of the standard of living." (Mosley, 1982 p.3).

It has also been noted that coefficients increase in magnitude and significance during periods of accelerated deterioration of economic conditions (Mosley, 1978 ; Alt and Chrystal, 1981).

The relationship between economic conditions and government popularity (or lack of it) has been explained traditionally in Downsian terms. Individuals perceive the decline in their living standards as the product of governmental performance and, on a rational calculation of their own best interests, vote against the offending party at election time. On the other hand, Kiewiet and Kinder (ibid.) report that in the United States at least, a number of recent studies show that there is a very weak link between personal economic grievance or difficulty and voting against the government party in congressional elections. (Moreover, Converse and Campbell's assertion that the working class will pursue their section interests - with the middle class opposing it for the same reasons - is not borne out : Cook, 1979). In direct contradiction to the Downsian thesis Kiewiet and Kinder claim that their individual-level data shows, instead, a strong connection between voter's perception of the national

economic situation (their "sociotropic" perception) and subsequent voting behaviour (Kiewiet and Kinder, 1981).

There is now a growing body of comparative research which supports the sociotropic thesis (Reed and Brunk, 1984; Alford and Legge, 1984; Lewis-Beck, 1983). And Butler and Stokes give an analysis of the dual role of personal and 'global' judgements in conditioning public opinion and voting behaviour (Butler and Stokes, 1974).

If the sociotropic thesis is essentially correct there is an intuitively plausible case for suggesting that cues about the nation's economic health can only come from the media. This notion is reinforced by Kiewiet and Kinder's finding that there was a very low correlation between indices of personal well-being and perceptions of nation economic trends. For Kiewiet and Kinder global perceptions are not extrapolated from personal experience (Kiewiet and Kinder, 1981). Kiewiet and Kinder (ibid.), and Fiorina note that the strength of the element normally associated in media studies with selective perception (ie. partisanship) is itself affected by changing sociotropic perceptions (Fiorina, 1981). If this sociotropic thesis holds, and the media are the source of globally related attitudes, the relationship between audience and media may approximate to that which Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur feel is a necessary condition for powerful influence - "dependency".

Some work has been done in the British context which should encourage further examination of the sociotropic thesis and the media's role in presenting economic news. Mosley has shown the utility of focusing on media representations of economic trends

(and here the Daily Mirror was focused upon) instead of aggregate official statistics, :

.."the proportion of the government's popularity lead that can be explained by economic and cycle variables rises from about 35% to about 47%. Furthermore, inflation, which is a barely significant variable over the whole period if official estimates are used, becomes highly significant if the Daily Mirror figures are used in the regression." (Mosley, 1982, p.9).

Mosley's results appear, in this instance, to be fully consistent with the sociotropic thesis, though do not amount to direct support. Paper reports may simply reflect the effect of the economy on the lives of people more accurately.

Distinctions in levels of perceptual imagery which are consistent with sociotropic voting behaviour, are evident in a number of studies. Dunleavy comments on how perceptions of the individual's own trade union differ markedly from those on unions in general (Dunleavy, 1980). Palmgreen and Clarke make the distinction between the local and national agenda-setting capabilities of the press (Palmgreen and Clark, 1977). Tyler and Cook feel there is a useful distinction to be made between personal and global judgements on the threat of crime (Tyler and Cook, 1984). And something approaching the personal-global distinction is carried in much of the Cultural Studies work on encoding and decoding (Hall, 1980 ; Morley, 1980). More interestingly Blumler, McQuail and Nossiter highlight the personal-global form of perceptual distinction in their study of young voters (one that Kinder and Kiewiet would be all too familiar with). Individuals may, indeed, have different levels of perception, but the importance of the respective levels has yet to be closely examined using individual-level data. One of

the objectives of our study is to address this issue.

A qualification has to be made here. The communication process (and its possible influence on voting behaviour) may operate at a variety of differing levels. While Kinder and Kiewiet distinguish between national and global perceptions, Husbands draws a trichotomous distinction. It is his assertion that if we hypothesise an economy-popularity relationship we must theorise the contextual as well as the personal and global levels (Husbands, 1985). This third, local, dimension is important in relation to our study. Kiewiet and Kinder found that sociotropic perceptions were not extrapolated from personal experiences or grievances. They did not, however, look at the individual's perception of the immediate local environment (the predicament or otherwise of neighbours and associates). This is also the case in the comparative work on sociotropic voting. Our data will hopefully speak to this issue.

The question remains one of how best to address the issues which emerge from the growing literature on 'economic voting'. Our study employs a range of techniques from cross-country comparison, through time series analysis, to cross sectional and panel studies. Our own poll takes the form of a longitudinal, individual-level panel study following the same group of individuals over three separate contacts. This form of approach is very much in line with the contemporary appeals for more relevant and incisive data collection techniques. Peffley (Peffley, 1984) and Miller (Miller, 1986) have also noted the need for a careful examination of the role of the media in cuing the electorate in terms of economic trends. Moreover, Whiteley

(Whiteley, 1986) has called for a more thorough examination of the influence of short-term economic fluctuations through panel data.

In the body of our research we address a number of salient questions. Can comparative techniques be used to explore and elaborate upon the impact of economic fluctuations? Are time series approaches sufficiently flexible to accommodate the complexities of attitude change? Do 'pocketbook' perceptions influence political preference? Are sociotropic beliefs distinct from, or related to, pocketbook and local perceptions? Do sociotropic attitudes independently influence political preference or behaviour? And finally, are sociotropic beliefs extrapolated from perceptions of the immediate environment?

We are also interested in exploring techniques for isolating that element of the community which is dependent on the mass media for economic information. Attribution of responsibility for economic turbulence is also a feature whose significance we want to explore. The importance of this attributional element has been emphasised by Peffley, Feldman and Lewis-Beck (Feldman, 1982; Peffley, 1984 and Lewis-Beck, 1986). This notion has a bearing on our understanding of the development of partisanship. Conover and Feldman have tried to establish a link between attribution and affect which bridges this gap (Conover and Feldman, 1985). The field is under-explored in Britain, and it is our hope that the data we have accumulated will allow us to address these issues.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CLASS VOTING AND ITS RIVALS

#### 2.1

Harold Wilson speaking in the mid-nineteen sixties declared that, "All political history shows that the standing of a government, and its ability to hold the confidence of the electorate at a general election depend on the success of its economic policy". Professional political analysts have taken a slightly different view. Their attempts to explain and predict electoral outcomes have focused, in turn, on the class composition of the electorate (Butler and Stokes, 1974, 1969), or on the individual's issue preferences or ideological predispositions (Himmelweit et al. 1985; Budge, 1982; Heath, Jowell and Curtice, 1985; Rose and McAllister, 1986). Latterly, there has been a renewed interest in the voter's expression of economic self-interest (Downs, 1957; Husbands, 1985; and Sanders et al, 1987); or in their territorial or geographical circumstances (Owens and Wade 1988; Miller, 1977, 1978).

The old orthodoxy that 'class equals party' has been the issue round which much of the debate has centred. The classical exposition of Butler and Stokes has been challenged by the evidence of increasing volatility, the rise of electorally strong centre parties and the emergence of alternative theories. The strongest contenders have been the 'issue voting' models which focus on the electorate's shopping list of issue preferences (both economic and political). Current attempts to resurrect the class thesis have hinged on an eclectic fusion of structural, sociological and attitudinal elements. Heath, Curtice and

Jowell's approach takes a re-specified class definition and bonds it to examination of the electorate's underlying principles. Dunleavy and Husbands, on the other hand, take a broadly sociological approach and look at the relationship between the individual's structural position and their vulnerability to ideological indoctrination (Dunleavy and Husbands, 1985). It has also been established that at constituency level there is still a strong relationship between the individual's class or occupational milieu and his or her propensity to vote for the natural class party. Last, but not least, theorists have shown an interest in the application of sophisticated econometric techniques to the time series data on short-term, inter-election fluctuations in government popularity. Here the focus has been on macro-economic changes and their direct and indirect impact on the electorate's own economic expectations (Sanders, Ward and Marsh, 1987; Clarke, Mishler and Whiteley, 1990).

Plotting the 'behaviouralist' elements in what is after all the study of political behaviour may seem at first a little perverse. The behaviour of the electorate at the ballot box is, after all, the primary focus of most if not all of the studies cited, and the central dependent variable is the voting act. However, we hope to establish that there is an important difference between the analysis of electoral behaviour *per se* and the behaviouralist approach to the endeavour. We will argue that a behaviouralist appraisal of the current literature can clarify some of the problems associated with earlier studies. Moreover, it can highlight some of the shortcomings of the theoretical alternatives and offer a useful research agenda for the future.

## 2.2

The behaviouralist approach we wish to pursue goes beyond that described by Dahl as, :

**.."attempt to improve our understanding of politics by seeking to explain empirical aspects of political life by means of methods, theories and criteria of proof that are acceptable according to the canons, conventions and assumptions of modern political science." (Dahl, 1961, p. 767)**

It extends to a primary, if not an exclusive focus on the behaviour, attitudes, cognitions, and emotions of the electorate. The components can be grouped in different ways. Harrop and Miller differentiate between 'attention', 'choices' 'perceptions', 'evaluations', 'associations', 'emotions' and 'images' (Harrop and Miller, 1987). Social psychologists would be more comfortable with cognitions, evaluations and affect - or more usually cognitions and affect (Zajonc, 1980; Conover and Feldman 1985). Whatever the analytical distinctions, the emphasis is on the relationship between what goes on inside the individual's head and their overt behaviour.

A central element here is an emphasis on the accuracy, reliability and validity of attitudinal measures. Certainly within the discipline of social psychology a great deal of effort has gone into the attempt to discern whether attitudinal responses reflect underlying cognitive structures. The effort to distinguish between cognitive structure and experimental artifact is represented by the search for 'construct validity' (Miller, 1978, pp.118-119). Furthermore, it is possible to do this while avoiding the egregious errors of an earlier generation of theorists who sought to incorporate this form of enterprise within a structural functionalist framework (Parsons, 1951).

The approach has a long, if occasionally less than distinguished history. It encompasses the analysis of political culture, socialisation, mass media effects, community power and the modelling of public opinion (Almond and Verba, 1963; Jennings and Neimi, 1981; Klapper, 1960; and Noelle-Neumann, 1981 and 1987). The approach can be usefully contrasted with those studies which emphasise real interests, social roles or structurally determinate social positions (Jessop, 1974; Parkin, 1971; Lukes 1974; Clegg, 1989, Cox et al., 1986). One of our central themes will be that a number of contemporary voting theories fail to make this distinction altogether; do so less than clearly; or conflate the two analytical strands in a conceptually uncomfortable fashion.

A further distinction will be made between what behaviouralists might consider 'circumstantial' as opposed to 'material' evidence. The former concerns data that relates to attitudes, cognitions and emotions either indirectly or obliquely (where they are inferred rather than explored). The latter denotes the attempt to approach and measure these mental elements in a direct and accurate manner.

We decided not to undertake a comprehensive overview of the literature in the style of Scarbrough (Scarbrough, 1987), and felt it appropriate to focus instead on the landmark texts. We wanted to appraise their formative contribution to the discipline - in the terms described above. As a starting point we might focus on the work of Butler and Stokes (Butler and Stokes, 1969 and 1974). Their attempt to describe accurately the nature of post war electoral behaviour will be appraised in terms of

evidential support and conceptual clarity. The focus can then turn to the recent literature on class voting and the behaviouralist interpretation of the attempts to reestablish the model. Again, the emphasis will be on the extent to which the data presented underpin satisfactorily the interpretation the authors offer.

The emphasis then shifts to those theorists offering alternatives. Issue voting models including those of Himmelweit and Budge (Himmelweit *et al.*, 1985; Budge, 1982) will be critically examined, as will the evidence presented in the broader thesis of Rose and MacAllister (Rose and MacAllister, 1986). That these authors present novel and interesting interpretations is not in dispute. What is, however, at issue is whether the theories can be considered conceptually plausible or evidentially substantial from a behaviouralist perspective. The different issue voting theories will be examined in the light of the ongoing debate on the substantive and methodological significance of the concept of partisanship.

The rational voting model of Antony Downs will be left to the following chapter. It has proved fertile in terms of research spin offs, but its conceptual underpinnings are rather different from those of the conventional voting model. It therefore merits separate attention.

### 2.3

The early work on the relationship between class and party mirrored research done in the United States (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948; Berelson et al., 1954; Campbell et al., 1960). The approach there was on the relationship between occupation, partisanship and voting behaviour. Evidence of the ignorance and lack of interest of the electorate led these theorists to downplay the notions of the sophisticated voter making a rational choice between party programmes (Schumpeter, 1943). In the British context the seminal work of Butler and Stokes, drawing on earlier American studies sought to explore in more depth the link between social background, occupational class and voting behaviour.

The behaviouralist point of departure is quite evident from the opening paragraphs of the section on 'The Dominant Class Alignment'. They point out that, .."too little attention has been paid to the beliefs that link class to party in the voter's mind.", and that .."the system of ideas, the attitudes, motives and beliefs which lie behind the observed differences [in class support for the parties] have been largely neglected." (Butler and Stokes, *ibid.*, p.67). The method employed in giving substance to the observed association is to examine the relationship between partisanship, class self-image and voting behaviour. The instruments used to measure these ideational elements are the familiar questionnaire items on strength of partisan affiliation, self-ascribed class and vote choice. The 'objective' categorisation of respondents in terms of occupation leans towards a structuralist position. Yet Butler and Stokes

make it clear that this is a form of shorthand only. The objective positions reflect the strong relationship between party self-image and occupational status (*ibid.*, 1974, pp.78), and the respondent's descriptions of class characteristics in terms of occupation (p.70). In this sense the objective categories could be said to have ample ideational substance.

The relationship between class self-image and the respondent's party choice are further explored through the survey questions on perceived conflicts of class interest and expressed beliefs in class-related norms. A longitudinal dimension is given to the thesis by way of literature on political socialisation. Familial transmission and communal reinforcement of partisan attachments are seen as the root of inter-generational stability in voting patterns. The breakdown of this process, due in large measure to social mobility, is offered as an explanation of 'deviant', 'out-of-class' voting.

The attempt to frame an understanding of class voting in terms of the ideas, attitudes and perceptions of respondents would no doubt be applauded by behaviouralists. However, it is possible to take issue with Butler and Stokes' interpretation of the data and to question their conclusions. The first point that can be made concerns the strength of the relationship between self-ascribed class and political identification. A cross tabulation of partisan self-image and class self-image supports Butler and Stokes' thesis :

**Table 2.1 Partisan Self Image Against Class Self Image**

(*ibid.* p.77)

		Class Self-Image	
Partisan Self-Image	Cons. Labour	Middle	Working
		79%	28%
		21%	72%

Yet the picture is less clear when we look at 'objective' indicators of occupational class and class self-image. With Class I as 'Higher Managerial', Class II as 'Lower Managerial', Class III as 'Supervisory Non-Manual', Class IV as 'Lower Non-Manual', Class V as 'Skilled Manual', and Class VI as 'Unskilled Manual' the cross tabulation looks a little more ambiguous :

**Table 2.2 Class Self Image Against Occupational Status**

(*ibid*, p.78)

	<u>Occupational Status</u>					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Middle Class	80%	60%	57%	46%	26%	20%
Working Class	20%	40%	43%	54%	74%	80%

For Classes II, III and IV the relationship is less than clearly defined. Individuals are almost as likely to say middle class as working class. The looseness does not give warrant for the conclusion that, "The close alignment of occupational level and class self-image accords well with our evidence that occupation is the most important of the elements that characterise the classes in the public's mind." (*ibid.*, pp.73).

From the behaviouralist point of view there is a danger here of slipping from the use of categories which have ideational content to those where the content is less than clearly defined. Denver notes the propensity for voting researchers and opinion pollsters to use occupation as a shorthand for class (Denver, 1989). The risk here is of moving from a conceptualisation of class as a complex community of ideas, to an abstracted and over-generalised category. While Butler and Stokes are at pains to deny the determinist appreciation of their data, there is a sense of movement in the direction of 'objectification' in their statement that,

"Because of the preeminent importance of occupation we shall use it in most cases as a measure of class location, although we shall often consult the individual's image of his own class and occasionally turn to other 'objective' influences" (*ibid.*, p73).

Butler and Stokes do, however, go beyond the straightforward cross tabulation in fleshing out the substance of class perceptions and their relation to party support. They do this by means of the analysis of open-ended responses to a number of questions. They take the form, 'Is there anything you particularly like/dislike about the Conservative/Labour Party?'. The responses are coded and grouped into discrete categories. These relate to perceptions of politics as class conflict; and politics as the representation of rather more diffuse class interests. The third category is established in the respondent's articulation of 'class norms'.

The reports of the exercise fill only six of the book's five hundred pages and comprise the verbatim reports of responses deemed typical. As an extension of this exercise Butler and Stokes also asked respondents to place the Labour and Conservative Parties on a semantic differential scale. The poles of the scale represented descriptions of the parties as 'middle class' and 'working class'. In their estimation 90% of respondents place the Conservatives towards the middle class end of the scale and 83% place the Labour party near the working class pole. Finally, Butler and Stokes pool responses from the open-ended questions to their three models of how class interests are manifest :

[see overpage]

**Table 2.3     The Nature of Political Beliefs**

<u>Nature of Belief</u>	<u>Cons. Middle Class</u>	<u>Labour Working Class</u>
Politics as representing opposed class interests	13%	39%
Politics representing simple class interests	12	47
Politics as expression of class political norms	10	5
No interest-related or normative content	65	9
Total	100% n = 96	100% n = 301

Butler and Stokes feel they have established the nature of the perceptual link between class and party. Individuals express more or less clearly defined collective interests, and respond to class related group norms. For Butler and Stokes the Labour Party in particular is associated in the minds of many with the working class and their perceived interests. The behaviouralist would applaud the way in which the available attitudinal data is used to flesh out the concept of 'class' in the class-party relationship. What might be disputed is the effectiveness with which this is done. There are four substantive, largely methodological, criticisms that can be made of Butler and Stokes' interpretation. They form a critique of the notion that an ideation community underpins their class categories.

The first concerns the use of open-ended questions. Butler and Stokes give verbatim reproductions of comments which are representative of what they describe as (A) 'opposed class interests', (B) 'simple representations of class interests' and (C) 'partisan group norms' (*ibid.* p.83-89). Among these are, respectively,

(A) What one man disliked about the Conservative Party : "Their

representation of unearned capital. Their disregard for the working classes. They are solely a money class representing high finance, which is detrimental to the prosperity of the country and the people".

What one woman thought of Labour : "I don't like their attitude towards richer people - that they are the ones who should pay for all the extras and help that the poor people get."

(B) The reason one woman likes Labour : "Mr. Wilson is a man who will stand by his word. They are really out to help the working class."

(C) Different respondents note : "I always vote for them [Labour]. It's the working man's place to vote Labour."

"I feel they [the Conservatives] are more in keeping with my station in life."

Yet the analysts here seem less than fully sensitive to the problems inherent in the categorising, ordering and coding of data gleaned from unstructured interviews or responses. The responses they cite do seem to give the genuine flavour of expressed class perceptions. But it must be borne in mind that Butler and Stokes only quote a small fraction of those interviewed. For the category of 'opposed class interests' this amounts to five respondents. For the 'class norms' section three abbreviated responses are quoted; for the 'simple representation of class' element only two.

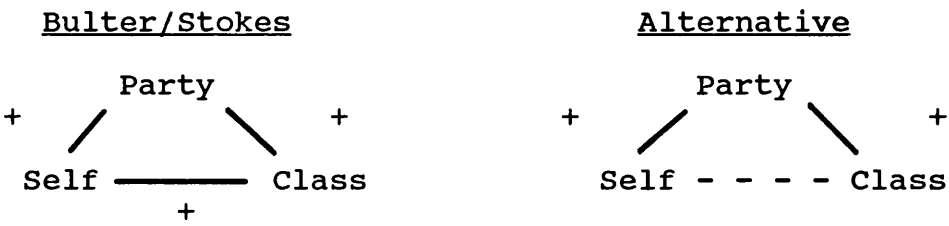
The room for ambiguity is most obvious in Butler and Stokes' consideration of the category of 'simple representations of class'. Two quotes (from the only two individuals cited) are of interest here. The first from a miner's wife from the Don Valley; the second a bricklayer's wife from Ayrshire :

(1) [Likes about Labour] "Well , I think we'd be better off if they got in. They would do more for the working classes."

(2) [Why do working class people mainly vote Labour?] "Because they think Labour will do things for them and get things to suit their income." (pp.86 & 87)

It is far from clear in this respect that the utterances conform to Butler and Stokes' notion of class solidarity. They see the voter's cognitive map embracing a positive, three-way relationship between class, party and self (ibid., pp.98). A plausible alternative reading from the quoted passages might suggest a less class-solidaristic conception. The relationship between the individual and his or her class is one of association rather than solidarity. They associate themselves with a particular group though not necessarily seeing that association in term of mutual self interest. The two perspectives can be represented graphically :

**Figure 2.1 Class, Party and Self : Competing Views**



Butler and Stokes suggest the voter makes a positive connection between him or herself and their party. At the same time an empathetic connection is made between self and class. The last element in the equation links the individual's class with a particular party. An alternative understanding might link self and party, and class and party. But the link between self and class is altogether less clearly recognised. And if that link is tenuous we are left (in the last two verbatim reports above) with an instrumentalist appreciation.

The central problem here is that it is almost impossible to tell from the verbatim report of a few open-ended responses, which of the two models is 'correct'. The first emphasises class

solidarity. The latter can suggest, or is at least consistent with, an instrumentalist perspective in the mind of the voter. Here the self-to-class connection is unclear or ambiguous. The instrumentalist appreciation of party activity has been studied elsewhere (Whiteley, 1983). But with respect to partisan affiliation the point being laboured is that the data produced by unstructured interviews is notoriously difficult to handle and interpret. Butler and Stokes are thus in no sense 'wrong' in their reading of reports. Yet in view of the lack of a coherent, clear and reproducible coding strategy, one reading or interpretation seems as valid as the next.

The difficulties in dealing with this form of data (and, indeed, with presenting it with economy of space) also confronts researchers in other branches of political science. Lewis, working on audience appreciation of news acknowledges that ordering unstructured responses reliably and unambiguously is extremely difficult (Lewis, 1986). Analysts confronted with the problem of making sense of, or ordering diverse and idiosyncratic responses are also reduced to quoting large chunks verbatim, as Butler and Stokes do. In Morley's study of the 'Nationwide' audience, interview responses are extensively reproduced, .."because of the absence of any adequate method which would enable us to formalise and condense the particular responses into consistent linguistic and/or ideological categories." (Morley, 1980, p.163, emphasis original).

Nowhere do Butler and Stokes elaborate the criteria they employ in ordering the data used to construct Table 4.9 (reproduced above). This is not to deny the reports they

deliver, but simply to draw attention to the concept of class as expressed by the broader sample. There are enough gaps in Butler and Stokes's data presentation for us to consider further exploration of the construct validity of their conceptualisation of class (Miller, 1978). Here we run into a second difficulty - the operationalisation of class self-image.

Butler and Stokes probe class self-image with the question, "Do you ever think of yourself as belonging to a particular social class?" (asking a randomly selected half sample). They report that for the 1964 questionnaire only .."about half".. the sample answer in the affirmative (actually exactly half). This hardly seems to justify the statement that, "The replies offer remarkable evidence of the primacy of 'middle' and 'working' class designations" (ibid., pp.68). They go on to prompt this half of the overall sample with the question, "Most people say they belong to either the middle or to the working class. If you had to make a choice, would you call yourself middle class or working class?". Not surprisingly the number placing themselves in a class category jumps from 50% to 93%, with 7% "don't know".

The other randomly selected section of the sample are asked a straightforward prompt question to start off with ("There's quite a bit of talk these days about different social classes. Most people say they belong to either the middle class or the working class. Do you ever think of yourself as being in one of these classes?"). The number replying in the affirmative is only 60% in 1964, although again, with further pressing, only 13% refuse a class self-categorisation.

Assessing the relevance of unprompted class self-ascription

in the 1963 - 70 series as a whole is quite difficult. The picture is complicated by the splitting of samples and use of subtly different questions for subsections of their longitudinal panel. However, a flavour of the results can be seen from the comparison of prompted and unprompted responses :

**Table 2.4 Class Ascription : Prompted Versus Unprompted**

**PROMPTED** (*ibid.*, 1974, p.477)

<u>Thinking in terms of class</u>	<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>
'yes'	66%	60%	66%	na.	66%

**UNPROMPTED** (*ibid.*, 1974, p.477)

Thinking in terms of class	<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>
'yes'	na.	50%	40%	30%	43%

The responses explored above are used to give substance to the concept of class interest. They also served to vindicate the use of 'objective' occupational categories as shorthand for a collection of concrete, intra-class perceptions. On a close reading of results there can be less confidence that Butler and Stokes are justified in either respect. The difficulty starts with interpreting forced question responses, and the work of Asche and Noelle-Neumann's work is testament to the difficulty in distinguishing the socially acceptable from the genuine response (Asche, 1952; Noelle-Neumann, 1977). The public, in their wish to please, still have the annoying capacity to give an answer - any answer - where a non-response might be more appropriate.

When we go on to the unprompted questions there are problems with the reliability of the responses (in 1964 50% place themselves in a class; 30% in 1969; and 43% in 1970). What validity do we give to the structural integrity of class if

unprompted self ascription fluctuates between a half and one third in five years? If we look to other elements in the surveys we find more difficulty in giving construct validity to the concept of class. In 1963 - and 1963 alone - a question on class solidarity asked :

"Some people feel they have a lot in common with other people of their own class, but others don't feel this way so much. How about you? Would you say you feel pretty close to other [mid./work. class] people or that you don't feel much closer to them than you do people in other classes?" (ibid., 1969, pp.478).

The question is balanced and does not prompt the respondent - even if the response categories are convoluted. Only 55% said they felt 'pretty close', while 45% said they did not feel this way or did not know (34% and 10% respectively). The respondents are not tested on this in later surveys. Butler and Stokes do not explore the results beyond the simple presentation of the percentages in the appendices. The '55%' might have alerted Butler and Stokes to the low incidence of unprompted class self-ascription (50% in 1964), but in the event nothing is made of this.

Butler and Stokes present what the behaviouralists would deem 'material' evidence for existence of class self-awareness. The direct focus is upon the expressed attitudes and preferences; on the concrete perceptions of the surveyed sample. The problem is with the inferences that can be drawn from that evidence. The responses to open ended questions are presented as self explanatory. The criteria for ordering the data are not laid before us and ambiguities in interpretation are only cursorily explored. This would concern us less than it does if the class terms under scrutiny were clear and unambiguous. But attempts

to gauge the construct validity of class self image suggests altogether more difficult attitudinal terrain.

Leaving aside for a moment the question of construct validity, it is also important to look at the numbers of responses examined. That number will determine the extent to which Butler and Stokes' conclusions can be generalised. If we look back to their composite Table 4.9 (reproduced at the top of p.10 above) it must be noted that we are only dealing with a sub-sample. The answers are culled from, .."respondents whom we interviewed three times from 1963 to 1966 and who held throughout the period consistent class and party allegiance -.." (*ibid.*, 1974, p.91). The sub-sample here amounts to 1163 (*ibid.*, 1974, p.432 & 436), of which only 397 are middle class Conservatives or working class Labour supporters (amounting to 34.1%). Those in both categories giving class based responses number 308, this representing only 26% of the sub-sample as a whole.

Butler and Stokes err on the side of understatement when they note that,

**"Such a categorisation is far from including every elector whose vote conforms to the dominant political tendency of his class. Many happen to vote 'with' the majority of their class for reasons that have nothing to do with class interests or norms." (*ibid.*, 1974, p.91).**

They can rescue the class thesis if they are referring here to partisan socialisation and reinforcement within the family and community. The emphasis is still on the class related attachments, but the weight is more on 'circumstantial' evidence. Butler and Stokes refer to the strong evidence for inter-generational transmission of partisan affiliations. Their analysis also tends to suggest that attachments that are not

class-typical are a function of inter-class mobility (*ibid.*, 1974, pp.49-58, 101-02). Political socialisation theory was fairly well developed by the early 1970s and the confidence Butler and Stokes have in it is, therefore, not particularly surprising. However, subsequent studies have highlighted important theoretical and substantive weaknesses in the political socialisation material (Kavanagh, 1983).

The critical assault on the socialisation literature has two dimensions. The first looks at the accumulated data. Some of the earliest, path breaking work was based on secondary analysis of data; many of the original experiments were done on students (Hyman, 1959). Subsequent studies suggest much weaker relationships than was originally thought (Jennings and Neimi, 1981). Research has shown there to be a relationship between parental partisanship and early childhood affiliations - but this is not extended to adult behaviour (MacAllister and Kelly, 1985). Critics have also pointed out the deficiencies of 'pair-correspondence' (Marsh, 1971). This is the method used by Butler and Stokes, and it involves asking respondents about the partisan affiliations of parents. The method has, however, been shown to be rather weak. The room for misperception and inaccuracy has been shown to be substantial (Marsh, *ibid.*).

These deficiencies notwithstanding, there are interpretive difficulties even where pair-correspondence is established beyond dispute. The dilemma faced is the old one of disentangling correlation and causation. In the absence of clear and unambiguous evidence of familial transmission, a re-interpretation of pair-correspondence is at least admissible.

The emphasis is not on the breakdown of socialisation and community reinforcement, or indeed, on 'resocialisation' in a different location. Here the concept is of endogenous processes functioning or failing to function. An alternative conceptualisation could imply that exogenous variable(s) impinge uniformly on the parental and child generations. Social class mobility weakens the class-party relationship. But this might be due to exogenous influences impacting on the individual occupying a different social location. Hypothetically, a menu of exogenous influences could be quite extensive. It might include the effect of government policy on material wellbeing. The impact of event on the development of political principles might figure, as could the response to the broader political platforms of the parties. All of these have figured in contemporary alternatives to the 'class-party' thesis. These themes are pursued by Butler and Stokes, but are thought to offer little beyond negligible, short-term influences after class position is taken into consideration.

The object of the analysis here is not to deny the 'class-party' thesis in its entirety. Butler and Stokes quite rightly make reference to respondents' ideas of why their parents voted for their chosen party. Class issues do figure much more prominently here (ibid., 1974, pp.93). For the adult generation the notion of class position and solidarity may well have been of signal importance. Rather, the object is to highlight some of the weaknesses in their conceptualisation of the underlying ideational terrain - especially in respect to the postwar generation. Class self-identification, perceived mutual

interests and the reference point of group norms are integral elements of the 'class-party' thesis. Their accurate measurement has a direct bearing on the evaluation of that thesis. In the light of the above criticism it can be suggested that Butler and Stokes's class-party relationship cannot be accepted in its entirety - at least not in its unadorned form.

## **2.4**

The 1970s and 1980s have seen the erosion of the relationship between class and party outlined by Butler and Stokes (Crewe, Sarlvik and Alt, 1977; Franklin, 1985; Sarlvik and Crewe, 1983; Whiteley, 1986). A behaviouralist oriented interpretation of the decline can be seen in the theorists of issue voting (Himmelweit et al., 1985, Sarlvik and Crewe, 1983; Rose and MacAllister, 1986; Budge, 1982). The class party thesis has, however, been resurrected by Dunleavy and Husbands, and by Heath, Jowell and Curtice (Dunleavy and Husbands, 1985; Heath, Jowell and Curtice, 1985). The thrust is partly structuralist, partly behaviouralist. It is to these authors that we now turn.

The class schema Heath, Jowell and Curtice outline comprises five distinctive elements (Salarariat, Routine Non-Manual, Petty Bourgeoisie, Foremen/Technicians and Working Class). The definitions are somewhat different from Butler and Stokes and draws heavily on the work of Goldthorpe on social stratification. Broadly speaking, the analysts maintain that the root of class solidarity remain intact. While the working class is now much reduced in size and the class composition of society is more complex than it was hitherto, relative class positions are still the same. Class interests are still as likely to be structured as a function of position in the labour market (ibid., pp.35-38).

Despite the sophisticated nature of their class definition, it does not fully succeed in differentiating party support :

(see over page)

**Table 2.5 Heath Curtice and Jowell 'Class' Against Vote**

(*ibid.*, p.20)

	Party Supported					
	Con.	Lab.	Alli.	Other		
Salariat	54%	14%	31%	1%	-	100%
Routine Nonmanual	46	25	27	2	-	100%
Petty Bourgeoisie	71	12	17	0	-	100%
Foremen/Technicians	48	26	25	1	-	100%
Working Class	30	49	20	1	-	100%

The table only seems surprising in relation to the petty bourgeoisie grouping. Otherwise the differences between the classes are not particularly striking if we take the Alliance vote as an 'out-of-class' vote (Crewe, 1986). This central deficiency of the model is one that also plagues Heath, Jowell and Curtice's calculation of the 'odds ratio' (Scarborough, 1987). The analysts do go on to flesh out their concept with an exploration of the core principles dominant in the respective classes and we will return to these below. However, for the 1983 election at least, the relationship between the categories of class and voting behaviour is nothing like as close as it was in the 1960s.

Dunleavy and Husbands' seem to employ a more structuralist approach. The difference in emphasis is apparent in the following statements. Heath, Jowell and Curtice point out that,

.."the subjective awareness of class interests is clearly important. However much political scientists may instruct the classes in their 'objective interests', these will be translated into political action only if there is some subjective grasp of them. A class theory of politics must assume class differences in attitudes and values as well as in objective conditions." (*ibid.*, 1985, p.38; emphasis original).

The behaviouralist tone is fairly evident here and can perhaps be contrasted with Dunleavy and Husband's statement that,

"People will not necessarily (and perhaps not often) articulate the influence of their social location in

structuring their votes - the phenomenon may be objectively apparent to an analyst without being explicitly recognized by voters as involved in their decisions.(*ibid.*, p.18-19).

The approach here might be said to be Durkheimian in its emphasis on 'social facts'. The hoary old question of causation is, however, as relevant here as it is elsewhere. There is no need to go as far as Taylor-Gooby in criticising the authors for obscurantism in this respect (Taylor-Gooby, 1986). However, the point is that we cannot assume class interests and perceptions from the correspondence of class and voting categories (regardless of how intuitively appealing they are as explanations of the relationship).

Dunleavy and Husbands frame their concept of class in terms of position in a complex web of social production, consumption and labour. They go on to bond their theory to what behaviouralists might consider to be concrete, attitudinal foundations. They hypothesise a complex relationship between objective structural position and voting preference. Class position conditions receptiveness to dominant ideological messages emanating from the mass media. The blandishments of the political parties transmitted by the media are of similar importance (*ibid.*, pp.19-20 and 110-17). The partisan alignments of voters develop in tandem with issue positions. The latter are in no sense the cause of the former; both are a product of the complex relationship between structural position, mass media 'message' and party intervention.

Attempts to confirm the thesis of Dunleavy and Husbands have been less than wholly successful. The assertion that structural position is closely related to vote is directly challenged by a

number of authors (Franklin and Page, 1984; Taylor-Gooby, 1986; Rose and MacAllister, 1986; Whiteley, 1986). Scarbrough on the other hand suggests that Dunleavy and Husbands' 1000-plus sample is too small to test the complexity of the thesis : it is too small to control for all of the many structural positions hypothesised (Scarbrough, 1987, p.229).

The analysis of the attitudinal impact of the mass media might also be challenged. Dunleavy and Husbands rightly draw attention to the question of the role of newspapers as source of political information. However, we might question the implication that this confers power on the printed media. Barnett confirms that Dunleavy and Husbands are essentially correct, but also that the press are the least trusted of media (Barnett, 1989). The I.B.A. survey cited shows that the tabloids are trusted to give the most accurate news by only 8% of the population - as opposed to 67% for television (ibid., pp.52-53). Bearing in mind that source characteristics are an important focus for study of persuasive communication (McQuail, 1987), the picture - from a behaviouralist point of view - becomes a little more confused.

The situation is further complicated by the method Dunleavy and Husbands use to test the thesis that the press realise the ideational potential inherent in the individual's structural position. The focus is on the editorial slant of the papers read, the individual's structural position and their voting behaviour. There are problems with this approach from the behaviouralist perspective. It is apparent from research that some individuals are and some are not aware of the political

stance of their newspapers (Newton in Drucker, 1986). This element is not fully incorporated in the analysis, and it is difficult to see how this might be achieved.

The focus is on editorial line and structural position of the reader. The evidence here - from a behaviouralist position - is 'circumstantial' rather than 'material'. Class is defined in terms of objective position. The editorial line derived from the paper's political support during the general election - a technique which can underestimate the diversity and variety of material that stimulate the individual in inter-election periods. However, Dunleavy and Husbands rightly point out that we cannot plot the impact of a single paper on the individual's political dispositions,

**"Rather our concern should be with the overall level of pluralism in the mass media messages to which voters are exposed." (Dunleavy and Husbands, 1985, p.112)**

Given this assumption it is surprising that they leave out of consideration of those who do not read a newspaper - a group constituting 16% of the sub-sample they analyze (ibid., pp.117). Furthermore, underplaying the work on the vulnerability rather than the power of the press (Miller, 1982), Dunleavy and Husbands go on to look at the difference between the percentage of Conservative and Labour votes amongst groups of newspapers characterised by their editorial line. There is, however, a problem in interpreting the table reproduced below - one which also afflicts Heath, Jowell and Curtice's odds ratio :

(see over page)

**Table 2.6 'Class' and Media Exposure Against Vote**

*ibid.*, p.117)

<u>Overall</u> <u>Press Exposure</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>Con</u> <u>over</u> <u>Lab</u>	<u>(*)</u>
Tory Influence	Non-Manual	6%	74%	20%	+68	+48
	Manual	30	43	27	+13	-14
Mainly Tory	Non-Manual	17	54	28	+37	+ 9
	Manual	26	52	22	+26	+ 4
Minimal/None	Non-Manual	13	39	48	+26	-
	Manual	50	16	34	-34	-
Mixed Influence	Non-Manual	25	48	27	+23	-
	Manual	49	23	28	-34	-
Non-Tory Infl.	Non-Manual	48	22	30	-26	- 4
	Manual	71	10	19	-61	+42

Third party voting tends to confuse the issue. The calculation of the Conservative lead over Labour tends to overestimate the impact of editorially Conservative newspapers. If we calculate the Conservative lead over the non-Conservatives - the right hand column marked (\*) - the picture is altogether more complicated and difficult to interpret<sup>1</sup>.

In the 'Tory Influence' sector the Conservative over non-Conservative lead is markedly reduced for non-manuals and reverses for manuals. In the 'Mainly Tory' category the Conservative lead over non-Conservatives is negligible in both manual and non-manual classes. The situation is a little more complicated in the 'Non-Tory Influence' group. The Labour over non-Labour lead is both negative and negligible for non-manuals, although it is quite pronounced for manual workers.

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<sup>1</sup>. For the difference (\*) in the 'Non-Tory Influence' category the calculation is for Labour against non-Labour, reflecting the likely balance of editorial encouragement between Labour and the Alliance and Conservatives

The conclusions that can be drawn from the re-analyzed table fall far short of clear support for the thesis that class and media are conjoined to conditioning vote. Perhaps we could not expect a definitive analysis study based on a relatively small sample. Dunleavy and Husbands should be applauded for examining the role of the mass media - an element conspicuously absent from other class oriented work (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1985 and Heath et al 1990). However, bearing in mind Dunleavy and Husbands' view of the secondary importance of issue preferences, and their focus on 'ideological vulnerability', the ambiguity in their results must represent a weakness in the thesis.

## **2.5**

The class-party relationship can be reestablished if we choose to look not at individual level, but at constituency level processes. The work of Miller and of Owens and Wade suggest that at constituency level the balance of classes (and particularly the numbers of those in the middle class) are important in determining voting patterns (Miller, 1977 and 1978; Owens and Wade, 1988). Indeed, the class composition of the constituency is held to be of greater significance than the occupational status of the individuals that constitute it.

From a strictly behaviouralist perspective there are two problems with this form of analysis. The first is that although the studies highlight the predictive validity of class at the constituency level, the underlying processes at work are under-explored. Consensual crystallisation and/or abrasive class interaction are consistent with the results, but the processes themselves do not figure directly in the studies. Scarbrough points out that the examination of underlying processes has been hampered by the failure of election studies to focus on local occupational, familial or friendship networks (Scarbrough, 1987, p.240). As such, the court is still out in terms of individual level validation of the findings.

The second problem revolves round the issue of the determination of what constitutes the local environment. Miller chooses the constituency as the unit of analysis. This is scarcely surprising as it allows the use of Census data to sketch constituency class profiles. However, the constituency is, in behaviouralist terms, a fairly arbitrary unit of analysis which

need not in any sense correspond to the electorate's self-defined notions of the 'immediate' local environment. These conceptualisations could, hypothetically, range from the 'citizen of the world' perspective to a narrow back street parochialism. This intuitively plausible notion clouds the interpretation of Miller and of Owens and Wade's work.

Psephologists have not, however, focused on class categorisations alone (either at individual or constituency level). As noted already, Dunleavy and Husbands look at social class and vulnerability to ideological manipulation. This is analogous to the position taken by Heath, Jowell and Curtice. Instead of 'vulnerability' the metaphor is horticultural : social positions are 'fertile ground' for the development of groups of political values or principles<sup>2</sup>. The notion of giving ideational substance to the concept of class specific or, rather, class-related structures is in the tradition of Butler and Stokes. The emphasis is behaviouralist; the datum, attitudinal. The question remains whether Heath, Jowell and Curtice achieve their objective; whether the connection between class and values is established beyond doubt.

The initial attempt to flesh out the ideational substance of class values takes the form of a cross tabulation of social class and responses to five questionnaire items. The items refer to nationalisation, redistribution, job creation, trade union legislation and private education. The questions were,

- (1) 'whether some of the industries that are now

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<sup>2</sup> The analytical distinction between these values and the 'issues' favoured by Himmelweit et al., Crewe, and Rose and MacAllister is difficult to characterise.

- nationalised should become private companies.'
- (2) 'whether income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary working people.'
- (3) 'whether the government should spend more money to create jobs.'
- (4) 'whether the government should introduce stricter laws to regulate the activities of trade unions.'
- (5) 'whether the government should get rid of private education in Britain.'

The results show some signs of grouping, but do seem more ambiguous than Heath, Jowell and Curtice give credit :

**Table 2.7 Heath Curtice and Jowell 'Class' Against Issues**

(*ibid.*, p.18)

	<u>% Agreeing With 'Right-Wing' Alternative</u>				
	<u>National.</u>	<u>Redistrib.</u>	<u>Job Creat.</u>	<u>TU Legis.</u>	<u>Educ.</u>
Salariat	50	49	27	64	76
Routine NonMan	37	33	17	61	66
Petty Bourg.	60	60	32	71	77
Foremen/Technic.	40	41	20	55	71
Working Class	24	25	10	46	53

Heath, Jowell and Curtice note that, "However, while table 2.2 shows definite class differences in values, it would be quite wrong to think of society as polarised." (*ibid.*, pp.19). A less generous reading of the figures is possible. We might suggest the grounds for support of the notion of 'definite class differences' are rather weak. The 'petty bourgeois' group do look quite distinct. However, the differences between the 'Working class' and, especially, 'Routine Non-Manuals' on nationalisation, redistribution and job creation are less than startling. On trades union legislation the 'Working Class' do not look all that different from the 'Foremen and Technicians', who in turn do not stand out from the 'Routine Non-Manuals'. Moreover, there are many cells where the division approaches 50 : 50 or 60 : 40. This is so with the Salariat, Petty Bourgeoisie and Foremen on nationalisation, redistribution and trade union

legislation; and with the Salaried, Routine Non-Manuals, Foremen and Working Class on trade union legislation. On private education the Working Classes look quite different from the rest, but here too it was split quite evenly for and against.

Heath, Jowell and Curtice do go on to explore the theme of class-related values and voting. They do this by looking at Conservative and Labour voter's attitudes to six specific issues or values :

**Table 2.8 Issues Against Vote**

(*ibid.*, p.109)

% Agreeing with Right-wing Alternative

	Conservative Voters	Labour Voters
Nationalisation	66	12
Trade Union Legislation	84	29
Income Redistribution	59	12
Defence Spending	82	37
Private Education	87	43
Job Creation	35	2

A two-dimensional 'ideological position' map is also constructed (*ibid.*, p.118). One dimension is composed of attitudes for or against nuclear weapons; the other from attitudes for or against nationalisation. Heath, Jowell and Curtice note that not only do Conservative and Labour voters differ markedly on their acceptance of right-wing alternatives, but they congregate in the expected quarters of the 'issue' or 'principle' map.

Leaving aside the question of where and through what processes the individual develops his or her issue or value preferences, this approach - like all other issue approaches - is dogged by the problem of partisan interference<sup>3</sup>. Is the

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<sup>3</sup> The work of Sarlvik and Crewe (Sarlvik and Crewe, 1983), and of Himmelweit (Himmelweit et al, 1985) suffers in similar degree. The latter is also criticised for generalising from a

individual stating an issue or value position because he or she is a partisan and more or less loosely associates that issue or value with a party? Or is the individual a partisan because of their issue preferences or values? This is particularly difficult to tease out with respect to the complex notion of values.

It is clear which direction of causation Heath, Jowell and Curtice favour. They note that, .."we interpret these questions as tapping people's underlying values which they most often take for granted , but which nonetheless shape their perceptions and evaluations of specific events, personalities and policies." (*ibid.*, p.111). The problem is further complicated by the focus on the issues of nuclear weapons and nationalisation (although they do admit that other questions would do as well). The point is (as they also note) that these were chosen .."largely because they are the most politicised of the class and liberal issues respectively.." (*ibid.*, p.118, emphasis added). Yet it is precisely the high profile, highly politicised issues that voters can effectively filter in a partisan fashion. The possibility remains that the tables in this respect are merely testimony to the electorate's more or less clear association of nationalisation and denuclearisation with Labour (and of denationalization and nuclear deterrence with the Conservatives).

From a behaviouralist perspective there is more to the concept of 'ideology' than the response to five questionnaire items can adequately fill. Heath, Jowell and Curtice do not

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sample which attrition skewed towards the middle classes (Dunleavy, 1981).

explore the problem in much depth. Nor do those authors with a similar line of approach - most notably Sarlvik and Crewe (Sarlvik and Crewe, 1983, pp.281-313). They are interested in the individual's perception of the parties' position on a range of issues. These perceptions are then related to individual's personal preferences to show a close association with voting intention. However, exactly the same problem surfaces here. Do individuals fit their issue perceptions to their partisan self-image or does the self-image develop as a function of issue preference?

The resolution of the problem can turn either on denying the independence of partisanship from voting intention, thereby defining it out of existence<sup>4</sup>, or by examining the construct validity of the attitudinal terms themselves. Here the issue or 'principle' items do not fare particularly well.

Butler and Stokes' work on issue instability and ignorance questioned the notion of the impact of issues on voting behaviour. In the later work of Crewe and Sarlvik there is also considerable evidence of voters' misperception or ignorance of the position of parties (Table 9.1, Sarlvik and Crewe, 1983). The table is too large to reproduce here, but in four of the six issue categories between thirty and fifty per cent of respondents either misperceived the party's position or could not offer an answer. This is significant, as the survey was done after the 1979 election, where, for around a month, the electorate had been

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<sup>4</sup> "To a substantial extent, party identification is tautological. Demonstrating a high correlation between party identification and party vote supports the hypothesis that these are but two names for the one thing." (Rose and MacAllister, 1986, p.132).

bombarded by party propaganda from the press and televisual hustings.

The work of Dunleavy and Husbands with regard to 'non-attitudes' is also significant. By asking a battery of questions on issues, and in some instances reversing the wording, they were able to expose a high degree of inconsistency in responses (Dunleavy and Husbands, 1985, p.175-79). Again the results undermine the notion that attitudinal indices relate unambiguously to issue positions or tap 'real' ideational constructs. Furthermore, studies of children and young adults have shown a lamentable ignorance of politics. What little work that has been done on the knowledge of electors suggests that they are still not fully in charge of the facts on policy - they lack even basic knowledge and show little analytical sophistication (Mardle and Taylor, 1987).

On the other side of the coin, partisan identification is a variable with strong predictive validity. It is an analytical element with utility beyond the immediate realm of voting behaviour. The relationship between partisan identification and both voting and vote stability is highlighted by Sarlvik and Crewe (ibid.). Ninety five percent of 'very strong' identifiers voted for their respective parties; the corresponding figure for those with a 'strong' partisanship was seventy six percent. The 'impact' of partisan affiliation on vote stability can also be seen in their work. The very strong, and the fairly strong identifiers showed pronounced stability in voting preferences : 93% and 80% respectively voted for the same party in both 1974 and 1979 (Sarlvik and Crewe, 1983, pp.298).

Despite the decline in the strength of partisan affiliation (Crewe, Sarlvik and Alt, 1977; Crewe, 1984) partisan attachments still strongly predict voting behaviour and homing tendencies. Heath, Jowell and Curtice note that, "There has been no clear increase in hesitancy, volatility or turbulence, and no tendency for party identification to become a less powerful influence on vote" (Heath, Jowell and Curtice, 1988; Heath and McDonald, 1988). This does not sit particularly well with their earlier study, but like similar research it is testimony to the explanatory power of partisanship (Whiteley, 1986).

The question still remains whether partisanship is actually distinct from voter's choice - whether the two are one and the same thing. Rose and MacAllister maintain that this is the case and so control for political principles, pre-adult socialisation, socioeconomic (social class) interests and perception of government performance. Not surprisingly they find that partisan affiliation is practically redundant as a predictor of voting behaviour (Rose and MacAllister, 1986, pp.127-34). Bearing in mind what has already been discussed about partisan attachment and issues or principles the interpretive problems remain. They are compounded when the deficiencies in socialisation theory and the measurement of class attachments are considered. They become acute for Rose and MacAllister when they note that none of their pre-partisan variables account for the Alliance vote. Here only partisan identification and government performance (in that order) seem to matter (*ibid.*, 1986, p.134). They are forced at this point simply to reiterate, rather unconvincingly, that vote choice and partisanship are the same thing.

The notion of an affective partisan screen has predictive validity beyond the field of voting behaviour. Its influence is invoked to explain the media's inability to alter the perceptions and attitudes of viewers and readers (Klapper, 1960 and 1968; Sears and Chaffee, 1979; Davis, 1982; Sigelman and Sigelman, 1984). The root of the selectivity perception thesis in cognitive dissonance theory also strongly supports the notion of importance of the emotive element in the process (Festinger, 1957 and 1964).

Finally, if the notion of partisanship is considered to be affective in character, the work of Zajonc, and Abelson contribute significantly to the construct validity of the term (Zajonc, 1980; Abelson *et al.*, 1982). They note that the affective component of the thought process is substantively as well as analytically distinct from the cognitive element. In favouring individual candidates the affective precedes the cognitive; and, indeed, the two elements are thought to be handled by geographically distinctive parts of the brain. When gauged against the validating support for issue positions or values and principles, the affective conception of partisanship looks quite convincing. The evidence is dispersed, but indicative. Moreover, much of the support would be considered by behaviouralists as 'material' rather than 'circumstantial' (in the sense that it is grounded on direct attitudinal measurement).

## **2.6**

From the preceding thematic analysis a number of distinctive strands emerge. The class voting thesis that formerly prevailed is seen as deficient from the behaviouralist perspective. The predictive capacity of the original model is sorely diminished. Moreover, its universal applicability and the integrity of its attitudinal content were somewhat suspect even in its heyday. The different attempts to resurrect the class thesis or draw the discipline onto new explanatory ground, share some generic problems.

The first of these is the approach to support for attitudinal assumptions. Dunleavy and Husbands seem to come within a hairs breadth of affirming that it is unnecessary to explore the elector's perceived sectoral interests. If it can be established that an aggregate level relationship pertains which is consistent with the expression of 'real' interests then we need go no further. Behaviouralist might consider this unacceptable. Attitudinal assumptions are not a secondary element in a thesis, but must figure prominently at the core. As such they require suitable confirmation - ideally of the most direct attitudinal sort.

The problem is not, however, confined to the advocates of class or sectoral voting. Budge's work on issue voting has a similar feel (Budge, 1982). Though there are attitudinal elements they are imported at second hand. He uses the party manifestos and relies on the authority of analysts in the British General Election Studies to establish an issue agenda. Without direct attitudinal support, the issues are then hypothesised to

have a positive or negative impact on either 'bourgeois' or 'socialist' parties. The resultant model has predictive validity but almost wholly lacks an ideational foundation. From the behaviouralist perspective the operation is unsatisfactory.

Some of the studies which reconsider the class-party relationship have a more appealing predictive capacity. Miller's work on constituency level voting is indicative and should stimulate further analysis. Yet without a clear explanatory underpinning drawn from reliable and verifiable exploration of attitudes, the causal processes at work will remain obscure (Scarborough, 1987).

The last generic problem which afflicts the current voting theories concerns the clarity and validity of their respective attitudinal elements. The issue voting models have substantial predictive capacity, but the questionnaire responses used to sustain the thesis lack clear construct validity. The interposing variable of partisanship muddies the waters. The thesis is substantially, if not fatally flawed without confirmation that the survey items tap 'real' rather than 'non-attitudes'. The partisan element seems to have construct validity, but questions remain concerning partisan development, stability, and the roots of short-term fluctuations.

Bearing in mind the problems outlined, it seems inappropriate to urge some kind of eclectic fusion of approaches. Class, sector, issue and value elements can figure comfortably in a regression equation. Given the problems outlined above, the difficulty in interpreting the results go beyond the construction of plausible models based on sustainable assumptions. The

attitudinal elements that weave the elements together are often of a circumstantial nature, and we can be far from certain that class, issue or value positions constitute a useful shorthand denoting discrete or clear attitudinal clusters.

Many of the problems so far encountered stem from difficulties in operationalising the terms employed in the respective models. They constitute an impediment to future development. If terms like class or sectoral interests are not transparent to the analyst, what hope is there for the interviewee? 'Issue positions' and 'principles' are equally difficult to operationalise. The advocates of economic voting models maintain they have a solution to these problems and it is to them that we now turn.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ECONOMIC VOTING IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE : THE CASE OF SCOTLAND

#### 3.1

The starting point for many of the economic voting theorists is the construction of a set of assumptions concerning the individual voter's likely attitudinal calculus. These are not drawn exclusively from supportive attitudinal evidence, but are deductive and quasi-axiomatic. They form the backbone of a model of voting behaviour which has a deceptive clarity and simplicity. Anthony Downs was one of the principal architects of the "hypothetico-deductive" approach (Downs, 1957). Models developed from the 'Downsian' postulates have the apparent virtue that they do not place too heavy a burden on the information storing and handling capabilities of the electorate. And anyway, at least some evidence supports the notion that the electorate is a little better informed on economic than on policy or political matters (Pickett and Alpine, 1965).

The original model assumes that all individuals are impelled to maximise utility, net of any cost. The expected utility in voting lies in a likely fortuitous outcome from the election. The costs involved are those of observation of the political environment, although it is assumed that the individual can draw on his or her own financial experience and on the readily available information in the mass media. Minor costs are also incurred in transporting the individual's carcass to the polling booth.

Downs and Robertson also look to party ideology and partisanship for low cost means of establishing which party is

best in the eyes of the voter. The calculus is either, 'The party that has benefited me in the past had a particular guiding ideology'. Or, 'If this party was the one which benefited my father, why should it not benefit me' (Robertson, 1976, p.45). Notwithstanding "ideology" or family driven "partisanship", the basic model postulates that the individual will punish an incumbent when his or her economic circumstances deteriorate, and reward the government if the individual is better off.

The method employed here is more often used in the disciplines of economics and econometrics than in political science *per se* (Blaug, 1982). Like econometric theory a heavier emphasis is placed on the predictive capacity of the models than on their explanatory capacity. Few, however, in political science would go as far as Milton Friedman in asserting either that explanatory power or capacity is irrelevant or that, if predictions are accurate we may continue 'as if ' the initial postulates concerning behaviour are in some sense true (Friedman, 1953).

This instrumentalist approach would be acceptable if on the one hand the predictive capacity were impressive or, on the other, the initial postulates were plausible and hung together in a logically coherent and consistent manner. From a behaviouralist perspective the Downsian thesis is weak in both respects.

The premises can be considered in isolation but the logical framework in which they hang can be considered rather weak. The problem revolves around the need to square plausible, deductive elements concerning rational calculations with patently obvious

political phenomena in the 'real' world. Downs himself notes that if the voters take the time to consider if their respective votes will actually make a difference, they will decide not to vote at all. The individual voter is one among many; their vote cannot be expected to tip the balance; the outcome will pertain whether they vote or not - thus voting will mean outlay in costs with no assurance of any prospective return whatsoever. These initial conditions would leave us with a model that predicted that no one would vote at all. With the obvious fact that great numbers do indeed vote, Downs is forced to invoke the notion of 'long-run participation value' (Downs, *ibid.*, p.270). The individual realises that if all others so calculate, democracy will stagnate and with it the moral and economic health of the nation.

The problems with this are many, not least those associated with the 'free rider' (Olson, 1965). The individual need not be particularly shrewd to calculate that they can abstain but allow everyone else to incur the costs of voting (and in so doing help preserve democracy). This does not take us much further since if everyone calculated thus we would again be left with empty polling booths. The potential for a collapse into an unhelpful infinite regress is obvious.

The free rider problem highlights the difficulty of maintaining a model which is at the same time logically coherent and consistent with obvious, known facts. As the initial postulates multiply, the dangers of collapsing into contortions to explain indubitable evidence (eg. of large scale turnout) become more tangible and intractable. The situation, indeed,

gets more difficult for Downs. In postulating 'long-run participation value' the cost burden placed on the electorate is increased substantially. How is the voter to decide whether democracy is, indeed, a *sine qua non* for an effectively functioning modern economy? Few political scientists could offer a transparently plausible answer to that question (one that would not involve the expenditure of a great deal of intellectual energy to resolve).

Some have tried to rescue Downs from the morass by noting that any goal-directed justification for voting is admissible as rational (from 'pleasing the wife' to the satisfaction obtained from supporting a favoured party - Riker and Ordeshook, 1973). The initial postulates (beyond straightforward utility maximisation) have again been stretched and, for Laver at least, are too permissive and heterogeneous to construct a widely generalisable model (Laver, 1978). Anyway, if Riker and Ordeshook's assumptions are correct we are left with the problem of explaining the difference between turnout between the UK and the USA (70-80% and circa 50% respectively). Is the difference a function of exogenous influences beyond the utility maximising calculus? And if so, which ones?

### 3.2

If Friedman's position is taken, we might seek refuge in the predictive capacity of the model developed from Downsian postulates. We may even attribute the lack of complete fit to the difficulties involved in accommodating non-utility maximising calculations (perhaps analogous to the "disturbing causes" associated with macroeconomic modelling). Downs's work has indeed stimulated a great deal of research, typically focusing on time series analysis using econometric techniques (Pissarides, 1980). Relating a variety of aggregate economic indicators to government popularity was a method favoured by many analysts.

A number of studies over the last twenty years have lent support to Downs' thesis (Goodhardt and Bhanslai, 1970; Mosley, 1978; Frey and Schneider, 1978; Pissarides, 1980). Mosley notes that unemployment rates, inflation and growth rate etc. are all .."significantly correlated".. with government popularity (Mosley, 1982). Paldam, in an overview of the literature on 'popularity function', comes to conclude that, .."the V-P function should no longer be doubted." (Paldam, 1981, p.194).

In this sense alone we might say that the Downsian 'hypothetico-deductive' method is vindicated. Problems are raised if, however, we move from a predictive to an explanatory frame of reference. If a link can be established between aggregate fluctuations in the economy and the government's popularity, how are these to be explained? The typical Downsian answer is to conjecture that voters consider the government's past performance and the likely performance of the opposition (as

gauged by their past performance). The reward is then given or the punishment inflicted.

The attitudinal elements in the original models were, however, rather under-explored. In this sense the evidence was decidedly circumstantial, and both Kramer and Husbands have noted that aggregate statistical relationships are consistent with a great many individual level interpretations (Kramer, 1983; Husbands, 1985; Feldman, 1984).

Besides, we have the prospect of a bewildering array of economic variables impacting on government popularity. Many analysts have noted that statistical relationships are unstable over time. Variables from prices, inflation and unemployment, to balance of payments, exchange rates and growth in real incomes are seen to have an effect at some, but not at other times (Butler and Stokes, 1974; Miller, 1986; Husbands, 1985; and Paldam, 1981).

The danger inherent in speculating on underlying micro-level dynamics is evident in the work of Husbands (Husbands, 1985). He notes that there is a strong and statistically significant correlation between unemployment and government popularity for the period between 1966 and 1974. Inflation was likewise correlated but at a much lower level. Speculating on individual level processes, Husbands employs the notion of 'social communalism' to explain the impact of unemployment beyond those who were personally or vicariously affected. A concern for the lot of others is seen as important (*ibid.*, p.7). This interpretation does not altogether fit the Downsian model but it seems necessary given the statistical relationships.

The period from 1974 to 1979 differs markedly from the earlier phase. With unemployment doubling and inflation at its highest ever level, Husbands shows that neither variable is correlated significantly with popularity. Fluctuations in real disposable income are, however, strongly associated with movements in government popularity. Husbands is therefore led to conclude that individuals were no longer looking outward to the broader community at this juncture, but were instead using personalised criteria (fluctuations in real disposable income) in their judgement of the government.

The complications do not end there. In the period from 1979 to 1983, despite a decline in real wages , unemployment, in conjunction with the 'Falklands Factor', is the only economic variable associated with government popularity (*ibid.*, p.9). The inference made by Husbands concerning the individual-level processes is not that there has been a return to communalism, but that more people are directly affected and react accordingly (by punishing the government).

The problems here are evident. The results of Husbands' study are consistent with the Downsian thesis in the period from 1974 to 1983, yet, from a behaviouralist perspective, little supportive evidence is offered for Husbands' reading of the individual level processes. Speculation on the lurch (somewhere around 1973-4) from 'communalistic' to 'personalised' criteria for judging government performance is not particularly plausible either intuitively, or, more importantly, on the grounds of supportive evidence.

Moreover, some analysts have pointed to the large numbers of unemployed people voting for the Conservative government in 1983. Husbands does note that the swing against the Conservatives among the unemployed was 6% (as opposed to 2% for the rest of the electorate). However, it is difficult to sustain the Downsian thesis without qualification. Especially where post election polls show that, .. "the unemployed were not more strongly anti-Tory than others in their class; and half the young unemployed did not vote at all." (The Economist, 15 October 1983, p.33). Indeed, the level of support for the Conservatives among the unemployed and disadvantaged has been offered as conclusive evidence of the poverty of the Downsian model (Heath, Jowell and Curtice, 1985, p.162; Scarbrough, 1987, p.233).

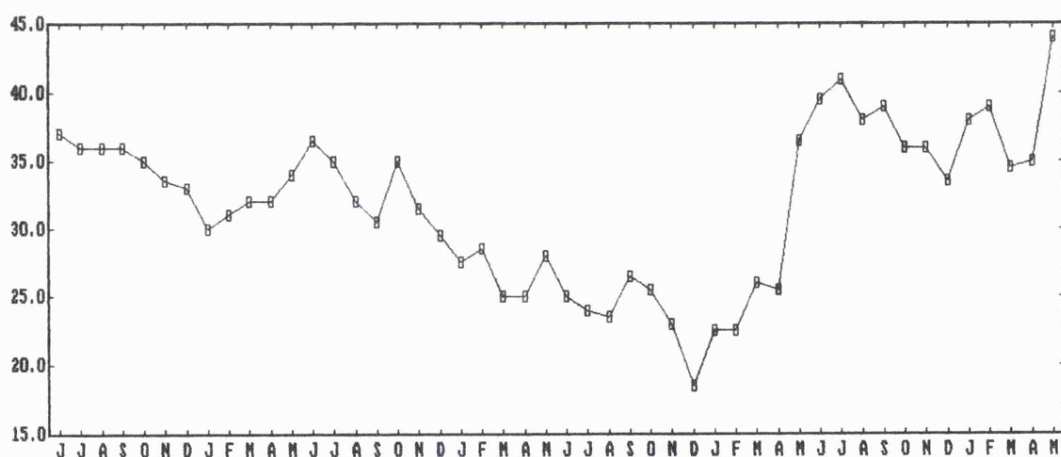
Before moving on to British and American analysts who focus almost exclusively on behavioural-attitudinal modelling of the popularity function, it is perhaps appropriate to look at a model which overlaps the econometric and the attitudinal. The model chosen is that of Sanders, Marsh and Ward (Sanders, Marsh and Ward, 1987). Their initial study concerned the period from 1979 to 1983 and takes as a point of entry the dispute over the impact of the so-called 'Falklands Factor'. The period is of interest because both government popularity and leading economic variables fluctuated quite markedly. Miller notes that difficulty attends the estimation of the impact of the economy on government popularity as the two usually trend quite lowly, thus obscuring the relationship (Miller, 1986). The 1979 to 1983 period thus offers an interesting laboratory.

### 3.3

Debate about the contribution of the Falklands War to Mrs. Thatcher's 1983 election victory still continues. It has, however, been commented - with some justification - that the political science community started with the assumption that the Falklands war influenced the popularity of the Conservative party in the run up to the 1983 general election. This is scarcely surprising given that government popularity jumped some sixteen percentage points in the course of the military campaign (see Fig.1 below).

Figure 3.1 : Government Popularity 1979-83

June 1979 to May 1983



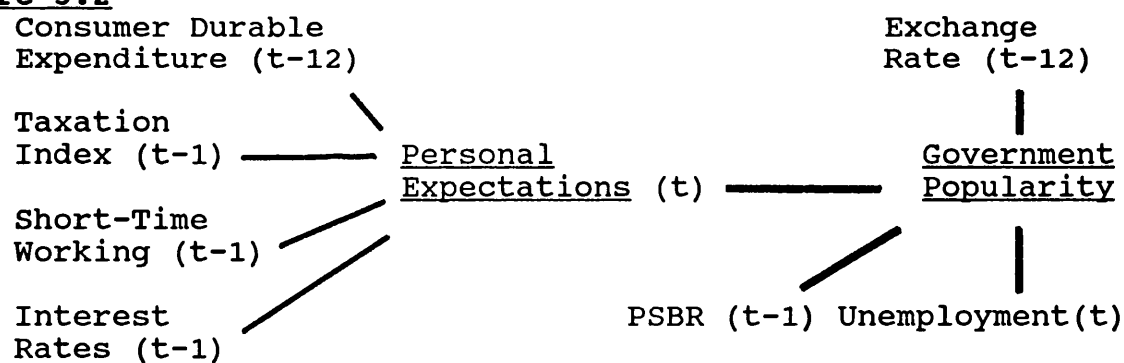
Political scientists have been eager to explain this jump, though not always in Downsian terms. Crewe, Dunleavy and Husbands, and Clarke *et al* have attempted to estimate the effect of the 'Falklands Factor' more systematically, although they differ in the weight they assign to it. Crewe, observing the raw opinion

poll data, felt that the 'Falklands Factor' was worth somewhere in the region of 15-16% for the Conservatives (Crewe, 1985). The statistical models of Clarke *et al.*, and of Dunleavy and Husbands also suggested a pronounced Falklands War effect (Clarke *et al.*, 1986; Dunleavy and Husbands, 1985).

Sanders *et al.*'s iconoclastic article offers a very different explanation of fluctuations in government popularity around the time of the Falklands War (Sanders *et al.* 1987). Based on a re-specified model they hold that it was, broadly speaking, the Conservative government's handling of the economy that was responsible for the reversal of its downward slide in popularity (somewhere around December 1981 or January 1982).

The calculations of Sanders *et al.* lead them to construct a model specifying the direct and indirect effects of economic trends on the Conservative Party's popularity. The most important element in the model is the public's expectations of likely future trends :

**Figure 3.2**



In their estimation a marked deceleration in unemployment, reduced Public Sector Borrowing Requirement and a promising trend in the pound's exchange rate against the dollar influenced government popularity directly. They do, however, have the strong suspicion that, "... the effects of these variables were

probably mediated by the speculative and interpretative endeavour of the mass media" (p.297). In contrast, a pronounced growth in consumer durable expenditure, a reduction in short-time working and a decrease in both tax and interest rates are held to affect popularity indirectly through the public's positive expectations concerning likely future trends - through 'consumer confidence'.

Here the thrust seems - at least in part - to be Downsian. Past economic fluctuations impact upon the individual, generate expectations and thus enter the utility maximising calculus of the voters (Downs, 1957). The notion here is that the voting public either rewards or punishes the government for fluctuations in the economy which have benefited or hurt them. What is unusual about the findings of Sanders *et al.* is the conclusion that virtually all of the Government's rise in popularity in 1982 should be attributed to these economic factors; and that the Falklands War was worth scarcely 2-3% for the first few months after the conflict, and little thereafter.

The 'heretical' nature of this thesis has prompted a counterblast from Franklin (Franklin, 1987). He claims that if we look at a large number of objective economic indicators and then lag them by a variety of time spans we can scarcely fail to find some kind of correlation between some of these indicators and government popularity. This criticism is particularly pointed bearing in mind that previous economic models have shown an unstable relationship between a variety of economic variables and popularity. Franklin also enquires why the lag between exchange rate alterations and government popularity should be as long as twelve months.

Sanders et al. have responded to these criticisms by pointing out that their model is derived from the wealth of research on the economy and its influence on voting behaviour (Sanders et al., 1988). They also suggest that the lag on exchange rate fluctuations is plausible as it takes about one year for their effects to 'work through the economy' and have an impact on the lives of individual voters. In the case of both criticisms Sanders et al. feel their model is fully in accordance with a 'Downsian-driven' analysis of popularity fluctuation, one which emphasises objective economic trends and speculative inference on their individual level impact.

Perhaps the most illuminating aspects of the controversy consist in the methodological lessons which may be drawn. Franklin warns that we must avoid the 'broomstick' approach to data collection. By this is meant the unsystematic or random accumulation of data with no clear conception of how it is tied together. However, Sanders et al. counter strongly that their study does not constitute such an exercise; their thesis is articulated to macro-level theorising with a long pedigree.

On an equally important methodological point Franklin draws our attention to the fact that the great majority of respondents in a number of surveys approved of the government's handling of the Falklands war. In essence, then, Franklin is correct in pointing out that if, as he mentions, almost everyone approves of what the government is doing, how are we to gauge the effect of 'approval' (measured in aggregate) on the government popularity? Where are our control conditions? The answer from Sanders, Ward and Marsh is quite simple in this case. If we

control for fluctuations in the economy before, during and after the Falklands War, the 'Falklands Factor' is reduced to a few percentage points.

An analogous methodological problem confronts students of mass media impact. The dilemma confronts Miller in his work on the media and the Falklands War (Miller 1983). He points out that if everyone is reading or watching similar media output on an issue (say the Falklands War), or aware of that output through others, then how are we to distinguish the influence of one particular newspaper or medium. He maintains that we must look at distinctively different media environments within the same political domain (eg. Scotland and England within the United Kingdom). The digression is not simply incidental. The systematic difference in media environments across a similar population may give us a laboratory in which to test the impact of otherwise of political communication (in 'aggregate'). Moreover, it can in one sense allow the analysis of the comparative impact of economic fluctuations.

Miller maintains that the impact of the distinctive tenor of the Scottish mass media explain aggregate fluctuations in popularity at the time of the Falklands - fluctuations that are quite different from those in the United Kingdom as a whole. In this sense the model contrasts starkly with that of Sanders *et al.* The fortuitous conjunction of a number of factors makes Miller's case study of the Scottish experience of the Falklands War particularly relevant with regard to the debate on the general impact of the 'Falklands Factor' and the integrity of the econometric model of popularity function. However, the thrust

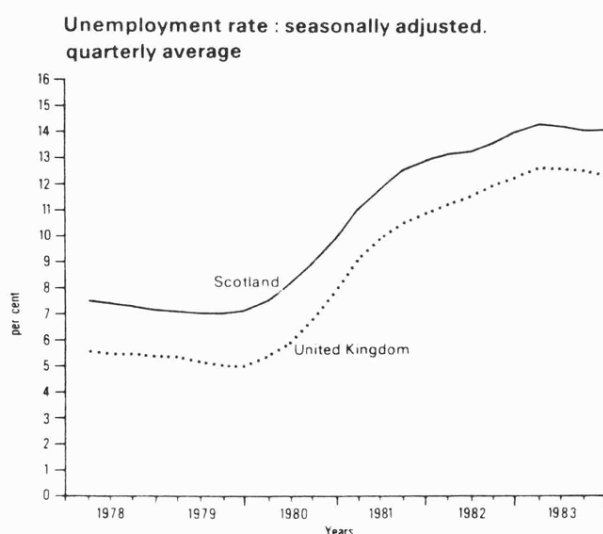
has to be comparative and speculative, rather than systematic and statistically orientated.

First, the war was neither a wholly English nor a peculiarly Scottish affair. Scottish and English troops fought together. The Belgrano was sunk by a Clyde based submarine. The Scots as well as the English would, ultimately, pay for the war through taxes. In this sense we have an issue on which the capacity for systematic difference across conditions (Scotland-England) is reduced. Second, a limited amount of comparable economic data are available through which we can examine or test the model that Sanders *et al.* construct for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Most of the factors to which Sanders *et al.* allude show the same trends in Scotland that they do in Great Britain as a whole. To all intents and purposes for Scotland and England 'exchange rate' and 'PSBR' are indistinguishable.

**Figure 3.3** : Comparative Unemployment

Source : SCOTTISH ECONOMIC BULLETIN (JUNE 1988) P.23



Moreover, if we look at unemployment (Fig.2 above) we see that for Scotland as a whole the trajectory is very similar to that of the UK. A sharp upswing is evident after 1979 followed by deceleration 1981-83. The "direct" elements of Sanders *et al.*'s popularity equation are very much in evidence in Scotland.

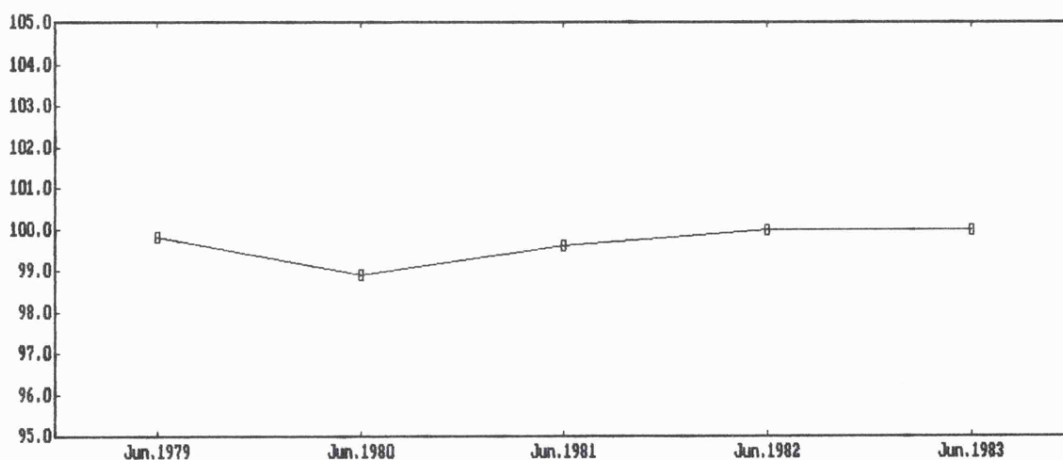
With regard to the 'indirect' elements again, 'taxation' and 'interest rate' trends are the same for Scotland as they are for the U.K. It should be noted here that interest rate fluctuations may have a differential effect on Scotland due to the relatively high percentage of publicly owned homes (49% in Scotland to 31% in England - Dickson, 1988, p.361). However, the aspect of primary importance is the effect of interest rates on 'consumer expenditure' which is at the centre of Sanders *et al.*'s thesis. Here the difference in effect may be less marked.

The data for earnings and consumer expenditure are not directly available, but if it is possible to infer anything from comparative data, then Fig.3.4 is interesting :

**Figure 3.4 : Earnings**

**SOURCE : SCOTTISH ECONOMIC BULLETIN (JUNE 1988) p.23**

**Average Weekly : Scotland as a Percentage of U.K.**



It suggests that, for Scotland, weekly earnings began - after 1980 - to creep toward the national average. In this sense the general trend of degeneration after 1979 followed by upswing is again apparent. The data on Scottish 'consumer expenditure' is also interesting as this, for Sanders et al., is primarily associated with their 'economic expectation' index :

**Table 3.1 Consumer Durable Expenditure : Scotland as % of U.K.**

**SOURCE : SCOTTISH ECONOMIC BULLETIN (JUNE 1986) P.53**

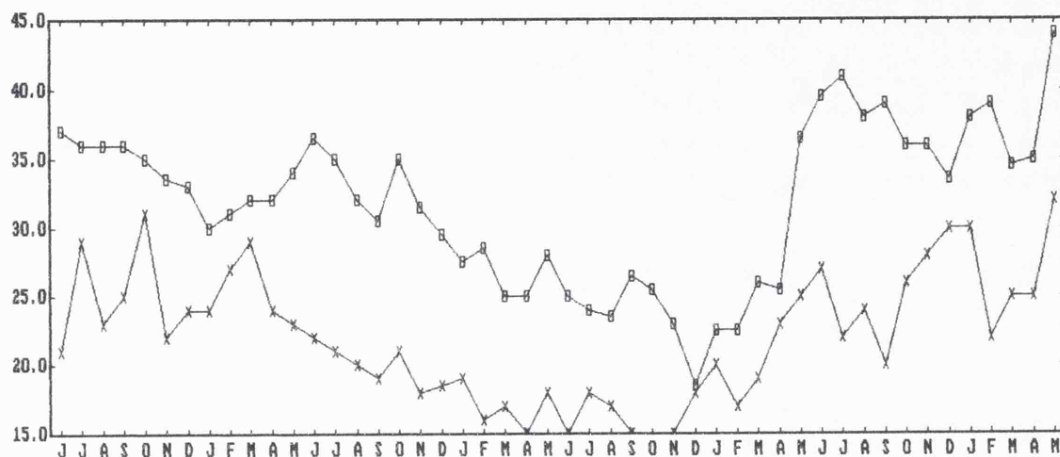
1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
96.4%	95.9%	94.6%	94.3%	95.2%	96.8%

The contours of the fluctuations in consumer expenditure closely match those of the UK as a whole. Moreover, in relative terms, we see a downward plunge from 1979 to 1981 followed by a closing of the gap. However, overall, the contours of the fluctuations in consumer expenditure closely match, within a few percentage points , those in the U.K. as a whole.

Sadly we do not have available a discrete, disaggregated index of 'economic expectation' or 'short-time working' for Scotland. However, as Miller points out, sustained upswing in the government's popularity simply did not occur around the time of the Falklands War. He notes that, "on the basis of MORI polls the Falklands Factor was only half as strong in Scotland as in England; on the basis of a much greater number of Systems Three polls the Falklands Factor was entirely non-existent in Scotland" (*ibid.* p.23). In essence Miller is correct, but Fig.3.4 below shows the complexity of popularity fluctuations. We do see a distinctive, though less steep, upswing around the end of 1981. However, the beginning of the upswing precedes the consumer

expenditure 'surge' by all of two months (it is evident from October 1981).

**Figure 3.4** Government Popularity : U.K. and Scotland  
 SOURCE : GALLUP & SYSTEM THREE SCOTLAND  
 June 1979 to May 1983



Yet in a comparative rather than statistical analysis it may be uncharitable to quibble about one or two months either way. Of much greater significance is Miller's observation that at the time of the Falklands the upward trend in Scotland is less prominent than in the UK as a whole, and it is followed by a sharp downturn in September 1982 to almost pre-surge levels. Where the popularity gain in the U.K. over April-July is sixteen points, in Scotland the Conservative Party experience a drop of one percent.

### 3.4

The primary implication of the data for the work of Sanders, Ward and Marsh is that the intuitively plausible link between economic factors, expectations and popularity, and the direct connection between some primary economic indicators and public mood appears to be weakened. It might, of course, be held that there is a systematic difference across conditions (something in the 'Scottishness' of those living north of the Solway) that explains the differing trends in government popularity (Lewis and Potter, 1970). However, this requires us to consider what exactly this is and how it might be incorporated into an individual level explanation which Downs would find familiar. The Downsian axioms are universally applicable or they begin to lose their self-evident relevance to an easily generalisable model.

And moreover, if we recall, the Falklands War was not an exclusively Scottish or English issue. If the issue was closer to home (say a dispute over North Sea oil or over a settlement in Northern Ireland) then the implicitly different dimensions of Scottish political culture would pose problems for a straight, cross-condition comparison (Dickson, 1988). But, to repeat, the Falklands was a British national issue; one in which the families and dependents of Scottish and English soldiers shared a deep concern.

The comparison of the different explanations of the dynamics of the 'Falklands Factor' highlights the problems endemic to studies of the aggregate analysis of the relationship between economic trends and government popularity. The work of Sanders,

Ward and Marsh is, in behaviouralist terms, a step beyond the earlier work. It directly incorporates at least one attitudinal element (in its inclusion of the economic expectations variable). Husbands' study (Husbands, 1985) shows that inferring aggregate shifts in thought patterns from objective aggregate indicators is fraught with difficulty. Sanders and his co-authors not only look at aggregate economic indicators, but clearly incorporate an attitudinal indicator of public opinion.

The model of the ideational dynamics underlying the statistics is still, however, contentious. The problem is with 'expectations'. Sanders, Ward and Marsh are right to say that because two questions are on the same survey script they need not interfere with one another (*ibid*, p.296) - we will have more to say on this point later. But they may still find difficulty in defending themselves against an alternative reading of the statistics. For Sanders et al. the ideational dynamics underlying the statistical relationships is something like:

**'the economy is doing much better, thank God; in all expectations it will be the same in the future; the government is primarily responsible; the government gets my vote if there is an election tomorrow'.**

This is necessarily a caricature, but it is an instructive one. It fits well with the Downsian thesis of a fairly direct causal connection between economic fluctuations and government popularity. But as current research in Britain and the United States shows, this connection is complex and may be mediated by the effects of attribution and vary according to level of perception. Theorists have identified at least three levels : the personal (here Downs is preeminent); the contextual or local level (highlighted by Husbands and echoed in some research in the

United States); and the theorists of 'sociotropic' voting (most notably Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981).

Questions which might be asked at this juncture include : is the voter thinking of his or her own wellbeing (their 'pocketbook' perception) or about the national economic situation (their 'sociotropic' perception, Kinder & Keiweit, 1981)? This thesis on sociotropic voting is supported by a good deal of comparative research. Reed and Brunk have undertaken work in Japan where the contours of economic development provide a laboratory where 'pocketbook' and 'sociotropic' models should yield strikingly different predictions concerning voting patterns (Reed and Brunk, 1984). Alford and Legge have carried through similar work in Germany (Alford and Legge, 1984), and Lewis-Beck in France (Lewis-Beck, 1983).

We might also ask to whom do voters attribute responsibility for economic upswings or downturns (Lau & Sears, 1981; Tyler, 1982; Peffley, 1984 and Peffley & Williams, 1985)? Feldman has demonstrated that perceptions of personal circumstances do not enter the party preference equation because American cultural values hold the individual and not the Government responsible for personal wellbeing. He speculates that this may be the reason why personal circumstances fail to register as significant in recent studies (Feldman, 1982). On the same theme, and in a broadly comparative analysis of research in Western Europe, Lewis-Beck emphasises the importance of attribution (Lewis-Beck, 1986). In the four countries observed (Britain, France, Germany and Italy) perceptions of personal circumstances fail to impinge on political preferences unless the government is held

responsible for those circumstances. He also notes that perceptions of national economic trends have a weak influence unless associated with attribution of blame to incumbent government.

And lastly, where do we get our information on trends and causal attribution (Mosley, 1984; Benton & Franzier, 1976; Behr and Iyengar, 1985)? This research suggests that the media have a role to play in influencing perception of the economy, and setting the agenda on the causes and cures of economic ills.

Bearing in mind the weight of this comparative analysis, an alternative reading of the situation and its ideational dynamics might well be:

**'the government has done well in the Falklands and the economy has improved. This reflects with credit upon them. Surely a government that can pull us out of a war can be 'expected' to continue to pull us out of the economic ditch; therefore, the government will get my vote if there is an election tomorrow**

This again is a caricature, but it highlights the difficulty we face in teasing out causal connections at the individual level. The object here is to show that an 'expectations' question on a survey can be contaminated by more than merely its physical location on a survey script. It is not the object to show that the media were wholly responsible for the contours of public opinion at the time of the Falklands war and thereafter. Rather, it is sufficient to point out that the media might have an elliptical influence; an influence in conjunction with a variety of other factors (including discussion with others; personal experience; and vicarious learning).

The problem here is with controlling for the impact of confounding variables. This is evident from Sanders' statement that,

**"What we found quite simply, was that our 'Falklands Factor' measure - a measure virtually identical to that employed by previous researchers who had observed a 'Falklands effect' on government popularity - added almost no explanatory power to our statistical models". (Sanders, 1988, p.29, emphasis original).**

What is meant here, at least what is implicit, is that the respective 'effects' are virtually coextensive. This presents us with a difficult methodological problem, the resolution of which is anything but 'quite simple'. Sanders, Ward and Marsh do note in the original article that, "we conclude that the Falklands effect explanation is based largely upon a spurious theoretical interpretation of an empirical coincidence". (Sanders et al. 1987, p.282). However, if the comparative analysis of Scotland and the United Kingdom shows anything it is that an aggregate statistical model can be consistent with a number of individual level interpretations, and that these need and deserve further exploration.

Of equal importance at this juncture is the point that the plausibility of Miller's alternative model is reinforced by the manner in which it can be integrated with existing media effects research. This research is firmly behaviouralist in character. Klapper, the doyen of 'weak media effects' theory, himself acknowledges that a context of 'dependency' with regard to overseas news is one in which the impact of media content is considered more likely (Klapper 1960 and 1968; Ball-Rokeach and De Fleur 1976). The object of media attention is beyond the direct experience of most of the audience; the mechanisms of

selective perception are less effective. The breadth of anti-government coverage evident in Scotland during the Falklands war tends toward what Noelle-Nuemann described as "consonance". This similarity of content across a variety of media outlets is also associated with ability to influence (Noelle-Neumann and Mathes, 1988).

The ability to integrate Miller's thesis with existing material contrasts in some respects with Sanders *et al*,s' model. The most damaging criticism levelled at Sanders *et al*. in this instance comes from Lawrence Freedman. He cites Gallup Polls which show that the economic fluctuations which should (according to the model) have reflected well on the government, in fact made the public less favourably inclined toward the Conservatives. He notes that the economic situation made a large number of voters feel less favourable towards the government (a number significantly greater than those who became more favourable - Freedman,1987).

At this point it might be appropriate to make the almost trivially self-evident point that statistical models are, of necessity, a simplification of an otherwise complex universe. However, if the model is incompatible with attitudinal data that specify (from beyond its confines, but with some validity) the contours of this complexity, we might have to consider carefully our variable specifications. Otherwise, the only alternative position open to us is that of Milton Friedman. That of maintaining the convenient, if unsatisfactory, fiction that people behave 'as if' they are making Downsian calculations.

This is relevant with respect to Lawrence Freedman's critique of Sanders et al.'s thesis from existing but necessarily unintegrated poll data on the public's attitude to prevailing economic conditions. It has to be borne in mind that Gallup's "personal expectations" used by Sanders et al. is only one 'disembodied' element of the extraordinarily complex unity of public opinion. Yet this cuts both ways and relates as much to the data Freedmans cites as it does to the model of Sanders et al.

We argue that it is evident from the comparison of the Scottish and English experience of the Falklands war that an appreciation of the dynamics of government popularity requires a great deal more emphasis on integrated individual-level data analysis. Moreover, if the mass media were, indeed, at least partly responsible for the trajectory of government popularity in Scotland, then it would seem that they too should figure - in a more integrated fashion - in our estimations.

If the comparison we have undertaken is considered valid then the 'Falklands Factor' may be seen to have retained at least some of its plausibility. However, we cannot concur with Franklin when he asserts that, .."Dr. Johnson once said : 'Sir, I know my will is free and there's an end to it'. Most of us 'know' with almost equal certainty that the Falklands War affected our view of Mrs. Thatcher and her government; and it will need to be a persuasive piece of survey analysis that convinces us we are wrong." (Franklin, 1987, p.28). This makes the study of politics look more like theology than science.

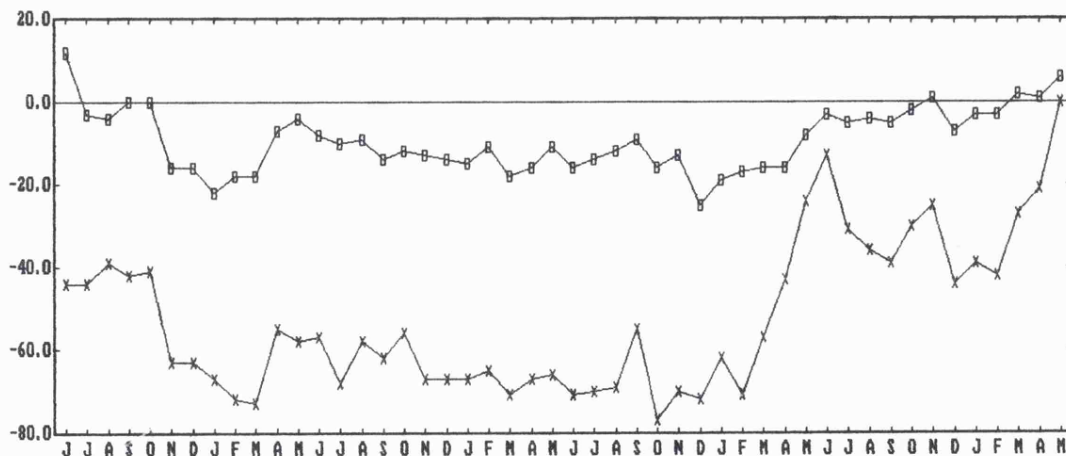
### 3.5

If we take a behaviouralist position, the next question to be addressed is, why do Sanders et al. employ aggregate government statistics to 'explain' their main predictive variable, "personal expectations"? And why are personal expectations the only attitudinal element in their model other than the dependent variable, "government popularity"? Aggregate statistics are not only open to manipulation by the government (eg taxation index and, more obviously unemployment - Miller, 1986), they can be fairly poor indicators of the likely effects at the individual level. And they are, of necessity, aggregated and averaged, and inadequately reflect the impact on individual households - though they might be relevant to a broader climate of experience and opinion.

A further complication lies in the interpretation of the aggregate level relationships between economic fluctuations and government popularity. A great deal of literature in the USA and elsewhere suggests that the individual's personal finances may not be the datum for calculations on the merits of the government. Rather, global, or so-called "sociotropic" perceptions, are believed to have an independent impact. Indeed, some studies suggest that personal economic experiences have absolutely no bearing on judgements of the government (Lau and Sears, 1981). The plot thickens with the notion that attribution of responsibility, whether it be at the personal or global level of perception, is a necessary condition for perceptions to impact on voting (we need look no further than the research already cited).

This leaves a number of issues outstanding with respect to the model of Sanders et al. Why, in their reliance on stepwise procedures, do they chose the 'personal expectations' index? In their initial search for a model they note that the bivariate correlation between personal expectations and government popularity is 0.79 (a great deal higher than the thirty or so other variables they test). The variable here is prospective in character despite the weight of research emphasising retrospective judgements (Norris, 1986; Hibbs, 1982; Hibbing, 1987). This is significant as the "general retrospective" time series shows a bivariate correlation with government popularity of 0.77. Fig.3.5 shows a comparison of prospective personal perceptions and general retrospective attitudes.

**Figure 3.5**  
Comparison of Personal Prospective (Top) & General Retrospective  
Perceptions : SOURCE : GALLUP  
 June 1979 to May 1983



The general retrospective variable is the classic "sociotropic" element which figures in much of the literature on the impact of global perceptions.

This measure does not figure at all when Sanders, Ward and Marsh come to specify the variables to be included in their stepwise regression model. The position can be defended on the grounds that general or global perceptions are be extrapolated from personal experience. In this sense global perceptions may be an artifact. However, there is a considerable amount of evidence that the two levels of perception are distinct and that global perceptions are not an epiphenomenon of those at personal level. In the United States Kinder and Kiewiet have shown that the two levels of perception are, indeed, independent of one another (Kinder and Kiwiet, 1981). Abramowitz *et al.* (*ibid.*) note that among those who attribute responsibility to government for economic conditions, personal and national level perceptions are quite distinct. Palmgreen and Clarke have suggest that individuals have distinctive local and national political agendas (Palmgreen and Clarke, 1977). Moreover Tyler and Cook distinguish personal and global perceptions of the threat of violence (Tyler and Cook, 1984).

In Britain a diverse body of research suggests that individuals have fairly discrete levels of perception. Mosleys's work on the media and government popularity lends oblique support to the notion (Mosley, 1984). Dunleavy shows that individuals draw a distinction between personal experience of trade unions and global judgements (Dunleavy, 1980). Some of the work on young voters is more directly relevant. Blumler, McQuail and

Nossiter looked at open-ended responses concerning issue preoccupations, and undertook a dimensional analysis of the associations between them. Cluster analysis showed seven main groups, two of which relate to the area of economics :

.."bread and butter problems with more or less tangible implications for the citizen's immediate circumstances and prospects (prices, taxes, jobs, etc.); preoccupations with the underlying viability of the economy (balance of payments, economic growth etc..." (Blumler, McQuail and Nossiter, 1975).

Sanders et al proceed some way in this direction in saying that the media may have a role in cuing the public on trends in unemployment, exchange rates and PSBR (the direct impact variables unrelated to personal expectations).

Sanders et al. do not pursue the question of causal attribution. This is understandable as the Gallup data they use do not afford them a reliable time series (and there would be no easy way this might be incorporated in their analysis anyway). They might be rescued by Furnham who notes that in his study of attitudes towards unemployment, almost everyone in his survey felt the government (or governments) were at least in some way responsible for past economic events (Furnham, 1982)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This contrasts with a Financial Times survey that suggested that people on the whole did not blame the government for unemployment (Visser and Wijnhoven, 1990)

### 3.6

What room does this leave us for re-specifying the model in a way behaviouralists would find acceptable? From the Gallup Political Index we can construct a number of prospective and retrospective time series which might be of use. These include :

- (1). A Global Retrospective Variable (GR) : "Do you consider that the general economic situation in this country in the last 12 months has ..".
- (2). A Global Prospective Variable (GP) : "Do you consider that the general economic situation in the next 12 months will..".
- (3). A Variable related to whether the respondent thought they had more left, after paying for all the staples, than they did last year (STAP) : "When you've paid all the things you can't get out of paying , for example, rent rates, fares etc., would you say that the amount left in your pocket is more than a year ago, the same or less".
- (4). A Personal Prospective Variable (as used by Sanders et al.) - (P) : "Do you consider that the financial situation of your household in the next 12 months will..".
- (5). A Personal Retrospective Variable (PR) : "In the last 12 months has the financial situation of your household..".

The empirical question is, can these variables be organised in such a way as to substitute for aggregate statistics as a predictor of Sanders *et al.*'s important independent variable (personal expectations)? We can draw here on the rather limited literature on the sources of prospective evaluations (from within the disciplines of political science and macroeconomics). The result would be a behaviouralist model even if, in a predictive sense, it was not a better one.

The existing material on the sources of economic expectations is rather sparse. The focus is on expectations of inflation and unemployment (not personal expectations in the

general sense). However, a few useful generalisations can be made. Contrary to Sanders, Ward and Marsh, the work of both Conover and Fiorina suggests that partisanship has an strong influence on expectations (Fiorina, 1981; Conover et al., 1987). In the British context we can only hypothesise that this would mean Conservative partisans would see the future in a rosier light than non-Conservatives. Sadly, the aggregated Gallup data available does not allow us to explore this avenue. It should, however, be taken into consideration, and we return to the issue later.

The other generalisations do concern variables whose impact we might try to measure. In predicting economic trends Fiorina emphasises respondent's perception of the government's past performance on inflation and unemployment. As interesting, he notes that respondent's general retrospective perceptions influence expectations of inflation and unemployment directly. He also notes that it influences expectations indirectly via evaluation of the government's past performance (*ibid.*, p.145-48).

In the generation of expectations of inflation Hudson and Lark emphasise the respondent's perception of how well they are managing their own income at the time of the survey. This echoes the work of Conover et al. In a panel study they highlight the importance of immediate personal experience and past evaluations of inflation and unemployment trends (*ibid.*). Gramlich notes that current and past inflation rates predict individual's expectations of inflation, but the focus is on aggregate statistics and not on retrospective perceptions (Gramlich, 1983).

He also notes that Republican incumbency and the existence of wage control legislation are also significant.

Thus what we have are a combination of prospective and retrospective elements associated with expectations. Following Fiorina we might look at a model featuring general retrospective (GR) and personal retrospective predictors of personal economic expectations:

$$PE \text{ (Personal Expectation)} = a + b(GR) + b(PR)$$

The hypothesis to be tested is that past experience influences expectations. The general retrospective element is included as a follow-up to the research on "sociotropic" voting.

A further model might be established following Conover, Gramlich, and Hudson and Luke. This would emphasise a global retrospective element, a personal retrospective variable (using either CURR or PR) and a factor relating to immediate personal experience.

$$PE = a + b(GR) + b(PR) + b(CURR)$$

An auxiliary set of questions revolve around the comparison of aggregate statistics and individual level perceptions. To what extent do aggregate statistics relating to year on year inflation match perceptions of price increases? If the former is a better predictor of government popularity than the latter, ought it to be considered a 'sociotropic' element that reflects, not the hardship of individual experience, but a mediated form of reality? This can only be done on a small scale due to the lack of appropriate Gallup data.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TIME SERIES APPROACHES TO ECONOMIC VOTING

#### 4.1

The model of government popularity which Sanders *et al.* produce is sophisticated and multifaceted. They review the econometric literature on popularity function, and the material on the Falklands War in particular. They allude to misspecification and embark on a theoretical exploration which highlights the likely impact of both the general economic situation and pocketbook influences. At this point a great deal of emphasis is placed on economic expectations. They offer a menu of likely influences on popularity which include real economic fluctuations and, crucially, general and personal economic perceptions (both prospective and retrospective). They go on to isolate those variables which show the same decline-recovery pattern as government popularity in the period. The likely candidates for inclusion in a model ie. those showing a decline-recovery pattern and high bivariate correlation with popularity include :

TAX & PRICE INDEX	TAX INDEX	EXCHANGE RATES
SHORT-TIME WORKING	CONSUMER DURABLE EXPENDITURE	
RETAIL SALES	GENERAL RETROSPECTIVE PERCEPTIONS	
PERSONAL RETROSPECTIVE PERCEPTIONS		
PERSONAL PROSPECTIVE EXPECTATIONS		

The prime question is why do Sanders *et al.* then start with a stepwise regression analysis using only 'real' economics variables and two prospective perception questions? ("Employing an analogue of the SPSS stepwise procedure and using as

predictors all the variables in categories 2 and 4 of Table I, we estimated a large number of equations which provided alternative operationalisations of the basic 'expectations/objective economic performance' model." *ibid.* p.295) The regression model produced by this technique isolates variables for personal expectations (PE), PSBR lagged six months (PSBR-6), unemployment (UN), exchange rates lagged twelve months (EXCHANGE-12). The question at this juncture is, why (when modelling Government popularity) do general and personal retrospective perceptions not figure in the model? Sanders, Ward and Marsh note that "...none of the other variables identified in categories 2-5 of Table 1, either lagged or unlagged, furnished a significant parameter when added to this 'best' equation." (*ibid.* pp.296). It is unclear in this respect if a forced entry method was used after the initial equation was specified, or whether a further stepwise regression was performed including all the initial variables plus the retrospective perception elements (lagged or unlagged).

The forced entry method of regression is explored in the table below. The model incorporates the elements that Sanders, Ward and Marsh specify (personal prospective perceptions, PSBR lagged 6 months, exchange rates lagged 12 months<sup>1</sup> and unemployment unlagged). To this model were added the general and personal retrospective perceptions that were not included in the original stepwise equation :

(see over page)

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<sup>1</sup>. We would like to thank David Sanders for providing the raw data for lagged exchange rate. Due to the truncated nature of the data set we could not calculate this ourselves.

**Table 4.1 Sanders et al Model with Additional Attitude Indices**

January 1980 - June 1983

<u>VARIABLE</u>	<u>t - STAT</u>	<u>STAND. REGRESS. COEFFICIENT<sup>2</sup></u>
General Retrospective	2.08	0.30
Personal Retrospective	-0.37	-0.04
Personal Prospective	2.42	0.33
Exchange Rate (lagg 12)	3.71	0.42
Unemployment	3.75	0.35
PSBR (lagg 6)	2.30	0.17

**Dependent = Popular. R-Sq. = 0.88 n = 42 D-Watson = 1.77**

As we can see, the personal retrospective element clearly fails to reach significance and its coefficient shows the wrong sign. However, the same cannot be said of the general retrospective variable. The parameter has the predicted sign; it is also significant at the 2% level (though not at the 1%). The path coefficient (the standardized regression coefficients) show that this variable's contribution to the model is comparable with that of personal expectations and greater than that of unemployment. The results seem to be at odds with the Sanders, Ward and Marsh conclusions.

The size of the t-statistic is important here given the degree of multicollinearity evident in the model. An examination of the correlations between the independent variables highlights the problem. The correlations between personal retrospective perceptions and both general retrospective and personal prospective perceptions are fairly modest.

**Table 4.2 Correlation Matrix : General Retrospective, Personal Retrospective and Personal Prospective Perceptions**

	General Retro	Personal Retro	Personal Pros
General Retro	1.00		
Personal Retro	0.53	1.00	
Personal Prosp.	0.86	0.68	1.00

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<sup>2</sup>. Otherwise known as the 'beta-coefficient'.

The problem lies with the correlations between personal prospective perceptions and general retrospective perceptions. At 0.85 this is large and ought to be considered in the light of the distorting impact of multicollinearity. As Schreoder et al point out,

"While regression coefficients estimated using correlated independent variables are unbiased, they tend to have larger standard errors than they would have in the absence of multicollinearity. This in turn means that the t ratios will be smaller. Thus it is more likely that one will find the regression coefficients not to be significant than in the case where no multicollinearity plagues the data." (Schroeder et al., 1986, p.72)

The effects of multicollinearity are obviously relevant in a context in which elements in a model are dropped as a function of failing to achieve significance.

The inclusion of a general retrospective element in an aggregate model seems appropriate, even given Sanders, Ward and Marsh's stated preference for parsimony and limited multicollinearity. The other three criteria they give for judging a model (intuitive plausibility, maximised R-squared and significance of the parameters) would seem to be met. Notwithstanding problems with significance testing (associated with multicollinearity), the inclusion of a general retrospective element is not obviously intuitively implausible. Besides, the R-squared for the model in which it is included is 0.88 which compares favourably with that of Sanders, Ward and Marsh of 0.87 (though this would be expected simply as a function of increasing in the number of independent variables). Finally, to Sanders, Ward and Marsh's list of desirable features in a model might be added the support of evidence from other studies. In this

instance it is clear from the evidence presented in the preceding chapter that general retrospective perceptions figure prominently in a number of recent studies on government popularity in the United Kingdom and the United States.

The inclusion of the Falklands Factor dummy variables into a model of Government popularity (which includes general as well as personal elements) still, however, fails to make an impact. R-squared is unchanged and with a t-statistic of 0.84 it fails to achieve significance. The model still suggests that the Falklands Factor was worth little to the Conservative Government and that economic factors still predominated.

The problems of model respecification are further highlighted if we take the initial Sanders, Ward and Marsh model (personal expectations; PSBR; unemployment; and exchange rate); remove the prospective variable; and substitute, in turn, the attitudinal elements that were left out of the stepwise procedure. This was done as a substitute for reproducing a stepwise regression including retrospective general and personal perceptions. The original data base has, sadly, been modified and truncated and as a result that particular option was excluded. If, however, the personal retrospective perceptions variable is substituted for the personal prospective variable, the R-squared is reduced at 0.81 (c.f. Sanders, Ward and Marsh at 0.87) :

Table 4.3      Original Model with Personal Retrospective Replacement

<u>January 1980 - June 1983</u>		STAND. REGRESS.
	<u>t - STAT</u>	<u>COEFFICIENT</u>
Personal Retrospective	2.03	0.21
Exchange Rate (lagg 12)	5.06	-0.57
Unemployment	0.80	-0.06
PSBR (lagg 6)	3.02	-0.26
Dependent = Popular.   R-Sq. = 0.81   n = 42		D-Watson = 1.70

At t equal to 2.03 the variable is significant at the 2% level, though the path coefficients show a relatively modest contribution towards popularity. On the other hand the 'unemployment' parameter fails to achieve significance.

The situation is, however, quite different if we take the general retrospective variable and enter it in the equation in the place of personal prospective perceptions.

**Table 4.4 Original Model with General Retrospective Replacement**

January 1980 - June 1983

<u>VARIABLE</u>	<u>t - STAT</u>	<u>STAND. REGRESS. COEFFICIENT</u>
General Retrospective	4.08	0.52
Exchange Rate (lagg 12)	3.99	-0.42
Unemployment	4.23	-0.34
PSBR (lagg 6)	2.73	-0.21

**Dependent = Popular. R-Sq. = 0.86 n = 42 D-Watson = 1.67**

Here the R-squared is 0.86 (comparable to Sanders, Ward and Marsh's 0.87). The general retrospective variable easily achieves significance and the path coefficients show it to have by far the strongest contribution towards Government popularity<sup>3</sup>. This is in marked contrast to the Sanders, Ward and Marsh model where exchange rate outshines the personal prospective variable (see below) :

**Table 4.5 Original Regression**

<u>VARIABLE</u>	<u>t - STAT</u>	<u>STAND. REGRESS. COEFFICIENT</u>
Personal Prospective	4.51	0.44
Exchange Rate (lagg 12)	5.59	-0.49
Unemployment	3.81	-0.19
PSBR (lagg 6)	2.53	-0.25

**Dependent = Popular. R-Sq. = 0.87 n = 42 D-Watson = 1.70**

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<sup>3</sup>. The residuals from the model did not correlate significantly with any of the SWM economic variables. The correlations were done on variables lagged between one and six months (the maximum lag allowable given the truncated nature of the data base).

The alternative model featuring general retrospective perceptions seems to perform favourably in comparison with Sanders, Ward and Marsh's. The comparison extends to the separate analysis of economic downswing (July 1979 to December 1981) and economic upswing (January 1982 to June 1983) in the period under consideration. The table below highlights the degree of similarity:

**Table 4.6 General Retrospective Model : Upswing and Downswing**

	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENTS WHOLE PERIOD (n = 42)	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENTS DOWNSWING (n = 24)	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENTS UPSWING (n = 18)
Gen. Retro.	0.52	0.20	0.42
Unemployment	-0.34	-1.02	-0.05
Exchange Rate	-0.42	0.28	-0.47
PSBR	-0.21	-0.09	-0.18
R-squared	0.86	0.82	0.85

Like the Sanders, Ward and Marsh model the coefficients (with the possible exception of Exchange Rate) remain fairly consistent in terms of their signs<sup>4</sup>. The R-squared for the three segments are also similar (as Sanders, Ward and Marsh report for their model - see below). Again the period is from January 1980 to June 1983.

**Table 4.7 Original Model : Upswing and Downswing**

	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENTS WHOLE PERIOD (n = 42)	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENTS DOWNSWING (n = 24)	STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENTS UPSWING (n = 18)
Personal Pros.	0.44	0.28	0.68
Unemployment (t)	-0.25	-0.76	-0.17
Exchange Rate (t-12)	-0.49	0.01	-0.17
PSBR (t-6)	-0.19	-0.15	-0.24
R-squared	0.87	0.85	0.85

There are obvious methodological qualifications that have

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<sup>4</sup>. The model passes the Chow Test with an 'F-statistic lower than that of the SWM model.

to be acknowledged in this form of exploration. The forced entry replacement of different variables in a model already derived from stepwise procedures is no substitute for full stepwise analysis using all variables considered to be relevant. However, the technique does highlight the point that general retrospective perceptions can at least be modelled along the lines of personal prospective perceptions without drastically modifying the explained variance or robustness. The findings are significant in the sense that they suggest we do not place too much emphasis on just the one attitudinal indicator. The Sanders, Ward and Marsh model is parsimonious, but its emphasis on prospective perceptions does not sit well with the wealth of research on the significance of retrospective evaluations. The initial model which Sanders, Ward and Marsh develop is, indeed, the model of statistical rectitude and parsimony, but the consideration of a retrospective and, particularly, a general retrospective feature adds a new dimension of causal complexity. Needless to say the causal explanations associated with a complex model embracing retrospective and prospective elements at both national and personal level, are markedly different from those featuring only prospective evaluations and the 'real' economy.

## 4.2

It was conjectured at this point that the means for calculating the respective attitudinal elements may actually impact on the regression equation estimations and add to an otherwise complicated approach. Presented with the monthly Gallup aggregates shown below Sanders, Ward and Marsh added the 'improved' elements together, added the 'deteriorate' elements together, and subtracted one from the other to give a single figure for that month. We speculated that simply aggregating the positive and negative tails might distort the value. Individual's experience of marked improvement or deterioration might well influence perceptions of the Government more forcefully than modest changes. Following Cathrine Marsh (Marsh, 1989, p.305), in all such questions we, therefore, calculated very optimistic responses x2 and left mildly optimistic as they stood (likewise for pessimistic elements). Using Marsh's example, the table below shows how different summary results can be calculated :

### GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION, DECEMBER 1984

#### MARSH

GOT A LOT BETTER	1	x2	2	
GOT A LITTLE BETTER	16	x1	16	
STAYED THE SAME	21			18 - 85 = -67
GOT A LITTLE WORSE	33	x1	33	
GOT A LOT WORSE	26	x2	52	
DON'T KNOW	4			

#### SWM

GOT A LOT BETTER	1			
GOT A LITTLE BETTER	16			
STAYED THE SAME	21			17 - 59 = -42
GOT A LITTLE WORSE	33			
GOT A LOT WORSE	26			
DON'T KNOW	4			

The resultant recalculations, for the time period under consideration, highlight some interesting features. Firstly, the weighted indices show the same decline recovery shape as the unweighted used by Sanders, Ward and Marsh. The correlation between the respective indices and government popularity are also comparable :

**Table 4.8**      **Bivariate Correlation : Economic Perception and Government**

(n = 48)

General Retrospective	0.77 (*)
Weighted General Retro.	0.82 (***)
Personal Retrospective	0.67
Weighted Personal Retro.	0.66
Personal Prospective	0.79 (*)
Weighted Personal Prosp.	0.80 (***)

A point to note, however, is that the weighted general retrospective variable is more closely correlated with Government popularity than the weighted prospective variable (\*\*\*) . This is reversed for the unweighted variables where personal prospective is more closely correlated with popularity than general retrospective (\*). We will return to this point below.

The analysis of the impact of the weighted attitudinal indices proceeded along the lines of the exploration already undertaken. Again the full stepwise procedure was not an option we could pursue. However, the forced entry method embodying the variables in Sanders, Ward and Marsh's original model was employed using weighted instead of unweighted indices. The first step was to duplicate Sanders, Ward and Marsh's model including personal prospective perceptions (weighted) along with lagged PSBR and exchange rate, and including the unlagged unemployment

variable. The results are remarkably similar to those generated using the unweighted variable. Again the period covered runs from January 1980 to June 1983 :

**Table 4.9 Weighted and Unweighted Original Model**

		<u>t-STAT</u>	<u>PATH</u>
<u>Weighted</u> (n = 42)	Personal Prosp.	3.60	0.40
	Exchange Rate (t-12)	5.14	-0.50
	Unemployment	3.23	-0.23
	PSBR (t-6)	2.28	-0.18
	R-squared = 0.85    Durbin -Watson = 1.77		
<u>Unweighted</u> (n = 42)	Personal Prosp.	4.51	0.44
	Exchange Rate (t-12)	5.59	-0.49
	Unemployment	3.81	-0.19
	PSBR (t-6)	2.53	-0.25
	R-squared = 0.87    Durbin-Watson = 1.70		

Path coefficients are similar, all variables are significant and R-squared at 0.85 is comparable, if smaller, than the original. By these criteria the weighted model has less explanatory value, although the Durbin-Watson statistic would suggest that autocorrelation is not a problem (while for the unweighted the statistic falls into the 'uncertainty' region).

As with the initial experiment, the original model is extended to include weighted personal and general retrospective perceptions. The results are presented below :

**Table 4.10 Weighted and Unweighted Model With Added Attitudinal**

		<u>t-STAT</u>	<u>PATH</u>
<u>Weighted</u> (n = 42)	General Retrospective	1.98	0.34
	Personal Retrospective	0.22	-0.02
	Personal Prospective	1.54	0.25
	Exchange Rate (t-12)	2.87	-0.37
	Unemployment	3.05	-0.31
	PSBR (t-6)	2.21	-0.17

Dependent = Popular    R-Sq. = 0.86    D-Watson = 1.90

(see over page)

Unweighted  (n = 42)	General Retrospective	2.08	0.30
	Personal Retrospective	0.37	-0.04
	Personal Prospective	2.42	0.33
	Exchange Rate (t-12)	3.71	-0.40
	Unemployment	3.75	-0.35
	PSBR (t-6)	2.30	-0.17

Dependent = Popular. R-Sq. = 0.8 D-Watson = 1.77

The model again roughly compares with the original unweighted specification, and it is evident from the Durbin-Watson statistic that again autocorrelation is not a significant problem. Path coefficients show, among the attitudinal variables, the general retrospective element contributing most to Government popularity (this being expected given its closer correlation with popularity than the weighted personal prospective index). However, it is obvious that only one of the weighted attitudinal elements achieves significance (general retrospective), and then only at the 5% level. This in conjunction with the R-squared of 0.86 (cf. 0.87 unweighted) might lead us to conclude that weighting adds nothing of explanatory value to our model. The problem of multicollinearity is still an issue. Weighted general retrospective, and weighted personal prospective perceptions are even more closely correlated than their unweighted counterparts (0.88 and 0.85 respectively). Again the danger is that the t-statistic is artificially lowered. It might also be noted that the coefficient for the weighted personal retrospective has the wrong sign and is not significant.

The next step was to duplicate the procedure employed above. Sanders, Ward and Marsh's personal prospective variable is dropped, and weighted personal and general retrospective elements are added to the three economic variables. The results are presented below :

**Table 4.11 Weighted Personal Retrospective Model**

<u>VARIABLE</u>	<u>t - STAT</u>	<u>STAND. REGRESS. COEFFICIENT</u>
Personal Retro. (weight.)	1.35	0.15
Exchange Rate (lagg 12)	5.20	-0.62
Unemployment	0.74	-0.06
PSBR (lagg 6)	3.12	-0.27

**Dependent = Popular. R-Sq. = 0.80 n = 42 D-Watson = 1.55**

Personal retrospective fails to achieve significance and the model has a comparatively low R-square (0.80). However, the individual inclusion of general retrospective perceptions is more successful :

**Table 4.12 Weighted General Retrospective Model**

<u>VARIABLE</u>	<u>t - STAT</u>	<u>STAND. REGRESS. COEFFICIENT</u>
General Retro. (weight.)	3.83	0.53
Exchange Rate (lagg 12)	3.16	-0.37
Unemployment	3.84	-0.29
PSBR (lagg 6)	2.73	-0.21

**Dependent = Popular. R-Sq. = 0.85 n = 42 D-Watson = 1.77**

Mirroring the model which includes the unweighted variable, the weighted general retrospective element is significant, shows a dominant contribution to the dependent variable, and the model has a respectable measure of explained variance (R-squared of 0.85). Still, with R-squared less than the original model, one of the Sanders, Ward and Marsh criteria for acceptance of the weighted model is not met. Though, again, it is important to note that when the Falklands variable was added to the equation in no instance did it reach significance or add other than modestly to R-squared.

### 4.3

There are a number of tentative conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis already conducted. As Sanders, Ward and Marsh rightly note, model specification is crucially important. However, in force entering global and personal retrospective variables into an equation derived from stepwise procedures, Sanders, Ward and Marsh may be too hasty in dismissing the general retrospective variable. In using significance as a criterion for accepting or rejecting the model where it is included, multicollinearity is a problem which clouds interpretation. General retrospective perceptions do achieve significance, and this in a context where it is highly correlated with other attitudinal variables. As with all problem of multicollinearity it is virtually impossible to tease out which variable is the more important in determining government popularity, but it seem overly hasty to dismiss general retrospective perceptions and focus entirely on prospective evaluations.

The model which Sanders, Ward and Marsh present does still show a degree of multicollinearity, but the more pressing issue concerns the variables left out of the model. The personal retrospective variable is, in interpretative terms, the most troublesome. Why does it fail to figure statistically and interpretatively in the models outlined. Statistically, the variable is superfluous. High R-squared statistics are achieved without it. The problem arises in accounting for the omission in Downsian terms. Downs suggests that the voters look to the past as a guide to the future. The calculus is straightforward

and intuitively plausible; other than wishful thinking what alternatives sources do the public have at their disposal? We intend to return to this issue in the next section, but for the mean time it seems as appropriate to flag the importance of explanatory cohesion as it does to stress statistical propriety.

The experiment with weighted variables further confirms the difficulties associated with multicollinearity and the sensitivity of models to the correlation between independent variables. With the weighted general retrospective variable more highly correlated with popularity than the personal prospective variable, the tables are effectively turned and the retrospective component seems to come to the fore as a more dominant explanatory element. This apart, the use of weighted variables did not add statistically to the explanatory capacity of the model (with R-squared smaller than for unweighted models). In this context, although the weighting of variables seems 'intuitively plausible' (to use Sanders, Ward and Marsh's phrase) the experiment was not a success and was thereafter abandoned.

#### 4.4

A further point concerns the manner in which Sanders, Ward and Marsh go on to develop their model. They speculate that it may be possible to model personal expectations as the dependent variable using a stepwise procedure on the objective economic time series data already employed. Having performed the regression with personal prospective attitudes as the dependent variable, they feel that a number of 'real' economic variables explain or, rather, predict the fluctuations in personal expectations. The resultant model includes consumer durable expenditure (lagged 12 months), a taxation index (lagged one month), short-time working (lagged one month) and interest rates (lagged one month). R-squared is a respectable 0.76 and all variables achieve significance. Adding a Falklands dummy variable to the equation does not increase R-squared and furnishes a non-significant coefficient.

Sanders, Ward and Marsh feel at this point they have established a plausible and statistically sound explanation for government popularity. The four variables listed above impact upon individual's expectations about their personal financial position in the future. These expectations, possibly in conjunction with media cued perceptions of unemployment, exchange rates and PSBR, adequately explain government popularity. At no point do we need to include a Falklands Factor; if the Falklands War made a contribution it was essentially a limited one.

But the explanatory problem outlined in the previous section remains. Why do personal retrospective perceptions not figure in the model of personal prospective perceptions. The objective

economic elements used to predict personal expectations are lagged by twelve months or less. Yet the underlying thesis is Downsian in character, and the personal retrospective question is framed in a 12 month context ("In the last 12 months has the financial situation in your household"...). So the question remains, if 'real' economic trends impact on the individual, why do personal retrospective perceptions not figure statistically in the model? Why have recourse to surrogate measures of 'real' economic impact when people's relative perceptions of their past and present lot should, it would seem, tap this directly. Surely an individual's perception of their circumstances should offer a better indication of the direct impact of broader macroeconomic fluctuations than aggregated government statistics.

To explore this line of reasoning we sought to develop a model of personal prospective perceptions which would incorporate only attitudinal variables. On the 'intuitively plausible' assumption that the 'real' impact of macro-economic fluctuations would and should register through individual's perceptions of their immediate position, the economic statistics elements were dropped completely. What we are left with are a series of variables that relate to personal and general perceptions, and to the individual's immediate economic circumstances.

The variables chosen included personal retrospective perceptions, general retrospective perceptions, general prospective perceptions and a variable which we felt might mirror or plausibly shadow "consumer durable expenditure". We felt this was appropriate as this variable was, statistically, the largest economic contributor to personal prospective perceptions in

Sanders, Ward and Marsh's model. The question asked was, "When you have paid all the things you cannot get out of paying, for example, rent, rates, fares etc. would you say that the amount left in your pocket is more than a year ago, the same or less?". The resultant perception can plausibly register the income the individual can either save or spend.

The other three variables were included to cover the other eventualities. Backward looking perceptions of the personal and global situation, and attitudes towards the future of the national economy. The assumption here is that expectations must come from somewhere; they are not conjured out of the air. The attitudinal calculus was, 'both the country and myself have been doing well. The country is doing well too. I have more money to save or spend on consumer durables. I can therefore expect that the same will be true in the future'. The associated popularity element might well be, 'any government that presides over such situation deserves my vote'.

The model does not perform particularly well (see table below):

**Table 4.13 Alternative Attitudinal Model**

(n = 48)		STANDARDISED REGRESSION COEFFICIENT
	t-statistic	
General Retrospective	2.10	0.34
General Prospective	2.66	0.38
Personal Retrospective	4.00	0.49
'Pay-over-staples'	0.32	-0.03

**Depend. = Personal Prospective R-squared = 0.82 D-Watson = 1.13**

R-squared is a respectable 0.82 and compares favourably with Sanders, Ward and Marsh's objective model (0.76). However, with the Durbin-Watson statistic 1.13 and n = 48 autocorrelation becomes an issue. The model also shows signs of

multicollinearity. General retrospective and general prospective perceptions are closely correlated (at 0.78). Personal retrospective perceptions and the 'pay-over-staples' variable are similarly correlated (0.77). The 'pay-over-staples' element fails to achieve significance and has the wrong sign, while general retrospective perception just fails to achieve significance at 1% level. While the model is based on assumptions with explanatory plausibility, it is unsatisfactory in statistical terms.

The problem may, yet, lie in the choice of time periods. The retrospective elements take as their point of reference the previous twelve months. As such, for the first ten to twelve months or so of the Conservative administration, the indicator may be contaminated by perceptions relevant to the last Labour Government. In order to deal with this issue the model outlined above was reapplied to the time span after the first year of the Thatcher administration. In this context the retrospective elements should accurately reflect evaluations of the Conservative Government alone. The results are reported below:

**Table 4.14 Time Restricted Attitudinal Model**  
**June 1980 - June 1983**

(n = 37)		STANDARDISED REGRESSION COEFFICIENT
	t-statistic	
General Retro.	1.72	0.38
General Prospective	1.17	0.23
Personal Retro.	3.55	0.41
'Pay-over-staples'	0.31	0.03

**Depend. = Personal Prospective R-Sq. = 0.87 D-Watson = 1.26**

On R-squared the model performs slightly better. However, all but the personal retrospective parameter fail to achieve significance. Multicollinearity is obviously still an issue, and

we chose to deal with this by dropping one or other of the personal and global elements. General prospective and 'pay-over-staples' were dropped. These variables showed the smallest contribution to the model above and were closely correlated with their personal or global counterparts. All combinations of global and personal variables were tried though particular attention was paid to the correlation of residuals with time, maximised R-squared and appropriate Durbin-Watson statistics. The choice of personal retrospective perceptions and general retrospective evaluations was vindicated. It maximised R-squared, kept Durbin-Watson within the relevant bounds and minimised correlation of residuals with time. The results are outlined below :

**Table 4.15 Truncated Attitudinal Model**

(n = 37)		STANDARDISED REGRESSION COEFFICIENT
	t-statistic	
General Retrospective	8.18	0.63
Personal Retrospective	5.23	0.40

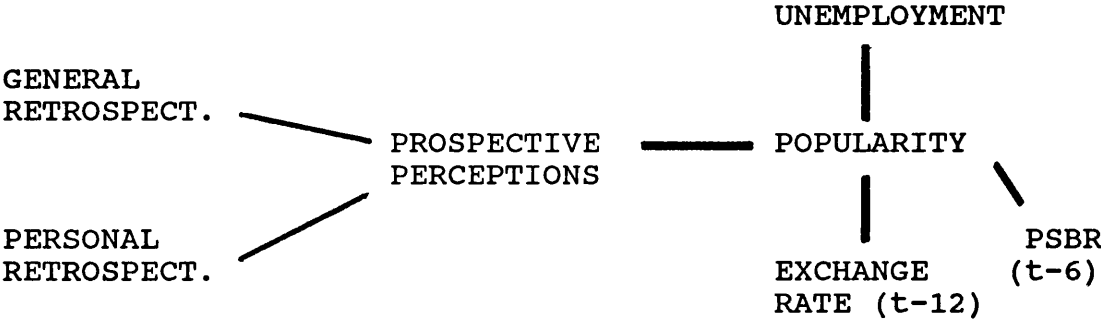
**Depend. = Personal Prospective R-Sq. = 0.86 D-Watson = 1.38**

The model performs fairly well in comparison with Sanders, Ward and Marsh. R-squared is higher (cf. 0.76). The residuals are, however, more highly correlated with time (0.16 compared to 0.05 in the Sanders, Ward and Marsh model). Yet the model does win out; not only in parsimony, but in terms of its explanatory plausibility. If, as Sanders, Ward and Marsh suggest, objective economic fluctuations impact on the individual, it seems wholly appropriate to measure this directly (via the personal retrospective variable). The inclusion of a general economic variable reinforces the work already done both in Britain and the United States on the impact of global evaluations. The model

seems to confirm that both elements do make an independent contribution, and judging by path coefficients, the general retrospective variable is dominant<sup>5</sup>.

The development of the Sanders, Ward and Marsh model still leaves us with a number of anomalies. The model might now look something like this :

**Figure 4.1 : Alternative Attitudinal Model**



The situation is complicated by Sanders, Ward and Marsh's reference to the role of the mass media in facilitating the influence of PSBR, unemployment and exchange rate.

"The three measures of the objective state of the economy...all furnish negative coefficients. Although we are unable to demonstrate it here, our strong suspicion is that the effects of these variables were probably mediated by the speculative and interpretative endeavour of the mass media." (Sanders, Ward and Marsh, *ibid.*, pp297)

Here, it would seem, is a 'sociotropic' understanding of the underlying dynamics. The focus is not on the immediate, tangible

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<sup>5</sup>. The inclusion of a Falklands dummy adds little to the model and yields a parameter that fails to achieve significance.

(n = 37) R-squared = 0.87		STANDARDISED REGRESSION COEFFICIENT
Durbin-Watson = 1.42		
	t-statistic	
General Retrospective	3.89	0.58
Personal Retrospective	5.18	0.40
Falklands Dummy	0.41	0.05

impact on people's lives that these 'real' variables symbolise, but on their expression as cues in a broader 'unreal' or rhetorical, battle of information. Much the same is said of general retrospective perceptions (or so called 'sociotropic' evaluations). If the analytical distinction is firmly drawn between personal experience and mediated appreciation then it seems appropriate, given the analysis of prospective evaluations outlined above, to try to model government popularity as parsimoniously as possible, using only those variables which relate to personal experience and global evaluation.

The model tested below seeks to do just that. The general retrospective variable is used as is the personal retrospective element. On top of this we added the Falklands War dummy variable and a variable for the arrival of the SDP on the British political scene. The inclusion of these elements is justified on the grounds of their perceived importance in Mrs. Thatcher's first term. They constitute the two most significant political phenomena in the 1979 to 1983 parliament. The first constituted one of the most direct and tangible threats to the Government of the period. The second was, arguably, the most significant alteration in the party system in the post war period (as well as being symptomatic of a broader Opposition malaise).

The results of this form of modelling are presented below:

**Table 4.16 Economic Attitude and Political Event Model**

		STANDARDISED
<u>April 1980 - June 1983</u>		REGRESSION
(n = 39)		COEFFICIENT
General Retrospect.	t-statistic 2.92	0.50
Personal Retrospec.	1.27	0.15
Falklands War	2.14	0.38
S.D.P. Formation	3.06	-0.36
Dependent = Popularity	R-Sq. = 0.82	D-Watson = 1.57

As with previous models incorporating retrospective elements the time span under scrutiny begins just under one year into the administration (since the questions are framed in year long perspective). The correlation between general retrospective and personal retrospective elements may still present problems of multicollinearity. Yet, at  $r = 0.57$  this is less of a problem than with other models we have considered. So the personal retrospective variable's failure to achieve significance should perhaps be treated with less caution. On the whole, though, the model performs quite well. The general retrospective element is comfortably significant as is the SDP variable. Somewhat surprisingly the Falklands War variable is significant at the 2% level (though not at 1%). The R-squared value at 0.82 is lower than the original Sanders, Ward and Marsh calculation (0.87), but is comfortably within range. At -0.06 the residuals from the model are not highly correlated with time. Nor are the residuals significantly correlated with any of the 'objective' economic indicators which Sanders, Ward and Marsh use. The highest correlation between residuals and the economic variables was for Money Supply at  $r = 0.25^6$ .

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<sup>6</sup>. When this variable was entered in the model it merely increased R-squared from 0.82 to 0.83, but furnished a parameter that fell short of significance ( $t = 1.59$ ).

#### 4.5

Thus far the primary technique employed has been OLS regression, and in this we mirror the emphasis of the original Sanders, Ward and Marsh study. However, other authors have used different techniques. Clarke and Whiteley's analysis of macro economic performance and government support favours Box-Jenkins (Clarke, Mishler and Whiteley, 1990). On the other hand, Peel et al use a form of lagged endogenous variable model to forecast government popularity into mid-1992 (Peel, Sandu and Byers, 1990), as do Holden and Peel (1985). Indeed, Sanders, Marsh and Ward have explored in some detail the advantages and disadvantages of the respective techniques (Sanders and Ward, forthcoming). They note that while OLS is appealing in the sense that the results are easy to interpret in causal terms, there are still problems associated with serially correlated error. In reviewing the competing alternatives they reach some tentative conclusions. They note that any technique must allow the translation of model parameters into some form of individual level decision calculus. This essential element,

..."renders the lagged endogenous variable method the most appropriate of the class of Autoregressive, Lagged Endogenous Variable and Box-Jenkins techniques for analysing Government popularity data." (*ibid.*)

With this in mind we sought to examine our model using the lagged endogenous technique.

We looked first at the model we had developed using simple OLS :

$$Y_t = (\text{General Retrospective}) + (\text{Personal Retrospective}) \\ + (\text{Falklands}) + (\text{S.D.P.})$$

This was augmented by the inclusion of the lagged endogenous

variable giving the final specification :

$$Y_t = (Y_{t-1}) + (GR) + (PR) + (Falklands) + (S.D.P.)$$

The question wording on the general retrospective and personal retrospective questions was backward regarding so we felt it appropriate to drop some data points (as these might be contaminated by perceptions of the previous Government). This in effect means  $n = 39^7$ . The results are presented below :

**Table 4.17**      Economic Attitude, Political Event and Lagged Endogenous Variable Model

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Parameter</u>	<u>t-stat</u>	<u>Stand.Reg.Coeffic.</u>
Y(t-1)	0.51	4.07	0.49
Gen.Ret.	0.19	4.17	0.60
Per.Ret.	-0.07	0.78	0.09
S.D.P.	-3.61	2.48	0.25
Falklands	0.43	0.19	0.03

**Dependent = Government Popularity      R-Sq. = 0.88**

The Personal Retrospective Perception and the Falkland Factor variables signally fail to achieve significance. If we judge by the standard regression coefficient, General Retrospective Perception, of the remaining three variables, makes the strongest contribution to Government popularity (stronger than the lagged endogenous variable). The model compares favourably with the Sanders, Ward and Marsh specification with an R-Square of 0.88 and autocorrelation is largely absent<sup>8</sup>.

The realisation that we can successfully model popularity using general retrospective attitudes and political events led us to take one last shot at re-specifying the model. Given the

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<sup>7</sup>. We extended the time period marginally to start 10 months into the Conservative Government.

<sup>8</sup>. Lagrange Multiplier Statistic suggests no first or second order autocorrelation. Residuals are normally distributed and no heteroscedasticity is evident.

wealth of literature on attribution, the object was to tie in not only the economy in general, but the Government's place in managing economic affairs. The data set we had at our disposal offered us a question which would suit this purpose : "Do the Government's policies for tackling the economic situation give you the feeling that they are or are not handling the situation properly". A variable was constructed from aggregated responses to this question.

The 'Handle' variable is not as unambiguously 'sociotropic' as the General Retrospective one previously employed, but it is sufficiently close for our needs. We tried to model Government popularity without the lagged endogenous variable included and, as expected, ran into problems with first and second order autocorrelation. The model was thus re-specified including the lagged popularity variable, the final result looking like this:

$$Y_t = Y_{t-1} + \text{Handle} + \text{Personal Retro.} + \text{Falklands} + \text{S.D.P.}$$

The results are shown below<sup>9</sup> :

**Table 4.18**      Lagged Endogenous Model Incorporating 'Handle' Variable

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Parameter</u>	<u>t-stat</u>	<u>Stand.Reg.Coeffic.</u>
Y(t-1)	0.35	2.90	0.34
Handle	2.22	4.44	0.53
Per.Ret.	-0.02	0.30	-0.03
S.D.P.	-1.86	1.27	-0.13
Falklands	2.36	1.25	0.17

**Dependent = Government Popularity      R-Sq. = 0.89**

The results look remarkably similar to those of the previous model. The personal retrospective element performs badly; again

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<sup>9</sup>. Again the Lagrange Multiplier Statistic suggests no first or second order autocorrelation. Residuals are normally distributed and no heteroscedasticity is evident.

failing to achieve significance. The difference lies in the failure of the remaining political event variables to achieve significance. Again the nominal sociotropic element seems to dominate the equation, if we judge from the standardised regression coefficient.

#### 4.6

What lessons can be drawn from the re-analysis of the original Sanders, Ward and Marsh model? Certainly there is a central difficulty in modelling popularity which relies heavily on 'objective' economic data. The statistics reflect economic changes and fluctuations, but are in a sense epiphenomenal. They are often aggregated, averaged and relativised, and are likely to constitute only a rough guide to the concrete experiences of individual citizens. The problem in modelling popularity with aggregate economic data lies in their dual existence. However rough, they are reflections of what is happening in the 'real' economy. Yet they have another incarnation as government statistics, which in themselves make news. This is true of consumer spending, budget tax increases and is certainly the case in relation to unemployment, interest rates, retail sales, balance of payment figures and exchange rates. In this manifestation they have the potential to affect judgements on the state of the country or the buoyancy of the national economy.

The questions addressed in this chapter concern the relationship between these statistics and aggregated individual perceptions. To a lesser extent they concern the form of statistical technique employed in the analysis. The original Sanders, Ward and Marsh model focuses on the impact of personal prospective evaluations on government popularity. Retrospective elements seem to have been entered subsequently, but dropped after failing to achieve significance. Thereafter they are disregarded. A difficulty then arises in explaining the forces that generate such evaluations. Retrospective variables are not

considered, though the explanatory framework is couched in terms of the impact of past, 'real' economic fluctuations on current evaluations of the individual's prospects.

Inclusion in the model of unemployment, PSBR lagged six months and exchange rates lagged twelve months further complicates the picture. Sanders, Ward and Marsh speculate that media representations may explain the impact of these variables. However, in defending themselves against the charge of simply employing a stepwise technique on many variables (in a form of broomstick exercise), they justify the retention of lagged variables by virtue of their delayed impact on people's actual lives.

The attempt to model prospective perceptions using a combination of retrospective variables was intended to tease out the contribution of global and personal perceptions to evaluations of the future. The relative success of the model is testimony to the difficulty in sorting out the underlying causal processes. The combination of general and personal elements (with the former dominant) seems to explain personal prospective evaluations more adequately than Sanders, Ward and Marsh. Explained variance is higher, the model is more parsimonious (using two rather than three causal variables), and, in relying on personal retrospective perceptions, it addresses more directly the issue of actual (or perceived) impact rather than inferred impact (via aggregate economic statistics).

The relative success of this form of modelling leaves us with some further conundrums. The first concerns the place of the retrospectively driven evaluations in Sanders, Ward and

Marsh's broader model of Government popularity. The way Sanders, Ward and Marsh explain the model (in terms of the mass media and impact on personal lives) led us to consider whether a simpler model using only retrospective elements and political event variables might not be more effective in explaining Government popularity. This led us to construct a model using personal and general retrospective variables in tandem with a Falklands dummy and a variable mirroring the establishment of the Social Democratic Party. The results of this exercise left us with a structure that meets some, though not all of Sanders, Ward and Marsh's criteria for a good model. They focus on intuitive plausibility; maximised R-squared; significance and robustness of all parameters; and avoidance of collinearity. To this list might be added parsimony, explanatory clarity and support from parallel studies.

We would submit that the model we explored has as much intuitive plausibility as that of Sanders, Ward and Marsh. The coefficients of the lagged endogenous and sociotropic variables have the expected sign and are significant. On R-squared the model does not score as well. At 0.82 it is lower than Sanders, Ward and Marsh (cf. 0.87). This touches on an issue flagged already concerning the propriety of emphasising predictive capacity over explanatory lucidity. It might be suggested that what our model loses in explained variance it makes up for in parsimony and clarity. We might speculate that the effects of change over time (in both the personal and global spheres) are registered by the individual and impact directly on Government popularity (or indirectly via evaluations of future prospects).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CROSS SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF GALLUP SURVEY : OCTOBER 1981

#### 5.1

The focus here is on cross sectional analysis of a single representative Gallup survey. The survey is from the series which form the substance of Sanders, Ward and Marsh's study - namely the Gallup Political Index. The Index runs as a monthly digest of public opinion. It incorporates a variety of questions - some asked consistently over a long period, others as one-off elements paid for by sponsors. We are more interested in the former as they are the building blocks from which Sanders, Ward and Marsh constructed their original model. The aggregated responses form the base for the monthly elements in Sanders, Ward and Marsh's time series analysis. The particular month chosen was October 1981. This was chosen partly for convenience (the data is readily available from the E.S.R.C. Archive at Essex), partly for the questions included (including those on the economy and on partisanship).

The survey was conducted at a time when the fortunes of the Conservative Party were at a low ebb. The economic upswing had not yet materialised and unemployment had only just begun to show a slight levelling off. Conservative popularity was approaching but had not yet reached its nadir. Asked who they would vote for, 25.5% said Conservative - slightly higher than in July and August of that year, but not as low as December. The month was chosen as it represented a low point in Conservative fortunes and preceded the upturn in the economy and Government popularity. If the economy does impact on personal or global perceptions we

might expect this to show most markedly at such a time. The period was also chosen to precede the Falklands War.

The questions we wished to ask of the 1084 respondents were many. What were the relationships between the different levels of perception (personal and global - prospective and retrospective)? Were evaluations differentiated by class? How were these forward and backward looking perceptions related to the individual's current financial position? If the Downsian thesis is sustained, assumptions concerning these relationships need to be explored. Answers we hoped would also help elaborate the Sanders, Ward and Marsh model.

We wanted to look at the role of partisanship in structuring the relationship between levels of perception, and, indeed, the perceptions themselves. Bearing in mind the controversy surrounding the conceptualisation of partisanship (and its role in structuring perception) we wanted to explore its impact at the individual level. The debate is also germane to the appreciation of the Sanders, Ward and Marsh model. There is still a question mark over the role of partisanship in shaping perceptions rather than vice versa - this being particularly relevant to the personal prospective element of Sanders, Ward and Marsh's model. We wanted to look at the relationship between perceptions, voting preference and partisanship (though the cross sectional nature of the data precludes an approach couched unambiguously in terms of cause and effect).

With some qualifications we were, however, able to look at the relationship between vote in 1979, intention to vote at the time of the survey, and economic perceptions. In this context

we felt that it might be argued that changes in intention and alterations in perception of personal or global circumstances are a little less difficult to conceptualise in terms of cause and effect.

We wanted to go on to look at the unemployed. As a group of particularly disadvantaged individuals we wanted to see if their perceptions of their lot and their views on the Government differed significantly from those of the rest of the population. Were they particularly pessimistic, disinterested or optimistic? Were they more or less likely to vote against the government as a function of the decline in their standard of living. Did they have a particularly jaundiced view of the national economy? Despite the fact that the unemployed are less likely to actually vote in elections, we felt that this numerically large element of the public merited attention in their own right. They are also a group on whom we hoped we might test the raw Downsian 'pocketbook' thesis.

Lastly, our intention was to look at the structure of economic responses on the questionnaire, with a view to assessing how levels of perception relate to one another. From the analysis we hoped to determine what sources individuals drew upon to give those perceptions substance.

## 5.2

The aggregated perceptions of the sample in October 1981 were distributed as follows :

**Table 5.1 Aggregate Economic Perceptions : Oct. 1981**

	General Retrospect.	Personal Retrospect.	General Prospect.	Personal Prospect.
LOT BETTER	0.2	2.6	0.9	1.7
LITTLE BETTER	5.9	8.5	19.1	11.6
THE SAME	9.0	31.9	23.1	40.4
LITTLE WORSE	28.5	29.8	24.6	27.3
LOT WORSE	53.7	25.5	25.2	13.7
DON'T KNOW	2.6	1.8	7.1	5.4

Clearly the sample had fairly grim memories of the past, both in personal and national terms. Looking to the future there seems to have been more optimism - especially if the focus is on national wellbeing. The distribution here is more evenly balanced between optimism and pessimism. We wanted to look beneath these surface features at the relationship, if any, between the different levels of perception.

First we thought it appropriate to look at the relationship between class and economic perception. The question was, do the respective classes have distinctive attitudinal profiles when it comes to economics? Our results are set out below :

**Table 5.2 Aggregate Economic Perceptions Against Class**

### General Retrospective Perception by Class

	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
BETTER	7%	12%	8%	4%	4%	5%
SAME	13	14	11	8	7	9
WORSE	73	72	80	85	87	83
D/K	7	2	2	4	2	3
n =	15	122	259	344	214	129

### General Prospective Perception by Class

	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
BETTER	53%	30%	25%	17%	11%	18%
SAME	20	26	27	21	23	18
WORSE	20	37	42	55	59	52
D/K	7	7	5	7	7	12
n =	15	122	259	344	214	129

### Personal Prospective Perception by Class

	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
BETTER	13%	13%	20%	11%	12%	8%
SAME	67	50	43	34	40	41
WORSE	20	34	33	47	43	47
D/K	0	3	4	7	6	4
n =	15	122	259	344	214	129

### Personal Retrospective Perception by Class

	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
BETTER	7%	14%	14%	11%	10%	6%
SAME	80	41	32	29	29	31
WORSE	13	43	53	58	58	63
D/K	0	2	2	2	2	1
n =	15	122	259	344	214	129

We have to be wary about small numbers in the 'A' category, but otherwise we can say something about the distribution. It is clear that there are not huge differences across the classes on any of the economic issues. The largest differences are not those across the C1 - C2 divide. Here the break is between categories B-to-D and category E (though in many instances the difference is not large). It would seem there is no clear class community of ideas on the economy, personal or global.

Our second focus was on the relationship between prospective and retrospective elements of perception at both the national and personal levels. The question was, are individuals consistent in their appreciation of trends in the respective spheres? The answer is a qualified 'no'. First we looked at consistency in retrospective perceptions (personal and national). 'Consistents' were defined by their responses on a five point scale on both personal and global questions. Responses available to those questioned were that, things had got, 'a lot better', 'a little better', were 'the same'; had got, 'a little worse' or 'a lot worse'. A 'don't know' category is also included. The

categories were collapsed into 'better' , same', 'worse' or 'don't know', and 'consistents' were those who gave the same response on both questions<sup>1</sup>.

Of the 1082 respondents who could be coded, scarcely 54.3% were categorised as retrospectively consistent ("Cramer's V" in this instance 0.11). Crosstabulating prospective perceptions (comparing general prospective and personal prospective perceptions) 48.7% of the 1083 who could be coded were consistent (Cramer's V 0.25). We did recognise that there might be an overlap in the two groups. Retrospective 'consistents' may also be prospectively consistent. However, individuals may be consistent in retrospective perception, but inconsistent otherwise; they may have the same prospective view but different retrospective perceptions. Thus we felt it important to isolate the groups independently. Finally we looked at those who were consistent across all four levels of perception (those whose general, prospective and their personal and global appreciations were all the same). Of the 1082 who could be coded, only 23.8% were consistent across all questions!

What can be made of these figures? It would appear that individuals are far less consistent in their perceptions than might be imagined. Prospective perceptions are more closely associated than retrospective, though it could not be said there was an overwhelming overlap. The relationships are not

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<sup>1</sup>. This is a rather more strict interpretation of 'consistent' than might be arrived at by simply comparing raw responses. It was felt that survey measures are insufficiently precise to categorise as inconsistent someone who says their personal circumstances have got 'a little better' while the perception of the general situation is that it is 'a lot better' (Worcester, 1991).

particularly close. It would seem that levels of perception in a very substantial proportion of the sample are independent of one another. To this it might be added that where the individuals share the same perception at global and personal level the inference cannot be held that one element is necessarily extrapolated one from the other. The most that can be said is that there exists the possibility that this is the case.

The implication for the modelling at aggregate level are important. It might have been possible to justify dropping the general prospective or general retrospective variables by making the assumption that they were, in a sense, derivative. An individual may think that the general situation in the country had deteriorated or was about to. Yet he or she could conceivably have extrapolated from their perception of their own position. Personal experience is still the locus of opinion formation. If economy of effort is of the essence, as the rational choice theorists would have us imagine, this might be a defensible assumption (utility is, after all, maximised net of cost). However, if we look at expressed opinions, we find that a large section of the electorate are actually inconsistent. The assumption in this sense is challenged.

Do the retrospective 'consistents' we identified have any distinctive social characteristics? The group were isolated from those with inconsistent perceptions and compared on such criteria as, employment status, social class, self-ascribed social class, age and gender. Those consistent on their retrospective perceptions were more likely to be over thirty five than under

(dp=10%), and fractionally more likely to be male. There is an upward graduation in consistency from social classes A/B to E :

**Table 5.3 Consistency Against Class**

	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
CONSISTENT	26%	41%	51%	56%	57%	68%
INCONSIST.	73	59	49	43	43	31

Clearly the lower down the socio-economic scale, the more likely is consistency. A similar pattern is evident with respect to self-ascribed class as we move from 'Upper Class' through to 'Working Class'. The reason for this is far from obvious, but may be a function of education or sophistication in appreciation of the complexity of the economic environment. It is also likely that individuals in non-manual occupations were still comfortably well off even in the depth of a recession they could not be unaware of. Conversely, those further down the socio-economic ladder are not only badly off themselves, but are similarly aware of national economic deterioration.

The most obvious socio-economic variable that distinguishes consistent from inconsistent is employment status. The table below highlights the features of the relationship :

**Table 5.4 Retrospective Consistency Against Employment Status**

Retrospectively Consistent

	EMPLOYED				HOUSE	
	SELF-EMP	P/TIME	UNEMPL.	RETIRE.	WIFE	STUDENT
CONSIST.	48%	54%	70%	63%	51%	48%
INCONSIST.	51	45	29	36	48	51

The retired were more likely to be consistent, and the unemployed much more likely to be consistent than the other socioeconomic groups. However, if we look at the perceptions themselves it is clear that it is only on their personal retrospective perceptions that the unemployed seem to be out of step with the other groups (and here the difference is not startling) :

**Table 5.5**      **General Retrospective Perception Against Employment Status**

<u>General. Retro. Percept.</u>	EMPLOYED/ SELF-EMP	P/TIME	UNEMPL.	RETIRE.	HOUSE WIFE	STUDENT
"GOOD"	5%	9%	4%	4%	6%	7%
"SAME"	10	9	3	11	6	5
"WORSE"	81	75	88	81	84	84
"D/K"	2	4	4	2	2	1

There appears to be a degree of consensus across groups on the nature of the global situation (though a lesser degree of consensus is evident when we look at personal retrospective perceptions) :

**Table 5.6**      **Personal Retrospective Perception Against Employment Status**

<u>Person. Retro. Percept.</u>	EMPLOYED/ SELF-EMP	P/TIME	UNEMPL.	RETIRE.	HOUSE WIFE	STUDENT
"GOOD"	15%	13%	7%	4%	11%	5%
"SAME"	35	26	20	31	32	42
"WORSE"	48	60	69	62	54	48
"D/K"	1	-	3	1	2	3

Not surprisingly the unemployed and retired are in this respect more likely to say their personal situation has deteriorated than their employed counterparts.

If we turn our attention to the individuals who are consistent on their prospective perceptions some similarities are evident. Males tend to be fractionally more consistent than females; age is associated with neither consistency nor inconsistency. Gradation by class is far less pronounced than it was for individuals who were retrospectively consistent. The table presented below gives the details :

**Table 5.7 Prospective Consistency Against Class**

	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
CONSISTENT	33%	48%	43%	52%	47%	53%
INCONSIST.	66	51	56	47	52	46

A similar patternless distribution is reproduced for class self-ascription categories. Likewise, prospectively consistent respondents were not as conspicuously differentiated by employment status as those who were retrospectively consistent:

**Table 5.8 Prospective Consistency Against Employment Status**

	EMPLOYED				HOUSE	
	SELF-EMP	P/TIME	UNEMPL.	RETIRE.	WIFE	STUDENT
CONSIST.	46%	51%	56%	51%	45%	47%
INCONSIST.	53	48	43	48	54	52

It is clear that prospectively consistent respondents were not differentiated by their socio-economic characteristics.

Finally if we look at those respondents who were consistent on all economic perceptions (some 258 souls or 23.8% of the sample), we find roughly comparable results to those obtained if only retrospective consistents are isolated. Those over thirty five are marginally more consistent; males are very fractionally more consistent than females; and the working classes tend to be more consistent (judged by either objective or self-ascriptive criteria).

On the whole it would appear that in terms of socio-economic criteria there is little that startlingly differentiates 'consistents' from those who show independent levels of perception. However, a point worth commenting upon is that the lower down the class ladder an individual is placed or places themselves, the more likely they are to have consistent views on retrospective perceptions and are more likely to have consistent views across all prospective and retrospective perceptions. The Gallup data does not allow us to determine whether this is a function of education or of other social or psychological features.

### 5.3

If there are few socio-economic characteristics which differentiate consistents from inconsistent, are there any political or psychological attributes which do? We obviously wished to focus on the voting behaviour of the respondents. Likewise we wanted to determine whether those voting intentions differed from their reported 1979 vote (whether they were stable in their political preferences).

Both approaches have their difficulties. The variable on 'voting intention' was constructed from a combination of responses. A traditionally structured question ("If there was a general election tomorrow"..), followed by one probing those not stating a preference (If "Don't Know", "Which party would you be most inclined to vote for?"), was used to code all respondents. Vote preference was coded for a response to either of these questions, which left only 11.3% in the "Don't know" category. A variable for 'change in preference' was constructed using a combination of contemporary 'vote intention' and reported voting behaviour in 1979.

There are two difficulties with these variables : the first concerns memory; the second absolute numbers. The question, "For which party did you vote [in the 1979 General Election]?", excluding "Didn't vote", produced 41% for the Conservatives, 45% for Labour and 11% for the Liberals. This is clearly at odds with the actual result (43.9% Conservatives, 36.9% Labour and the 13.8% Liberals - Leonard 1991, p.200). The difference may be a function of flawed memory or, given the poor performance of the Government at the time, embarrassment. The second problem is

with absolute numbers. Having removed those who had 'moved' between non-Government parties, and leaving aside those who could not be coded as a function of not having voted in 1979, the numbers are small : Table 5.9 Movement to and from the Government

	No.	%
AWAY FROM GOVERNMENT	165	15.2
NO CHANGE	519	47.9
TO THE GOVERNMENT	7	0.6
LEFT UNCODED	214	17.7
NON-GOVERNMENT CHANGE	179	16.5

When, in particular, we have so few individuals changing preference in favour of the government, we have to be wary of interpreting without qualification.

Notwithstanding the problems presented by these issues, it is clear from our analysis that consistency was clearly related to party preference. Dropping the "Don't Knows" and the few who voted for non-mainstream parties the results are as follows<sup>2</sup> :

Table 5.10 Retrospective, Prospective and Overall Consistents By Vote

Retrospective 'Consistents'

	CON.	CENTRE	LAB.
CONSISTENT	36%	58%	61%
INCONSIST.	63	41	38

Prospective 'Consistents'

	CON.	CENTRE	LAB.
CONSISTENT	39%	49%	53%
INCONSIST.	60	50	46

'Consistent' Across All Economic Perceptions

	CON.	CENTRE	LAB.
CONSISTENT	8%	27%	30%
INCONSIST.	91	73	69

It is clear that opposition party supporters have a clear tendency to consistency. The relationship is most pronounced for those consistent across all levels. Given the state of the

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<sup>2</sup>. All cells contain twenty or more cases.

economy at the time and the balance of perception skewed toward the negative, it is perhaps not surprising that the Conservative party supporters display least consistency. The relationship could represent the expression of underlying partisan attachments (a theme we will return to in the next section). It may also reflect the nature of Labour's so-called natural constituency, which, coming from the lower socio-economic groupings, might be expected to both feel the pinch of the recession and be aware of its national ramifications.

The relationship between consistent and altered voting intention is a little more difficult to appreciate given the difficulties already outlined:

**Table 5.11 Retrospective, Prospective and Overall Consistents By Vote Movement**

**Retrospectively Consistent**

	AWAY FROM GOVERN.	UNCHANGED	TO GOVERN.
CONSISTENT	58% (96)	53% (278)	57% (4)
INCONSIST.	41 (68)	46 (241)	42 (3)

**Prospectively Consistent**

	AWAY FROM GOVERN.	UNCHANGED	TO GOVERN.
CONSISTENT	50% (83)	47% (247)	57% (4)
INCONSIST.	49 (82)	52 (272)	42 (3)

**Consistent Across All Perceptions**

	AWAY FROM GOVERN.	UNCHANGED	TO GOVERN.
CONSISTENT	28% (47)	22% (119)	14% (1)
INCONSIST.	71 (118)	77 (400)	85 (6)

The results of the analysis of this relationship are

presented above<sup>3</sup>. With reservations it is possible to say that little distinguishes those who moved away from support for the Government from those who were unchanged , in terms of their consistency - at any level. However, the numbers in the cells relating to those who had moved towards the Government prevent us from making generalisations with any confidence.

Setting aside the social and political characteristics of 'consistents', we can move on to a more important aspect of their dispositions - partisanship. The question is, what is the relationship between the strength of partisan attachment and consistency in perceptions of the economy?

One prediction that might be made could be that the more partisan the individual, the more likely that he or she would be consistent across perceptions. The obvious partisan dynamic would be that Conservative partisans would be less inclined to think their personal situation was or would be bad, and that this would extend to appreciation of past and present global perceptions. Cognitive dissonance would drive the individual towards consistency. The reverse would be true of non-Conservative partisans being less likely to think the Conservative Government was associated with prosperity - be it at personal or national level (prospectively or retrospectively). We attempted to test this hypothesis using the survey responses available to us. Unfortunately the Gallup questionnaire has a separate question for strength of partisanship ("Do you consider yourself close to any particular party? If so, do you feel your

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<sup>3</sup>. Cell frequencies are placed in parenthesis; percentages are for columns, and have been truncated.

self to be very close to this party, fairly close or merely a sympathiser?" - our emphasis).

The structure is not typical of partisan question wording, but is we feel sufficiently close to the essence of the partisan probe to allow for analysis along these lines. In this instance the partisan question responses were dichotomised ('very close' / 'fairly close' - 'merely sympathiser' / 'not close' / 'don't know'). The results are somewhat surprising and are outlined below<sup>4</sup> :

**Table 5.12**      **Retrospective, Prospective and Overall Consistents**  
**By Partisanship**

Retrospectively Consistent

	PARTISAN	NON-PARTISAN
CONSISTENT	55%	54%
INCONSIST.	<u>44</u>	<u>46</u>
	c. 100	c. 100

Prospectively Consistent

	PARTISAN	NON-PARTISAN
CONSISTENT	49%	48%
INCONSIST.	<u>50</u>	<u>51</u>
	c. 100	c. 100

Consistent Across All Perceptions

	PARTISAN	NON-PARTISAN
CONSISTENT	24%	23%
INCONSIST.	<u>76</u>	<u>76</u>
	c. 100	c. 100

It is quite clear that partisanship does not push the individual towards consistency at any level. This might be understandable if we are focusing on consistency across all economic perceptions; it might be hypothesised that it would take a strong partisanship indeed to force consistency across all levels. This notion is less easy to sustain in relation to retrospective or

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<sup>4</sup>. No cell contains less than 55 cases.

prospective consistency in isolation. The effects of partisanship (in terms of consistency at least) are, in this respect, negligible.

## 5.4

Cognitive dissonance does not appear to drive the individual towards consistency, but we might enquire whether it does influence the way the economy is perceived at the various levels. We examined the relationship between economic perceptions and voting intentions. The question was : are individuals of a Conservative disposition less likely than others to view the national situation or their own personal circumstances in a negative light? To determine if this is the case we collapsed the voting responses into Conservatives (with Conservative intentions stated initially or offered when probed), 'Floating Voters' (those without an initial preference, and stating none when probed) and 'non-Conservatives' (intending to vote other than Conservative, or likely to when probed). Voting preferences were then crosstabulated against each of the retrospective and prospective variables, tapping perception of change or likely change over a twelve month period. The results are presented below; the percentages represent columns, and the column totals are in parenthesis :

**Table 5.13 Economic Perceptions Against Partisanship**  
**General Retrospective Perceptions**

	CON	FLOAT.	non-CON.	
GOT BETTER	18.3	5.2	2.8	
STAY THE SAME	22.9	9.6	5.1	
GOT WORSE	58.7	85.2	92.1	
	100	100	100	
n = 1055	(218)	(115)	(722)	<b>Cramer's V</b> <b>= .26</b>

### Personal Retrospective Perceptions

	CON	FLOAT.	non-CON.	
GOT BETTER	16.8	10.9	9.6	
STAY THE SAME	45.1	27.7	29.2	
GOT WORSE	37.9	59.8	59.9	
	100%	100%	100%	
n = 1064	(226)	(119)	(719)	<b>Cramer's V</b> <b>= .13</b>

### General Prospective Perceptions

	CON	FLOAT.	non-CON.	
GETTING BETTER	52.4	16.2	12.9	
STAYING THE SAME	24.1	29.7	24.3	
GETTING WORSE	23.6	54.1	62.8	
	100%	100%	100%	
n = 1006	(212)	(111)	(683)	Cramer's V = .29

### Personal Prospective Perceptions

	CON	FLOAT.	non-CON.	
GETTING BETTER	23.2	11.3	11.6	
STAYING THE SAME	55.0	44.3	38.5	
GETTING WORSE	21.8	44.3	49.9	
	100%	100%	100%	
n = 1026	(220)	(115)	(691)	Cramer's V = .16

The closest relationship is that between voting intention and general prospective perception, and it is comparable with the association between voting intention and general retrospective perception. The patterning of the latter is quite striking and is not reproduced in any of the other crosstabulations. Almost all the 'floating voters' and 'non-Conservatives' had a negative view of the national economy! This contrasts with the Conservatives who, while pessimistic on the whole, were more balanced in their appreciation. The association between voting and the sociotropic measures is closer than that recorded for either personal perception variables. Personal retrospective perceptions are least closely associated.

The term 'association' is used advisedly in this context as the causal relationship between the variables cannot be addressed with the cross-sectional data available. The problem of reciprocal causation, in the guise of partisan misperception, tends to cloud the issue. Though we have established that partisan attachments do not lead to consistency across levels of perception, it may yet influence those perceptual levels independently.

To test this we crosstabulated a conjoined vote intention variable with the 'strength of partisan attachment' responses to produce a hybrid. Those with Conservative voting intentions were divided into two categories. Those who suggested that they had a 'very close' or 'fairly close' attachment to party ("Conservative partisans"), and those who were 'merely sympathisers', 'not close' or 'did not know' ("Conservative Articulated"). The same procedure was used for non-Conservative voting intentions. Finally, those who stated no intention, initially or when probed were coded, for convenience, as "Floating Voters". Cases were distributed fairly evenly across groups :

**Table 5.14 Aggregate Partisan Attachment**

CONSERVATIVE PARTISANS	5.9%	(n = 1084)
CONSERVATIVE ARTICULATED	15.0%	
FLOATING VOTERS	11.3%	
NON-CONSERVAT. ARTICULATED	53.8%	
NON-CONSERVAT. PARTISANS	13.9%	

While the test is not ideal, it is the best the data will afford. The results show that a measure of partisan attachment is associated with an individual's economic perceptions<sup>5</sup>:

**Table 5.15 Economic Perceptions Against Partisanship**

General Retrospective Perceptions

	Cons. Partisan	Cons. Articul.	Float.	non-Con. Articul.	non-Con. Partisan
BETTER	25.4	15.5	5.2	3.0	2.0
SAME	27.0	21.3	9.6	5.4	4.0
WORSE	47.6	63.2	85.2	91.6	94.0
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(63)	(155)	(115)	(571)	(151)
[Cramer' V = 0.27]      n = 1055					

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<sup>5</sup>. Percentages are represented by column.

### Personal Retrospective Perception

	Cons. Partisan	Cons. Articul.	Float.	non-Con. Articul.	non-Con. Partisan
BETTER	19.0	16.0	10.9	9.6	9.5
SAME	39.7	47.2	27.7	29.9	26.5
WORSE	41.3	36.8	61.3	60.5	63.9
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(63)	(163)	(119)	(572)	(147)

[Cramer's V = 0.13]

### General Prospective Perceptions

	Cons. Partisan	Cons. Articul.	Float.	non-Con. Articul.	non-Con. Partisan
BETTER	57.4	50.3	16.2	13.1	12.2
SAME	27.9	22.5	29.7	25.6	19.4
WORSE	14.8	27.2	54.1	61.4	68.3
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(61)	(151)	(111)	(544)	(139)

[Cramer's V = 0.29] n = 1006

### Personal Prospective Perceptions

	Cons. Partisan	Cons. Articul.	Float.	non-Con. Articul.	non-Con. Partisan
BETTER	21.3	23.9	11.3	12.2	9.0
SAME	52.5	56.0	44.3	37.8	41.0
WORSE	26.2	20.1	44.3	49.9	50.0
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(61)	(159)	(115)	(574)	(144)

[Cramer's V = 0.17] n = 1026

The percentages run in the expected direction, though there are some hiccups in the personal retrospective and personal prospective crosstabs. Again, the relationship is strongest for general prospective and general retrospective perceptions and weakest for the personal variables. As the association between variables was similar to that for voting alone we felt that the two exercises measure the same underlying features. However, we were glad to discover the crosstab on partisanship turned out as expected.

The importance of these results lies in their significance for macro-economic modelling. Sanders, Ward and Marsh are right in stating that autocorrelation is a problem for this type of

exercise. In statistical terms this can be dealt with by the inclusion of a lagged endogenous variable (in this instance popularity lagged by one month). This can be justified on explanatory grounds in terms of the inertia of public opinion. Sanders and Ward suggest that,

**"The inclusion of the lagged endogenous variable itself can be interpreted as denoting the elector's prior disposition to support the Government; the exogenous variables to denote, obviously the hypothetical economic and political influences of Governemnt popularity." (Sanders and Ward, 1991, p.27)**

Exogenous factors do not impact on a *tabula rasa*, but affect an active population already animated by historical partisan commitments. The explanatory utility of the lagged endogenous variable becomes obvious in this respect. It can, with some justification, represent the inertia of glacially moving partisanship.

However, if our results are taken at face value, the underlying features begin to look more complicated. In the realm of reciprocal causality which we inhabit, partisanship might affect perception; or perception may, in turn, affect the strength of partisanship. If either explanation is prioritised it would seem appropriate that we seek confirmation that the relationship actually obtains at the individual level. Judging from our results it seems easiest to argue dual causation for the sociotropic elements. On the other hand the closer we get to no relationship between perception and partisanship, the more difficult it is to argue either option.

The analysis presented above highlights the complexity of the individual level processes at work in the formation of political preferences. We might hypothesise that economic

perceptions can affect and be affected. But the different levels of perception may vary independently of one another. The partisan element in the equation may operate with different or varying degrees of intensity at those different levels. If either or both of those levels of perception have an important impact in individual's overall appreciation of the government's handling of the economy - the picture is doubly complicated.

The models we constructed in the previous chapter laid emphasis on general level perception as well as personal level circumstances. And, indeed, the former tended to weigh more heavily in the balance. Yet how do we tease out the independent 'impact' of the different levels of perception if individuals are as likely to maintain a uniform perception of personal and national circumstances as they are to differ? How do we assess the relative importance of each level of perception; which is more dominant?

We tried to approach the problem by focusing specifically on individuals who had diametrically opposed perceptions at the two levels. We isolated individuals who held the belief that their personal position was getting better while the national situation was deteriorating. We did the same for those who considered that the national situation was getting better while their own personal position was getting worse. These two groups together numbered some 97 individuals out of 1083 (around 9%) when we focused on national and personal retrospective perceptions. When we turned our attention to prospective perceptions the groups numbered 76 out of 1083 (some 7%). The numbers were small, but, we felt, enough for our purpose.

What we attempted was to code each individual separately. So, when focusing on retrospective perceptions in isolation, those with 'better' personal responses but 'worse' national responses were coded '1'; while those with 'worse' personal perceptions and 'better' global perceptions were coded '2'. Bearing in mind the issue of reciprocal causality, we hypothesised that if personal perceptions were more important in the formation of political perception (a Downsian or pocketbook hypothesis), then cell frequencies in a crosstabulation with voting intention should look like this :

	'1'	'2'
Conservative	HIGH	LOW
non-Conserv.	LOW	HIGH

The important feature here is the column distribution. Those coded '1' have a positive appreciation of their own environment, but negative about the global situation. As global appreciations count for nought in this conjectured model, they will wholly fail to 'impact on' vote choice. We hypothesised that if personal perceptions were dominant the individuals should fall predominantly in the top-left quadrant. Conversely those coded '2' have a negative view of home life but a positive perception of the national situation. Again, if the personal perceptions count for everything and global perceptions for nothing in this stylised model, they should group in the bottom right quadrant, but only if the Downsian or pocketbook calculus is at work.

The hypothesised distributions will look very different if, however, something other than the straight Downsian mechanism is at play. If the global element is dominant the distribution of

individuals should be the mirror image of the one suggested above. Individuals coded '1' have a negative global outlook, but a buoyant personal view; those coded '2' vice versa. If global calculations are dominant to the exclusion of pocketbook perceptions the negative global perception should push those coded '1' into the bottom left quadrant and those coded '2' into the top right :

	'1'	'2'
Conservative	LOW	HIGH
non-Conserv.	HIGH	LOW

The model is necessarily abstract and simplistic and the causal arrangement is left intentionally unspecified, but it has the attraction of being clearly able to distinguish the relative significance of a sociotropic or a pocketbook element.

The results of this exercise are reported below<sup>6</sup> :

**Table 5.16      Opposite Retrospective Economic Perception Against Vote**  
**Retrospective Perceptions**

	'1'	'2'
Conservative	25.6% (20)	68.4% (13)
non-Conserv.	74.4% (58)	31.6% (6)
	100%	100%

The responses for prospective perceptions show similar patterns:

**Table 5.17      Opposite Prospective Economic Perception Against Vote**  
**Prospective Perceptions**

	'1'	'2'
Conservative	30.0% (12)	55.6% (20)
non-Conserv.	70.0% (28)	44.4% (16)
	100%	100%

<sup>6</sup>. Cell frequencies are reported in brackets.

The shape of the distributions seem to approximate to the second model outlined above - the model featuring national or global perceptions. The shape of the distribution is more pronounced with respect to the retrospective cluster of perceptions, but it is evident in both. In assessing the relative importance of the global aspect of perception we have to recall that in our hypothetical model an equal column distribution would mean no particular priority.

True, the distribution could merely be a further reflection of partisanship. However, the exercise was conducted simply to show the relative significance of the respective levels of perception. It was not undertaken as an attempt to assess the causal relationship between the actual perceptions at those levels and the individual's vote preference. Doubt will obviously remain, and in order to address the issue the same exercise was undertaken with a view to framing the exploration in more appropriate causal terms. The focus was still on column distribution for the groups isolated; however, attention turned to 'change' (meaning in this context a difference between 1979 vote and current preference). We had already coded individuals according to the difference or lack of difference between their vote in 1979 and their present preference. This was now used as a 'dependent' variable: Table 5.18 Opposite Economic Perception Against Movement to and from Government

<u>Retrospective Perceptions</u>		
	<u>'1'</u>	<u>'2'</u>
TO GOVERNMENT	1.9%	7.6%
	(1)	(1)
STABLE	78.8%	84.6%
	(41)	(11)
AWAY FROM GOVT.	19.2%	7.6%
	(10)	(1)

### Prospective Perceptions

	<u>'1'</u>	<u>'2'</u>
TO GOVERNMENT	-	7.1%
	-	(2)
STABLE	76.9%	85.7%
	(20)	(24)
AWAY FROM GOVT.	23.0%	7.1%
	(6)	(2)

Sadly the numbers in cells are particularly small and we have an empty cell. The number is less than the original complement as some individuals were left uncoded (as they did not or were unable to vote in 1979). The distributions are scarcely symmetrical and this in conjunction with the difficulties in interpreting the 'change' variable outlined at the beginning of the chapter, mean that the results are inconclusive. Stability seems to be the most evident feature.

What we can do is look at the relationship between the different levels of perception (both retrospective and prospective) and change to or away from the government. The results are presented below : Table 5.18 (cont.)

### General Retrospective

	BETTER	SAME	WORSE
AWAY FROM GOVT.	19.6	22.8	24.5
	(9)	(18)	(135)
STABLE	78.3	75.9	74.6
	(36)	(60)	(412)
TO THE GOVT.	2.2	1.3	0.9
	(1)	(1)	(5)

Results for prospective perceptions show a similar pattern.

**Table 5.19**      **Aggregate Economic Perceptions Against Movement to and from Government**

### Personal Retrospective

	BETTER	SAME	WORSE
AWAY FROM GOVT.	19.5	23.5	24.5
	(15)	(53)	(95)
STABLE	79.2	75.5	74.1
	(61)	(171)	(283)
TO THE GOVT.	1.3	0.9	1.0
	(1)	(2)	(4)

### General Prospective

	BETTER	SAME	WORSE
AWAY FROM GOVT.	16.3 (25)	26.2 (43)	26.5 (87)
STABLE	80.4 (123)	72.6 (119)	73.5 (241)
TO THE GOVT.	3.3 (5)	1.2 (2)	- -

### Personal Prospective

	BETTER	SAME	WORSE
AWAY FROM GOVT.	20.3 (16)	20.7 (62)	27.8 (78)
STABLE	77.2 (61)	78.3 (235)	71.5 (201)
TO THE GOVT.	2.5 (2)	1.0 (3)	0.7 (2)

The limited numbers of individuals moving towards the government make these tables difficult to interpret with any clarity or certainty. If an effect is evident, and the reciprocal causality issue still hovers in the background, it is quite modest in size. The strongest relationship appears to be between general prospective perceptions and movement, but the empty cell and low cell frequencies mean we can deduce little from a reading of the distributions. There are also problems in gauging the accuracy of respondent's recollections on how they voted in the 1979 Election.

## 5.5

If clear causal interpretations are denied us, it might be appropriate to look at other tests of the pocketbook theory at least. One test might be to look at particularly disadvantaged groups. The unemployed, one such disadvantaged group, are a particularly interesting segment of the population. As a group they suffer disproportionately as a function of their personal predicament. In absolute terms they are worse off than the bulk of the population, though we need to be aware that their position may be comparable to some low paid employed people. Qualifications notwithstanding, the Downsian thesis might, in some respects, lead us to expect that the group will have a particularly jaundiced view of the government. We wished to explore the reactions of the unemployed in as far as they relate not only to their personal position, but to wider political and global perceptions. We wanted to know whether they were inclined to punish the Government. Is the Downsian thesis sustained in an unambiguous fashion? Do the unemployed have a particularly bleak view of the national situation and are their views about economic prospects coloured by their experiences?

We took our sample and dichotomised by employment status. Students, housewives and the retired were groups which did not fit into a work/non-work pattern and so were excluded. We felt that these excluded groups had few unambiguous common features between them, so we declined to focus on them as a separate unit of analysis. This left the unemployed contrasted with those who

were 'employed', 'self-employed' or were 'working part-time'<sup>7</sup>. On a range of perceptions the unemployed as a group did not seem to differ significantly from the rest. This was the case at all levels of perception :

**Table 5.20** Aggregate Retrospective Perceptions Against Employment Status

	<u>General Retrospective</u>			<u>Personal Retrospective</u>		
	UNEMPL.	EMPLOY		UNEMPL.	EMPLOY	
BETTER	4.1 (4)	6.6 (35)	-2	7.1 (7)	14.7 (78)	-7
SAME	3.1 (3)	10.5 (56)		20.4 (20)	32.9 (175)	
WORSE	88.8 (87)	80.2 (426)	+8	69.4 (68)	51.3 (273)	+18
D/K	4.1 (4)	2.6 (14)		3.1 (3)	1.1 (6)	

The unemployed were less likely than the employed to suggest their personal situation had got better; though considerably more likely to state that it had deteriorated. This is scarcely surprising given the rigours that unemployment brings. Perhaps it is surprising that the difference should be so small in this respect.

If the same exercise is performed for prospective perceptions, a similar pattern emerges :

**Table 5.21** Aggregate Prospective Perceptions Against Employment Status

	<u>General Prospective</u>			<u>Personal Prospective</u>		
	UNEMPL.	EMPLOY		UNEMPL.	EMPLOY	
BETTER	15.3 (15)	21.4 (114)	-6	15.3 (15)	15.0 (80)	0
SAME	20.4 (20)	22.9 (122)		26.5 (26)	38.5 (250)	
WORSE	61.2 (60)	49.2 (262)	+12	49.0 (48)	41.2 (292)	+8
D/K	3.1 (3)	6.4 (34)		9.2 (9)	5.3 (28)	

<sup>7</sup>. All the tables set out below were also calculated for a dichotomised sample which pitched only the 'employed' and 'self-employed' against the 'unemployed'. The results were closely comparable for all crosstabulations.

On general prospective perceptions the difference is of the same order as that for personal retrospective perceptions. There is little difference between the employed and the unemployed on their view of future personal trends.

Not only was there little difference in perception at the various levels, but we found that the unemployed were equally as consistent or inconsistent in their view of economic prospects (ie. matching general and personal prospective perceptions). On the other hand, as we might expect from our earlier analysis of consistency and employment status, there was a difference on retrospective consistency<sup>8</sup>:

Table 5.22 Retrospective Consistency Against Employment Status

Retrospectively Consistent

	UNEMPL.	EMPLOY
CONSISTENT	70.4%	50.3%
INCONSIST.	<u>29.6</u>	<u>49.7</u>
	100%	100%

So the unemployed were more likely to be consistent in their retrospective perceptions. This might seem plausible given that as a group they were more likely to have perceived personal deterioration, while the economy at the time had been performing particularly badly.

We also wanted to established whether, in terms of the intention to vote or movement since 1979, the unemployed were different from their employed counterparts<sup>9</sup>:

(see over page)

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<sup>8</sup>. No cell contained less than thirty cases.

<sup>9</sup>. The second table on change excludes those who were left uncoded due to not voting in 1979 or who moved between opposition parties.

**Table 5.23      Employment Status Against Movement to and from Government**

	UNEMPL.	EMPLOY		UNEMPL.	EMPLOY	
CONSERV.	8.2	22.9	-14	AWAY FROM	25.0	23.0
	(8)	(122)			(12)	(80)
FLOAT.	15.3	10.2		STABLE	75.0	74.5
	(15)	(54)			(36)	(250)
NON-CON.	76.5	66.9	+10	MOVED TO	--	1.8
	(75)	(356)				(6)

The results are important in one sense. It is clear that the unemployed are not particularly distinctive in their appreciation of past events or future trends. It is equally clear that the unemployed do favour parties other than the Conservatives. But they are not obviously more anti-Conservative than their employed counterparts. There is a tendency for the unemployed to be more likely to prefer non-Conservative to Conservative than the employed, but it is clear rather than pronounced. It may simply, or indeed not so simply, 'reflect' their position on either general prospective perception or personal retrospective appreciations. On these there was a modest difference between 'employed' and 'unemployed',<sup>10</sup>.

In this context it may be inappropriate to use change in voting for the Conservatives against change in employment status as a barometer of economic voting (without examining their economic perceptions). Heath *et al.* do compare persistence in Conservative voting among the employed and among those who became unemployed (Heath *et al.*, 1985 p.162). 85% of those remaining in work stayed loyal to the Conservatives; 74% of those who became unemployed also remained loyal! They note:

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<sup>10</sup>. Again this held true when we dropped the potentially ambiguous 'part-time' workers from the 'employed' category - comparing unemployed with employed and self-employed.

"It is perhaps rather remarkable that only a quarter of former Conservatives who had suffered unemployment defected to one of the other parties. We believe that this is powerful testimony to the greater importance of values compared with personal wellbeing on shaping people's votes." (*ibid*, p.162)

Our analysis suggests that this form of approach may be a poor test of economic voting (even if personal perceptions were the sole attitude of interest). While the unemployed are almost certainly not a homogenous group, they do not appear to differ significantly from those who were employed in their perception of change over the previous twelve months. Since the Downsian thesis is premised on the appreciation of change it is important that changing perceptions be empirically identified rather than inferred from employment status alone. Only when this is done can the unemployed

## 5.6

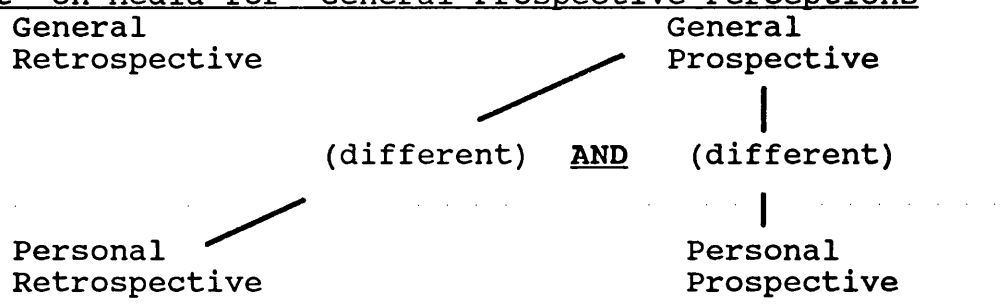
If the available data affords us a test bed for an unreconstructed Downsian thesis, it may also offers us the ability to isolate those individuals who are most likely to be 'dependent' on the mass media for global or forward looking economic cues<sup>11</sup>. The technique used involves determining which individuals have general perceptions (forward or backward regarding) which are not, or are unlikely to be, extrapolated from their personal experience. Here the assumption is that if individuals do not extrapolate their perceptions from their own experience, a case might be made that they are the product of media cues. An obvious counter-case might hold that individuals may instead rely on personal contacts for information. While this is consistent with the much criticised mass media "Two-Step-Flow" theorising (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Gitlin, 1978), evidence from Dunleavy and Husbands' study of the 1983 election suggest that personal contact is not as important as we might think. To the question, "What is your most important source of political information", only 3% answer that the main source is personal contact. Issues of questionnaire interpretation notwithstanding, a case might plausibly be made in defence of the assumption that those whose general prospective perceptions differ from both their personal retrospective and prospective perceptions, are in some sense dependent on the media for cues. The logic of the case can be shown diagrammatically:

(see over page)

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<sup>11</sup>. To highlight that the term dependency is used provisionally we will continue to place it in inverted commas.

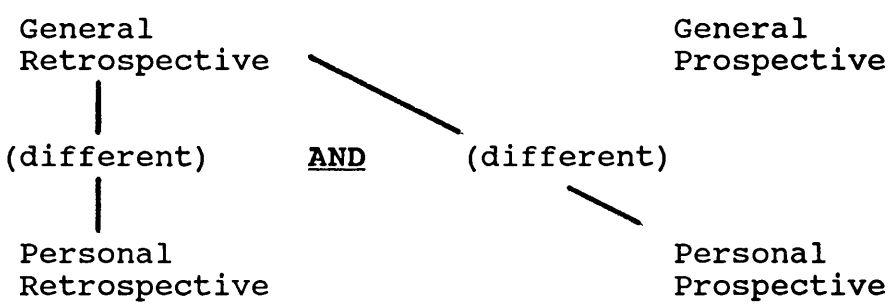
**Figure 5.1 The Logic of General Prospective Dependency**  
**'Dependent' on Media for General Prospective Perceptions**



The assumption is that individuals do not derive their general prospective perceptions from their personal circumstances. If individuals use neither personal retrospective beliefs nor personal prospective expectations to judge what might happen to the economy in the future, there may be a case for assuming they are more likely to be potentially 'dependent' on the mass media.

Focusing on general retrospective attitudes a similar logic is at work. We want to isolate those who are not extrapolating from past personal experience to perceptions of the general situation. Nor are past perceptions contaminated by personal optimism or pessimism (wishful or otherwise) :

**Figure 5.2 The Logic of General Retrospective Dependency**  
**'Dependent' on the Media for General Retrospective Perceptions**



We felt that in the light of Sanders, Ward and Marsh's work it was important to consider whether those we considered potentially 'media dependents' had any distinctive features. We focused on some socio-economic features, but the obvious question was whether they had particularly rosy or pessimistic views of the

economy.

It is clear that there was a rather large group of individuals who were either retrospectively or prospectively 'dependent' on the media (as we have defined it)<sup>12</sup> :

**Table 5.24 Prospective and Retrospective Dependency**

<u>General</u> <u>Retrospective Perceptions</u>	<u>General</u> <u>Prospective Perceptions</u>
'Dependent' : 34.3%	'Dependent' : 36.7%
'Independ.' : 65.7%	'Independ.' : 63.3%

Did these individuals have any distinguishing features? It is equally clear from our analysis that in neither group was there any relationship whatsoever between 'dependency' and age or gender. For both groups there was a tendency for 'dependency' to be associated with higher status occupations :

**Table 5.25 Prospective and Retrospective Dependency Against Class**

<u>General Prospective Perceptions</u>						
	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
'Dependent'	66	42	42	33	31	35
'Independ.'	33	57	57	66	68	64

<u>General Retrospective Perceptions</u>						
	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
'Dependent'	60	46	38	32	30	21
'Independ.'	40	53	61	67	69	78

Clearly the higher the class the more likely the individual's perception of the national economy is likely to be 'media dependent'. Yet for general prospective 'dependency' the pattern was not strictly uniform.

There was a fairly weak relationship between strength of partisanship and 'dependency' for either group. But 'dependency' is related to vote preference :

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<sup>12</sup>. The form of calculation means there may be overlap between groups. An individual can be 'dependent' in one dimension, 'independent' in another.

**Table 5.26 Dependency Against Partisanship**

**General Prospective Perceptions**

	Conservative	Floating	non-Conserv.
'Dependent'	48.9%	37.7%	32.7%
'Independ.'	<u>51.1</u>	<u>62.3</u>	<u>67.2</u>
	100%	100%	100%

**General Retrospective Perceptions**

	Conservative	Floating	non-Conserv.
'Dependent'	50.7%	36.1%	28.9%
'Independ.'	<u>49.3</u>	<u>63.9</u>	<u>71.1</u>
	100%	100%	100%

Conservatives on the whole are more likely to be 'dependent' than other groupings. This is significant when we go on to look at the relationship between 'dependency' and actual perceptions of the national situation (either retrospective or prospective). In this context controls on party support seemed appropriate.

We hypothesised that with the media dominated by Conservatively inclined material<sup>13</sup> we might expect 'media dependents' to be more optimistic and less pessimistic than 'media independents'. The notion here was of a prevailing climate of opinion rather than ideational dominance.

To test this we crosstabulated our 'media dependency' variable with general retrospective and general prospective perceptions. Having found that 'media dependents' in both cases were more likely to be Conservative we decided to control for vote preference to see if any differences between perceptions were merely a function of partisan misperception. The results

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<sup>13</sup>. Especially in the realm of printed material, and, if the Glasgow University Media Group are to be believed, in televisual output too (Glasgow University Media Group, 1976, 1980 and 1982). Though compare this with Harrison's diagnosis (Harrison, 1985).

are presented below<sup>14</sup> :

**Table 5.27**      **General Retrospective Perceptions Against Dependency : Controlling for Partisanship**

General Retrospective Perceptions

<u>ALL</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u> <u>'Indep.'</u>					
	BETTER	11.1 (41)	3.4 (24)			
	SAME	8.9 (33)	7.7 (65)			
	WORSE	73.3 (272)	87.1 (619)			
	D/K	6.7 (25)	0.4 (9)			
	<u>CON</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u> <u>'Indep.'</u>		<u>FLOAT</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u> <u>'Indep.'</u>	
B	22.6 (26)	12.5 (14)		6.8 (3)	2.6 (2)	5.7 (12)
S	13.9 (16)	30.4 (34)		11.4 (5)	7.7 (6)	5.7 (12)
W	56.5 (65)	56.3 (63)		65.9 (29)	88.5 (69)	84.0 (178)
D/K	7.0 (8)	0.9 (1)		15.9 (7)	1.3 (1)	4.7 (10)
	<u>NON-CON</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u> <u>'Indep.'</u>			<u>'Depend.'</u> <u>'Indep.'</u>	
						1.5 (8)
						4.8 (25)
						93.5 (487)
						0.2 (1)

**Table 5.28**      **General Prospective Perceptions Against Dependency : Controlling for Partisanship**

General Prospective Perceptions

<u>ALL</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u> <u>'Indep.'</u>					
	BETTER	34.3 (136)	11.8 (81)			
	SAME	19.1 (76)	25.4 (174)			
	WORSE	31.7 (126)	60.3 (413)			
	D/K	14.9 (59)	2.5 (17)			
	<u>CON</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u> <u>'Indep.'</u>		<u>FLOAT</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u> <u>'Indep.'</u>	
BET	62.2 (69)	36.2 (42)		28.3 (13)	6.6 (5)	22.5 (54)
SAM	9.9 (11)	34.5 (40)		21.7 (10)	30.3 (23)	22.9 (55)
WOR	19.8 (22)	24.1 (28)		30.4 (14)	60.5 (46)	37.5 (90)
D/K	8.1 (9)	5.2 (6)		19.6 (9)	2.6 (2)	17.1 (41)
	<u>NON-CON</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u> <u>'Indep.'</u>			<u>'Depend.'</u> <u>'Indep.'</u>	
						6.9 (34)
						22.5 (111)
						68.8 (339)
						1.8 (9)

<sup>14</sup>. 'Floating Voters' are defined as those who offered no original preference, and who responded 'Don't Know' when probed. Cell frequencies are in parenthesis; percentages are for columns.

The uncontrolled results for general retrospective perceptions are not particularly startling (though the difference in percentages are as we would expect). There is a slight tendency for the 'dependent' to be more optimistic and less pessimistic, but it is not particularly pronounced. When we control for party preference the situation does not change markedly with regard to non-Conservatives and Conservatives. At  $dp=10\%$  (percentage difference) the Conservatives were more likely to think the national situation had got better (though there was no difference in pessimism). Non-Conservatives are less likely to think things had got worse ( $dp=9\%$ ). The only thing worth drawing attention to is the distribution for floating voters. Here 'dependents' are noticeably less likely to have considered that the national situation had deteriorated<sup>15</sup>. The findings are consistent with mass communication effects research. Robinson, and Blumler and Gurevich suggest that the politically uncommitted are more vulnerable to press 'manipulation' than partisans (Robinson, 1974; Blumler and Gurevich, 1982). Floating voters do not necessarily see events through the partisan prism.

We felt that the results might be a function of too stringent a test of 'dependency'. We recalculated general retrospective 'dependency' by isolating only those whose general perceptions differed from their personal evaluations (personal prospective perceptions were ignored) :

(see over page)

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<sup>15</sup>.  $dp=22.6\%$ . It is appreciated that in these circumstances 'dp' does not give an unambiguous measure of association, but it does give a rough guide.

**Table 5.29      General Retrospective Perceptions Against Less Stringent Dependency : Controlling for Partisanship**

<u>General Retrospective Perceptions : Dependency Less Stringent</u>			
<u>ALL</u>		<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>
BETTER	10.8%	2.0%	
	(53)	(12)	
SAME	10.8%	7.6%	
	(53)	(45)	
WORSE	73.0%	90.2%	
	(360)	(531)	
D/K	5.5%	0.2%	
	(27)	(1)	

	<u>CON</u>		<u>FLOAT</u>		<u>NON-CON</u>	
	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>
B	23.6	7.2	7.0	1.5	5.1	1.1
	(34)	(6)	(4)	(1)	(15)	(5)
S	18.1	28.9	14.0	4.6	6.5	4.1
	(26)	(24)	(8)	(3)	(12)	(25)
W	52.1	63.9	64.9	93.6	84.9	94.6
	(75)	(53)	(37)	(61)	(248)	(417)
D/K	6.3	--	14.0	--	3.4	0.2
	(9)	--	(8)	--	(10)	(1)
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The results were similar if a little more exaggerated. The Conservatives begin to show some signs of an effect while for the floating element the impact is increased (though we must be wary of the small cell frequencies).

The results for general prospective perceptions are a little more surprising. The original crosstab shows a distinctive pattern. The 'media dependent' are much more likely to be bullish about the future of the economy (dp=25%). Alternatively, 'dependents' are much less likely to consider that things will get worse (dp=29%). The results are altogether more pronounced in the prospective context, and if we look at the tables on the controls, it is clear that they survive the exercise. They are not, in this sense, simply a function of partisan misperception. Indeed, the crosstabs show that the relationship is more

pronounced in some of the control conditions. The difference between 'dependents' and 'independents' among the floating voters and non-Conservatives is quite striking when we look at pessimistic impressions (dp=30% and dp=31% respectively). Likewise, the Conservative 'dependent' were much more inclined to be optimistic than their independent counterparts (dp=26.0%).

The results here are quite significant and we were anxious to see whether a similar pattern was evident when we looked at personal prospective impressions. Again we looked at and compared personal retrospective perceptions with personal prospective impressions. The rationale behind this was fairly simple, and similar in many respects to that for the isolation of general 'media dependents'. If individuals did not extrapolate from their past experience (ie. things have got worse in the last twelve months, so it is likely they will get worse in the next; or things got better, so they are likely to continue in that vein) we assumed that their perceptions were more likely to come from other sources. Among these the media might be one plausible origin. With these assumptions clearly in mind, and while aware of their weaknesses, we sought to determine whether so called 'media dependents' differed from their 'independent' counterparts<sup>16</sup>.

The calculations show that the numbers who are 'dependent' for prospective impressions are larger than for other levels of perception :

**Table 5.30 Personal Prospective Dependency**

<u>Personal Prospective Perceptions</u>	
'Dependent' :	43.3%
'Independ.' :	56.7%

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<sup>16</sup>. We examine our assumptions more closely in chapter six.

This group was not, however, distinguished by socio-economic class or voting preference (they were as likely to be Conservative as non-Conservative and Floating; they were as likely to be A/B as D/E). As with the other groupings there was no relationship between 'dependency' and either age or gender. Likewise, there was absolutely no relationship between 'dependency' and strength of partisanship. The picture somewhat changes if we look at the relationship between 'dependency' and prospective perceptions themselves<sup>17</sup> :

**Table 5.31**      Personal Prospective Perceptions Against  
Dependency : Controlling for Partisanship

<u>ALL</u>		<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>				
	BETTER	20.7	7.7				
		(97)	(47)				
	SAME	48.8	33.9				
		(229)	(208)				
	WORSE	21.1	56.2				
		(99)	(345)				
	D/K	9.4	2.3				
		(44)	(14)				
<u>CON</u>		<u>FLOAT</u>		<u>NON-CON</u>			
	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>	
BET	29.9	15.8	12.0	9.7	18.9	5.0	
	(32)	(19)	(6)	(7)	(59)	(21)	
SAM	50.5	55.8	58.0	29.2	46.8	28.4	
	(54)	(67)	(29)	(21)	(146)	(120)	
WOR	13.1	28.3	20.0	56.9	24.0	64.0	
	(14)	(34)	(10)	(41)	(75)	(270)	
D/K	6.5	----	10.0	4.2	10.3	2.6	
	(7)		(5)	(3)	(32)	(11)	

Despite some low cell frequencies and one empty cell the structure is quite apparent. As we would expect if our hypothesis was correct, the one-way crosstab is skewed in the expected direction. Most obviously, 'dependents' are much less likely to think things will get worse than independents (dp=35.1%).

<sup>17</sup>. Percentages are for the columns; cell frequencies are below in parenthesis.

The two-way tables suggest the picture is more complex (though no less interesting). The results survive control and in some important instances the results are actually exaggerated. Conservative 'dependents' are still more likely to be optimistic than Conservative independents (and less likely to fear things will get worse). Considering the difference between the original and control tables for the Conservatives it is clear that some partisan reinterpretation is at work. 'Dp' for those who view their prospects as bleak is reduced, in this respect from 35.1% to 15.2%. This is not the case, however, for Conservatives making positive predictions. After controlling for party, 'dp' barely changes from 13.0% to 14.1%.

The most significant results are for floating voters and non-Conservatives. For the former the marked difference between 'dependents' and independents is most obvious for those who feel things will be the same (dp=28.8%), and for those who feel things will get worse (dp=36.9%). If a 'no change' perception in the depth of a recession is considered non-hostile as far as the Conservatives are concerned, the result might be interpreted as confirming (or at least not contradicting) our hypothesis that 'dependents' will have a distinctive set of perceptions. On the other hand, the difference between 'dependents' and 'independents' on the issue of pessimism is pronounced and in the hypothesised direction. This is the case for non-Conservatives as well as floating voters. The non-Conservative 'dependents' are very much less likely to think things will deteriorate than their independent counterparts (dp=40%). The corresponding figure for floating voters is comparable (dp=36%). Sadly, again

our analysis suffers from the fact that so few individuals perceive things as getting better. Yet the results are clear and show a marked tendency for 'media dependency' to impact upon economic perception.

We thought it appropriate to test the validity of the 'dependency' variable. We considered that if the concept were a valid one, the associated variable would have little or no impact on respondent's perception of their immediate environment. Dependency might conceivably have an impact on backward regarding perceptions or, indeed, on projections. However, we might expect it to have no influence on perceptions of the closest and most tangible facets of family financial life. To test this we took the three 'dependencies' we had identified and cross tabulated them with a measure of current financial situation. The question used was phrased, "Which of these statements best describes the present financial situation in your household?" (our emphasis). Responses, which were subsequently collapsed, included, "We are running into debt", "We have to draw on our savings", "We are just managing to make ends meet on our income", "We are saving a little", and "We are saving a lot". These were not ideal, but they were the best afforded by the Gallup survey.

The results from this exercise are recorded below :  
**Table 5.32      Present Perceptions Against Prospective Dependency**  
**: Controlling for Partisanship**

<u>Present Personal Perceptions by Personal Prospective Dependency</u>			
<u>ALL</u>		<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>
	GOOD	32.6	28.7
		(153)	(176)
	SAME	52.0	51.6
		(244)	(317)
	BAD	12.8	15.3
		(60)	(94)
	D/K	2.6	4.4
		(12)	(27)

	<u>CON</u>		<u>FLOAT</u>		<u>NON-CON</u>	
	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>
G	40.2 (43)	48.3 (58)	36.0 (18)	25.0 (18)	29.5 (92)	23.7 (100)
S	47.7 (51)	40.0 (48)	56.0 (28)	56.9 (41)	52.9 (165)	54.0 (228)
B	9.3 (10)	10.0 (12)	8.0 (4)	8.3 (6)	14.7 (46)	18.0 (77)
D/K	2.8 (3)	1.7 (2)	-	9.7 (7)	2.9 (9)	4.3 (18)

It is clear from this table at least that media dependency for prospective perceptions, as we might expect, has an extremely modest impact on perceptions of present economic circumstances. In this sense our hypothesis is confirmed. Our confidence in the validity of the concept and its associated variable is reinforced. The result is little changed if we control for partisan affiliation. Looking at dependency for general prospective perceptions a very similar picture emerges :

**Table 5.33**      **Present Perceptions Against General Prospective Dependency : Controlling for Partisanship**

**Present Personal Perceptions by General Prospective Dependency**  
**ALL**

	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>
GOOD	34.8 (138)	27.9 (191)
SAME	48.9 (194)	53.4 (366)
BAD	11.8 (47)	15.6 (107)
D/K	4.5 (18)	3.1 (21)

	<u>CON</u>		<u>FLOAT</u>		<u>NON-CON</u>	
	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>
G	41.4 (46)	47.4 (55)	26.1 (12)	31.6 (24)	33.3 (80)	22.7 (112)
S	46.8 (52)	40.5 (47)	58.7 (27)	55.3 (42)	47.9 (115)	56.2 (277)
B	9.0 (10)	10.3 (12)	8.7 (4)	7.9 (6)	13.8 (33)	18.1 (89)
D/K	2.7 (3)	1.7 (2)	6.5 (3)	5.3 (4)	5.0 (12)	3.0 (15)

Again our confidence in the validity of the variable is sustained. However, the situation is slightly more complicated

if we look at those who are media dependent for their general retrospective perceptions :

**Table 5.34**      Present Perception Against General Retrospective Dependency : Controlling for Partisanship

<u>Present Personal Percept. by General Retrospective Dependency</u>						
<u>ALL</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u>		<u>'Indep.'</u>			
	GOOD	43.9	23.3			
		(163)	(166)			
	SAME	42.6	56.5			
		(158)	(402)			
	BAD	7.3	17.9			
		(27)	(127)			
	D/K	6.2	2.3			
		(19)	(16)			

	<u>CON</u>		<u>FLOAT</u>		<u>NON-CON</u>	
	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>	<u>'Depend.'</u>	<u>'Indep.'</u>
G	56.5	32.1	27.3	30.8	40.6	20.3
	(65)	(36)	(12)	(24)	(86)	(106)
S	34.8	52.7	59.1	55.1	43.4	57.6
	(40)	(59)	(26)	(43)	(92)	(300)
B	5.2	14.3	4.5	10.3	9.0	19.8
	(6)	(16)	(2)	(8)	(19)	(103)
D/K	3.5	0.9	9.1	3.8	7.1	2.3
	(4)	(1)	(4)	(3)	(15)	(12)

Here there appears to be something going on. Even after controlling for partisan attachment, general retrospective dependency seems to have an impact on contemporary perception. In conclusion we might suggest that there is strong though mixed support for the underlying validity of our measure. We may be reassured by the fact that the level of impact (dp=24% and dp=20%) is at the lower end of the scale of effects we have observed so far. Changing the measure of general retrospective 'dependency' to the less stringent interpretation (minus personal prospective) scarcely made a difference at all.

## 5.7

What then are we to make of our individual level approach to the structure of economic perceptions? At the risk of going over old ground it seems clear that our results point to some fairly unambiguous conclusions. The first is that the economic perceptions are in large part independent or discrete. By this we mean that individuals are quite capable of holding different or indeed diametrically opposing views of how things have been and will be at these four levels of perceptions. There is not, as we might have expected, a partisan drive towards consistency. Individuals seem comfortable holding different opinions at different levels, though it is impossible to determine with any certainty from the data available whether those views alter independently.

We have also noted that the strength of the relationship between partisanship and economic perception differs from level to level. General retrospective and general prospective perceptions are most closely related to partisanship in this respect. This means that not only are the various levels discrete for many, but that they are differentially affected by, or affect, partisanship. The evidence is testimony to the complexity of the opinion climate, and the difficulties confronting us in giving explanatory integrity to our aggregate models.

Our analysis of the unemployed is further testimony, if testimony were needed, that we need look beyond, or rather, beneath sociological categories to their ideational substance. It is clear that though the unemployed, on the whole, have a

lower absolute standard of living, they are not necessarily more inclined to see things as having changed for the worse. If the notion of monitoring the environment for change and punishing the Government if things get worse is integral to the Downsian pocketbook model, then we cannot look to the relationship between the category of "unemployed" and its association to Conservative defection as a test of pocketbook voting, as Heath *et al.* do (Heath *et al.*, 1985).

If anything can be said about media significance from a cross sectional approach to structure of economic perceptions, then the section on 'media dependency' is relevant and important. The assumptions made in the construction of the 'dependency' variable may err on the side of permissiveness, but we would contend that they are not entirely immoderate. If these assumptions are accepted, it seems clear that 'media dependents' in many respects have a different view of the economic universe. Our results lend some support to the notion that some aspects of general retrospective opinion, and general or personal prospective perceptions may be influenced by the mass media.

The questions raised and unanswered are, however, are as important as those addressed. The notion of 'media dependency' leaves unexplored the issue of the impact of local perceptions on economic predictions or perceptions. The work on constituency effects is couched in the Weberian terms we have been critical of, but it should at the very least alert us to the possibility that a narrow territorial dynamic is operating. The Gallup data we have available cannot address that issue. Nor can it address the issue of attribution of responsibility. We may believe

things are getting better, worse or are staying the same, but who is to be held responsible for this. Is it the government, exogenous influences or luck, or is the individual partly or wholly responsible (particularly for personal wellbeing)? If people make inferences about attribution does this in turn animate the passions (by making us angry or jubilant) or does it merely influence the individual's rational calculus? Again the data we have available cannot address these issues.

Yet the most lamentable deficiency in our analysis lies in the difficulty in addressing the issue of causality. In particular we may specify the strength of the relationship between partisanship and economic perceptions, but an understanding of the causal connection eludes us. Cross sectional data is particularly unsuited to answering this sort of question. If we are to approach any of the issues thus related we have to look to a different methodology. With this in mind we turn to the construction of a panel study to give us at least some insight into such issues.

## CHAPTER SIX

### PANEL ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC PERCEPTIONS : STRUCTURE AND IMPACT

#### 6.1

The survey we conducted was focused on one particular borough in South London - Lewisham. The choice was largely dictated by cost considerations, but was considered appropriate as individuals in a broader nationally representative survey might bring with them a variety of narrow parochial attitudes which would deflect attention from the analysis of uniform local detail. Lewisham borough was chosen as it contained two fairly marginal constituencies (Lewisham West and Lewisham East). These constituencies had a broadly based demographic profile. Waller notes of Lewisham West, from whence the majority of respondents came :

"It .... enjoys a cross-section of social characteristics (ie housing). [Though] this microcosm of London and England is not of an internally uniform nature. Labour has some very strong wards, such as the inter-war council estate at Billingham, at Sydenham East and in Forest Hill. The Conservatives do best in Catford and on the boundary with Dulwich in Upper Sydenham." (Waller, 1983, p.65)

None of our respondents came from these party dominated areas.

Lewisham East is similarly mixed, especially with regard to housing. The I.T.N. Election Handbook of 1987 notes that this constituency, "...consists of a cross-section of council and owner-occupied housing.." (Mathias, 1987, p.179). While this constituency also has its unrepresentative enclaves, we sought to find respondents from a variety of locations.

Having chosen the location for our survey, the approach to potential respondents was made initially by telephone. We were given access to maps containing detailed delineation of council

housing estates. From these we were able to narrow our range of target districts. A balance was sought between council and non-council areas. From here the approach was to have commercial companies provide us with a random list of telephone numbers from within the specified areas (to the number we had specified). Generally our field workers operated on lists of around one thousand telephone numbers.

Using these numbers the initial contact was made. The use of telephone contact has its obvious biases and problems (De Vaus, 1991). The most obvious of these problems concerns telephone penetration (or rather the lack of it). With our resource constraints we had to live with such biases. We were, however, reassured by the fact that the technique has been used successfully in recent British research (Miller, 1990). It also had some important advantages. We were able to screen out individuals who stated they had declined to vote. As this was intended to be one of our dependent variables, and given that expensive field interviews needed to be kept to a minimum, we felt it necessary to operate along these lines. Moreover, through preliminary media exposure and demographic questions we could control some important characteristics in the sample (gender, spread of quality and tabloid readers, number of pensioners etc.). Lastly, it became evident that some individuals were extremely uncooperative and would weed themselves out by outright refusal to take part. Again it was obvious that bias might creep in. The less interested, though also less likely to vote, are a significant part of the electorate and need attention. However, we felt that since long

term cooperative involvement of respondents was a necessary condition for successful completion of the survey, dropping the markedly uncooperative elements could be defended on the grounds of methodological expediency.

Having made initial contact by phone we followed up with a face to face interview in the individual's own home (rather than at the doorstep). These twenty five to thirty five minute interviews provided us with the in-depth background material as well as the primary political data we sought. The telephone survey provided us with a list of targetable and targeted individuals , only some of whom were both contacted and cooperative. These people constituted the substance of our survey (203 individuals in total). Of these, 167 were successfully contacted at all three points in the exercise. The number here is small by representative survey standards, but given our extremely limited resources it was the best that could be managed.

The limited resource aspect of the exercise also had an impact on the way the survey was conducted. The panel did not take the form of one single group of individuals followed over the three survey shots. Due to time, money and staffing problems the panel is split into two groups : group A numbering 133 individuals and group B with 70. These groups were approached at different times on the different shots so there is a degree of overlap. For Group A the typical month in terms of spread on the first contact is September 1987; on the second shot the mean date is December 1988; the third shot took place around July 1989. For Group B the picture is a little more compressed.

Starting point clusters around September 1988; second shot around August 1989; final contact around December/January 1989/90. The elapse time between shots for the two groups is, accordingly, different. For Group A the mean elapse time for shot 1-2 was 15 months; for shot 2-3 it is 7 months. For Group B the mean elapse time for shot 1-2 was 9 months; for 2-3 the figure was 4.5 months.

The structure of the sample is somewhat idiosyncratic, but we felt it did not debilitate. Much of the analysis does not relate individual responses to what was 'really' going on in the economic environment at a particular time. More effort is expended on exploring the structure of perceptions and their connection with political preferences. Given the resource constraints we felt that the structure did not negate the exercise. Straightforward and unqualified crosstabulation exercises using all 203 respondents are out of the question in such a context. However, with judicious safeguards we were able to maintain the full sample for some of the calculations.

The problem is especially acute if the analysis of the respective group subsections suggest opposing relationships between variables. In this context a cumulative arithmetic exercise might well lead us to dispute the validity of a hypothesised relationship (the respective tendencies cancelling each other out). This danger will always be with us given the structure of the sample. However, we can maintain the full sample for the purposes of analysis if we resolve to test at each stage if the subsections are telling us different things. This form of diagnostic exercise will be carried out throughout, and

any anomalies reported.

Was the sample obtained in this fashion unrepresentative of the constituencies from which they hailed? We divided the sample into their associated constituency groupings and compared those groups with the known features. Of these, 64 came from Lewisham East (LE); 137 from Lewisham West (LW). Two remaining respondents came from just south of Lewisham West in Forest Hill. Judging from the social characteristics of the two groups we do not have a fully representative constituency sample. It would, indeed, have been surprising if a sample of this size, drawn from the borough catchment area, had been so. However, we did come surprisingly close.

The LE group contained 30% home owners, a figure lower, but comparable with that for the constituency as a whole (38% fall into this category - Mathias, 1987). Those of the LE sample in professional or managerial categories formed a group constituting 15.7%. Again this was comparable with the constituency as a whole - 13.8% according to Crewe and Fox (Crewe and Fox, 1984, p.20). Pensioners constituted 20.3% of the LE sample - remarkably similar to the figure quoted by Crewe and Fox (20.8%, *ibid.*, p.214). The most obviously under-represented group were the manual workers, especially skilled-manual - 30% in our Lewisham East sample versus 46% in the constituency (*ibid.*)<sup>1</sup>. The biggest section was the 'residual' category which constituted 43.8%, comprising pensioners, student, those on state benefits and women who were looking after the family home.

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<sup>1</sup>. Probably accounted for by the slight over-representation of lower non-manual workers at 10.9%.

The larger Lewisham West (LW) group were comparably representative. Owner-occupiers constituted 56%, as against 43.5% in the constituency at large. Professional and managerial elements comprised 18.3% of the sample - 15.9% in the constituency (Crewe and Fox, *ibid*, p.215). Pensioners formed 13% of the LW group, against 19% in the constituency itself (*ibid.*). Again those in manual occupations were under-represented at 30% against the constituency's 45%; again the shortfall was in skilled manual. The residual category was again the most numerous at 35%.

Looking at the sample, then, it is clear that it is not hugely over- or under-represented in any particular category. There is a fairly even spread in the age profile :

**Table 6.1 Sample Age Distribution**

15-25	18.2%
26-35	18.2%
36-45	22.7%
46-45	11.8%
56-65	18.7%
65+	10.3%

To a certain extent we were lucky here. The break-down is fairly even across the categories. Here our targeting method paid dividends and gave us the ability to focus, in particular, on pensioners. On gender there is a balance of sorts (though obviously not matching the distribution in the actual community). Here again we were quite lucky (having no way at our disposal of organising a balance in those who chose to cooperate) :

**Table 6.2 Sample Gender Distribution**

Female	43.3%
Male	56.7%

Finally on housing tenure characteristics there is something of an even spread :

**Table 6.3    Sample Housing Tenure Distribution**

owner-occupiers	47.3%
council tenants	32.0%
with parents	7.9%
housing assoc.	4.4%
private rented	3.4%
others	4.9%

On average, across the two constituencies, the owner-occupiers tend to be fractionally over-represented and council tenants slightly under-represented, but the percentages were small (under 10% in this instance).

There are a few things to be noted here. The first is that the owner-occupiers are not a homogenous group of 'typical' two up, two down, semi-detached owners. Twenty four out of the ninety seven home-owners (24.7% of the home-owners) had bought their house from the council. The second point we want to draw attention to is the 'with parents' category. It was not on the original questionnaire, but has been 'constructed' from the data as it emerged. Respondents were categorised as 'with parents' if they answered 'no' to the 'owner-occupier', and 'the pay rent to who' questions (but only if they were in the 15-25 age group).

Marital status is an area where again we have a degree of balance in the sample (37% married or living as such, 63% without live in partners). However, without national figures readily to hand it is difficult to determine whether this is wildly un-representative or not.

Finally if we look at the sample in its entirety, the social class balance is fairly even :

**Table 6.4    Sample Class Distribution**

(A)	6.4 %
(B)	10.8 %
(Ci)	14.8 %
(Cii)	8.9 %
(D)	20.7 %
(E)	38.7 %

There is still an under-representation of manual occupations, but we do not feel that this unduly threatens the balance of the sample.

The skewed social class statistics are not as disturbing as those for the form of employment. The ratio of employees to self-employed seem reasonable (89.7 % to 5.4 % with 4.9 % uncodable). However, in terms of supervisory capacity there is a marked skew :

**Table 6.5 Supervisory Status of Sample**

non-supervisory	53.2 %
super. 1-20	36.0 %
super. 21-40	1.5 %
super. 41-50	1.0 %
super. 50 +	3.0 %
uncoded	5.4 %

Here the 36.0 % supervisory group swells to fairly large proportions the group that Heath et al. are primarily interested in. The redeeming feature here is that the '1-20' grouping masks the fact that most were supervising only a handful.

The profile in terms of location of employment is much as we might expect :

**Table 6.6 Employment Sector Distribution**

private company	52.7 %
national. industry	6.4 %
local/central govt.	31.0 %
charity	1.0 %
other	3.9 %
uncoded	4.9 %

The numbers of those in government employment of one sort or another seems high. However, this may reflect the constituencies lack of manufacturing employment. Crewe and Fox (*ibid.*) detail in their reference text the top or bottom constituencies on a number of criteria (eg. highest proportion of students, the various socio-economic groupings, the lowest unemployed etc.).

Only on the percentage in the service sector (and in ethnic groups) did either constituency figure in the top fifty.

The last feature in this section is trade union membership either at present or in the past. If we collapse the then-and-now distinction the figures look like this :

<u>Table 6.7 Union Membership</u>	
membership now or in past	59.1%
never in a union	40.9%

The 40.9 % may be a little too low even for Lewisham. However, the sample is not badly skewed; we still have a fair balance.

On voting and partisanship the overview is quite encouraging. We have an overall spread which is quite even in terms of partisanship :

<u>Table 6.8 Partisan Attachment</u>	
no close part.	24.6 %
Conservative	29.1 %
Labour	36.0 %
Centre Parties	8.8 %

More importantly, the distribution across the sample on voting intentions for the main parties is close to the 1987 result. Voting intention responses from the first round of interviews were as follows :

<u>Table 6.9 Reported Vote in 1987</u>	
Conservative	37.4 %
Labour	34.0 %
Centre (accumulated)	11.9 %
Others/wont'say/D/K	17.0 %

They are comparable with and in proportion to (though obviously not the same as) the actual result in the June 1987 election :

<u>Table 6.10 Constituency Vote : Lewisham East and West</u>			
	<u>LEWISH. EAST</u>		<u>LEWISH. WEST</u>
CON	45%	CON	46%
LAB	34%	LAB	37%
CENTRE	20%	CENTRE	15%

The numbers who did not know or would not say probably accounts

for the disparity, but the relative order and magnitude are comparable.

## 6.2

The primary focus of this chapter is the structure of economic perceptions. What, in this respect, is the relationship between levels of perception? The last chapter highlighted the notion that individuals may develop different perceptions at different levels. We wished to determine whether this extended to the level of local perceptions. Were our respondent's views of the national situation cued from perceptions of their personal or local context? Beyond this we wanted to look at consistency of attitudes over time. Were individuals consistent in their appreciation of the local, national or, indeed, their personal position?

If the individuals did have varying views at the different levels, we also wanted to explore their understanding of their circumstances. To this effect we asked individuals whether they considered the Government responsible or not. Here we hoped to tie our study into research conducted in the U.S.A. on the mediating impact of causal attribution (Peffley, 1984; Peffley and Williams, 1985; and Tyler, 1982).

While we wished to focus on those individuals who showed consistency across levels of perception, we wanted to extend this analysis to look at the relationship between partisanship and the different levels of perception. Particular attention is paid here to the under-explored local level. The local economic scene is, by definition, closer to home than some abstract notion of the 'national economy'. With known individuals subject to the vicissitudes of the local economic climate, were individuals more or less likely to mis-perceive their circumstances along partisan

lines? Were negative as well as positive feelings a part of this equation.

### 6.3

The first step is to determine the nature of aggregate alterations within the sample : how the sample differed over the three survey shots in its appreciation of personal, local and national circumstances. There are two points of importance that need to be flagged before we begin. The first relates to the splitting of the sample into the two groups noted in the section above. As we are dealing with alterations in perceptions as a function of notionally exogenous influences it is important that we disentangle the two groups. These, as we have noted, were interviewed at different times and so were subject to differing 'exogenous' influences. Conflating the groups would impede interpretation or render it meaningless.

The second point that requires attention is the temporal focus of the questions. As we noted in the last chapter a fully comprehensive appreciation requires that we look not only at backward regarding perceptions, but at forward regarding and contemporaneous attitudes. If we are looking at perceptions of personal and national circumstances this gives us an attitudinal matrix with six elements. We felt that to maintain all three time frames and expand the analysis to both the intermediate, local level, and attribution at all levels would bring undue complication. It would also have greatly extended an already large questionnaire. As we wanted to maintain cooperation and reduce attrition in an already small sample, we decided to narrow our focus to retrospective perceptions and give our attention to three levels : personal, local and national.

Focusing on Group I we can see from the table that the

collectivity, at the first interview, viewed the local situation in the bleakest light :

**Table 6.11 Aggregate Economic Perceptions : Group I**

	SOCIOTROPIC	LOCAL	PERSONAL
Better	34.6	10.5	42.9
Same	24.8	39.8	33.8
Worse	20.3	36.8	22.6
Unsure	20.3	12.8	0.8

The distribution of personal perceptions shows a rosier, more balanced distribution. National perceptions fall somewhere in between. As we might expect the numbers who were "Unsure" climb as we move from the personal to the national. The personal and local are proximate, the national, by definition, somewhat more remote and abstract. The second interview shows a drift towards deterioration at national level; likewise at the local level. The drift is less marked, though also evident at personal level which still maintains a semblance of balance. Finally the last shot shows continued deterioration with personal perceptions in aggregate appearing to catch up.

The second group (Group II) were interviewed in comparable stages but at later dates. This shows up in the general run of perceptions at the 'aggregate' level :

**Table 6.12 Aggregate Economic Perceptions : Group II**

	SOCIOTROPIC	LOCAL	PERSONAL
Better	34.3	14.3	34.3
Same	28.6	31.4	32.9
Worse	27.1	34.3	27.1
Unsure	10.0	20.0	4.3

At the first shot personal and national distributions are comparable; local perceptions are skewed towards deterioration. By the second shot there is a distinct deterioration at national and local levels. Likewise, personal perceptions became skewed towards deterioration, but the tendency was less marked. The

third shot shows comparatively little change. While this may be a function of flattening exogenous influences, it may also spring from the relatively modest time difference between second and third shots.

The relatively modest shifts in aggregate level perceptions do, however, mask volatility at the individual level. We coded the respondents for alteration in perception (at each respective level) between the first and second, and second and third interviews. The responses available to the sample when questioned at each interview had two items inferring modification, and two stability. After collapsing the categories, the responses coded were :

- (i) Things got better
- (ii) Things remain the same
- (iii) Things have got worse
- (iv) Unsure

(i) and (iii) unambiguously suggest change in circumstances or perception, (ii) and (iv) suggest lack of awareness or perceptual stability.

We wished to ascertain how many individuals had registered perception of change or stability across all three survey shots. Thus individuals answering 'Got Better' or 'Got Worse' at one interview, but 'The Same' or 'Unsure' at the other two were coded or scored "one" (for one instance of appreciation of change). Those who had registered 'Better' or 'Worse' at all three interviews were coded or scored "three". Individuals stating 'Unsure' or 'Same' at all three interviews were coded zero. Therefore a high score denotes perception of change over all three shots, while low or zero suggests minimal perception of change or lack of awareness of change. The scores for the three

respective levels of perception are as follows :

**Table 6.13    Attitudinal Movement on Economic Perceptions**

<u>SCORE</u>	<u>NATIONAL PERCEPTIONS</u>	<u>LOCAL PERCEPTIONS</u>	<u>PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS</u>
0	14 (8%)	54 (32%)	20 (11%)
1	31 (19%)	41 (24%)	45 (26%)
2	71 (43%)	49 (29%)	54 (32%)
3	47 (28%)	23 (13%)	48 (28%)

It is clear that there is more awareness of change or more volatility in perception at the global level and least at the local. The majority of individuals were at least aware of and prepared to register perception of change at the national and personal levels (those showing change at two or three interviews). Volatility was less marked with respect to local observations.

The obvious question which arises here is, were we looking at some form of response set (De Vaus, 1991, pp.89)? Were individuals who stated 'Got Better' or 'Got Worse' two or three times over the three survey shots registering a knee jerk response rather than an awareness or appreciation of real change. We looked at the individuals with two or three change responses at personal, local and global levels to determine whether they gave the same answer across two or three replies.

If we look at sociotropic responses first, and at those who registered change at all three interviews, the results suggest the response set notion is not sustained. Of the forty seven registering change, twenty two show "variability" (ie. 'Got Better' and 'Got Worse' in tandem). However, of the seventy one who register two perceptions of change only twenty two show such variability - room here, perhaps, for a response set interpretation.

A similar pattern emerges if we concentrate on personal level responses. Of the forty eight who give three indications of perceived change, twenty show variability. Yet of the fifty four who gave two responses suggesting change, only ten gave variegated answers. Local level perceptions, on the other hand, give the most room for the response set interpretation. Twenty three registered change over the three interviews, of whom only five showed variability. Of the forty nine expressing perception of change at two shots, fifteen showed variability.

If the patterns of response are interpretatively complex, awareness of change at personal level seems fairly easy to explain. Individuals are acutely aware of changes in their own financial circumstances, especially individuals of modest means. Small changes for them may have a profound impact. The difference between the local and personal or national level distributions is further testimony to the independence of stratified perceptions. Perhaps local circumstances did not change as markedly as personal circumstances or perceptions of global fluctuations. Alternatively the parochial economic scene may not have figured prominently in the press or on the main television channel servicing the area (South London Press, The Evening Standard or Thames Television respectively). Without these as alternative sources the sample could scarcely have registered anything save ignorance or stability. Whatever the explanation it seems likely that local perceptions have, in a sense, a life of their own. However, we cannot be certain of this until the relationship is formally analyzed - this we leave to the next section.

With national economic perceptions volatility has a potential explanation. The media produce something in the nature of a continuous stream of information on the economy, often taking the form of description of fluctuations in the country's fortunes. This might help explain gross volatility. However, this still leaves the question of whether individuals rely on national news for national perceptions. They may extrapolate from their own experience and this may explain the comparable volatility in personal perceptions. It is to this question of extrapolation that we now turn.

6.4

If we look at the individual level processes at work here is there anything of significance that can be said with respect to the extrapolation issue? What of the relationship between the three levels of individual response? Can we say anything about their relationship? We looked at the straightforward crosstabulation of responses at the three levels. The assumption here is that if there is extrapolation, responses should be the same or at least similar for the respective levels. This did not turn out to be the case :

Table 6.14 Similarity Across Perceptual Strata  
Percentage With Same Response for Both Questions<sup>2</sup>

	<u>shot1</u>	<u>shot2</u>	<u>shot3</u>
SOCIOTROPIC - LOCAL	32.9	52.5	39.9
PERSONAL - LOCAL	28.3	42.5	45.9
PERSONAL - SOCIOTROPIC	35.7	44.0	41.1

As with the results from the Gallup national survey it is clear that there is a relationship between the various levels, but it is not a close one. The results confirm that it is difficult to maintain that sociotropic perceptions are in some simple sense extrapolated from personal experience. In the first shot only 35.7% share the same personal and sociotropic perceptions.

We would obviously have liked to have confirmed that the group so identified mirrored the national distribution. To have done this would have required access to the disaggregated Gallup material for the same period. Since there is an enormous period of time between the collection of Gallup Political Index material

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<sup>2</sup>. Rather surprisingly, splitting the sample into Group A and Group B does not markedly alter the results obtained.

and its deposit in the ESRC Data Archive our only recourse was to ask Gallup directly if they would do the relevant calculations and pass the results on to us. This they kindly did. We look at the cross tabulation of general retrospective on personal retrospective perception. The distribution of answers from their sample of 1886 respondents (excluding "Don't Know"s) for the month of September 1987 was as follows<sup>3</sup> :

**Table 6.15**

Gallup Crosstabulation of Personal and Global Attitudes

		<u>Personal Circumstances</u>				
		1.bett	lit.bett	same	lit.wor.	1.wor
General Economic Perception	lot bett.	25	38	50	11	0
	lit.bett.	57	173	260	73	19
	same	30	106	302	107	51
	lit.wor.	19	34	134	126	53
	lot wor.	9	8	67	57	77

We felt that only the highlighted cells running top left to bottom right could be considered to be consistent or capable of extrapolation. It was, we submit, less likely that the rest were extrapolating from personal experience to general conclusions. The percentage sharing the same personal and global perception is, in this case, 48%. This is higher than our sample, but of the same order of magnitude. We suspect that the difference is a function of the split sample design we employed, or of the geographical focus; but small numbers made this difficult to test with any certainty.

If extrapolation were the root of sociotropic appreciations we might have expected the figure we have surveyed to have been different. Of further significance is the relationship between local and national perceptions. Here only 32.9% of individuals

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<sup>3</sup>. The numbers refer to cell frequencies.

share local and national perceptions. The hitherto unexplored question of extrapolation from local circumstances is answered. Individuals actually seem less inclined to extrapolate from the local than they do from the personal<sup>4</sup>. The relationship between local and national perceptions at the individual level is still weak.

If we go on to look at the coincidence of perceptions at the second and third shots a more complicated picture begins to emerge. At the second shot the percentage showing coincidence between sociotropic and local perceptions rises to 52.5%. The coincidence between pocketbook and national attitudes rises to 44.0%. If we go on to look at comparable results for the third shot local-national coincidence drops again to 39.9%; personal-national coincidence to 41.1%. The strengthening of the coincidence at second and third shot lends credence to the extrapolation hypothesis. Yet it may be a function of the generalised drift to pessimism we might expect as a country enters recession, in tandem with experience of depressed inner city life. Alternatively, the changing levels of coincidence are perhaps further testimony to the relative independence of the varying levels of perception.

An interpretative question here concerns the timing of the relationship between perceptions. It is entirely possible that perceptions of local or personal circumstances do not impact upon national perceptions at the time of interview. Thus they may not

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<sup>4</sup>. Again it has to be stated that coinciding perceptions do not necessarily mean extrapolation. We can only suggest that diverging responses rule out or render less likely the process of extrapolation.

show up in the crosstabulation of responses at 't1'. We may have to look at the relationship between local or personal perceptions at t1, and sociotropic attitudes at t2. The results of this form of analysis are reported below :

**Table 6.16          Temporal Contingency in Similarity Across Perceptual Strata**

**Percentage With Same Response for Both Questions<sup>5</sup>**

LOCAL t1 - SOCIOTROPIC t2	37.3%
PERSONAL t1 - SOCIOTROPIC t2	30.7%
LOCAL t2 - SOCIOTROPIC t3	37.5%
PERSONAL t2 - SOCIOTROPIC t3	33.3%

It is clear from the results that the extrapolatory hypothesis is not borne out even if this method is employed. The percentage of those showing coincidence of responses, local or personal (t1) to sociotropic (t2) are 37.3% and 30.7% respectively. If we extend this to look at the results for t2 local or personal, they are comparably low at 37.5% and 33.3%. If we were looking at a relationship that bore the hallmark of straightforward extrapolation we would expect the percentages to be higher than they are for our particular sample.

By means of comparison with our earlier cross-sectional study we sought to determine whether those who were consistent were in any way distinct. First we looked at the three socioeconomic variables that we had been interested in previously - age, gender and class. There were few surprises here with respect to age and gender. As with the broader cross-section, neither of these categories were related to consistency at any of the three interviews. We collapsed the sample into over- and

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<sup>5</sup>. Again splitting the sample does not suggest a revision of results is necessary.

under-thirty fives. At no point did this age differential distinguish consistents from inconsistent. This pattern was repeated with the gender variable. Results are broadly similar to those derived from the cross section we studied.

Finally due to small numbers we had to collapse the class category into non-manual and manual groups. At none of the survey shots did this variable in any way distinguish consistents from the rest. This is a somewhat different story from the earlier cross sectional analysis. In that instance a gradation was evident, with consistency more likely the lower down the socio-economic ladder. The results here might suggest that the relationship between class and constituency is unstable over time. It is more likely, however, that the sample's characteristics account for the disparity. The one area where the sample seemed unduly skewed was in the class category (with the working class, and particularly the skilled working class being under-represented). As a consequence, we fear we can infer little from a disparity between the respective cross sectional and panel approaches.

Turning to partisanship the results from our panel were reassuringly similar to those from our cross section. We defined as partisans those who expressed a very strong or fairly strong attachment to their party. Those "not very strongly attached" or merely "close to a party" (along with true independents, neither "partisans" nor "close") were classified as non-partisan. As with the cross sectional results there seemed little, or indeed no difference between partisans and non-partisans on the level of consistency.

The results look reassuringly like those from our earlier Gallup survey exercise. In this sense then we might hazard, tentatively, that consistency is not influenced by partisanship, and that we have the makings of a stable generalisation. This still does not help us in assessing the political impact of the respective levels of perception nor of their relative importance. To this we now turn.

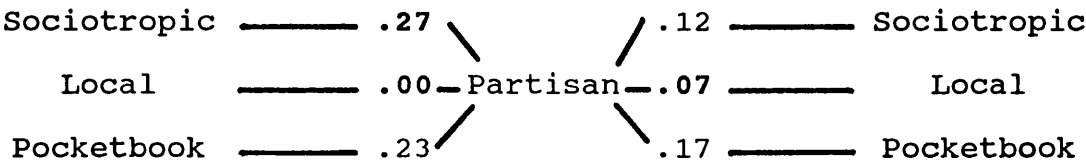
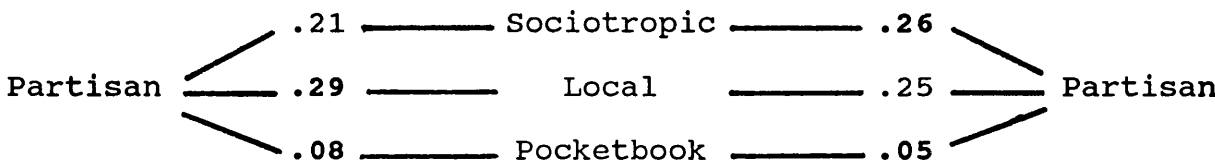
## 6.5

The path chosen was to replicate something of the earlier exercise with respect to the analysis of perception and partisanship. With a view to cell frequencies and the prospect of empty cells we decided that it was both expedient and defensible to collapse our analytical categories. On the side of economic perceptions we chose to dichotomise our measures along the lines of positive and static versus the negative. This would mean that the replies on economic perception would be collapsed into 'better/the same' and 'worse'. This relieves some of the more acute problems associated with small numbers, but is, we feel, defensible in the sense that at least one author has suggested that individuals respond to negative alterations in the economy , but not always to positive or static circumstances (Mosley, 1978).

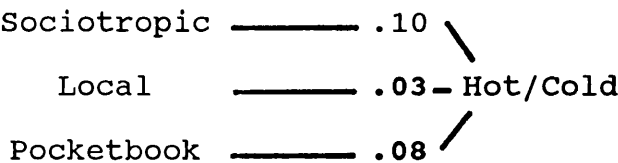
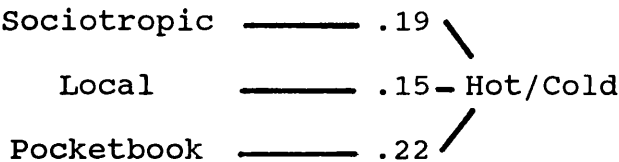
With this in mind we proceeded to explore the issues of partisanship and economic perception with a view to teasing out more thoroughly the causal elements in the equation. The emphasis is on the affective; the perspective longitudinal. We sought to look initially at the cross sectional relationship between economic perceptions and partisanship. But given the problem of reciprocal causation it was crucial to go beyond this. We therefore sought to look at the impact of prior economic perceptions on contemporary partisanship; prior partisanship on following economic perceptions. We also looked at alterations in affect by enquiring whether individuals had grown warmer or colder towards the Government since the last time contacted. The results of the exercise are reported below.

Table 6.17

<u>shot 1</u>	<u>shot 2</u>	<u>shot 3</u>
Sociot - Partisan 0.29	Sociot - Partisan 0.21	Sociot - Partisan 0.23
Local - Partisan 0.14	Local - Partisan 0.24	Local - Partisan 0.05
Pocket - Partisan 0.25	Pocket - Partisan 0.08	Pocket - Partisan 0.20



Partis. - Hot/Cold 0.21	Partis. - Hot/Cold 0.06
Socio - Hot/Cold 0.37	Socio - Hot/Cold 0.24
Local - Hot/Cold 0.28	Local - Hot/Cold 0.07
Pocket - Hot/Cold 0.11	Pocket - Hot/Cold 0.07



The results suggest a complicated picture, and one in which relationships are fairly weak (the reported statistic is "Phi"). The attempts to wrestle with the issue of reciprocal causation are not entirely successful. Four techniques are used : cross sectional (for partisanship to economy and economy to changing affect); preceding partisanship to following economy; preceding economy to following partisanship; and preceding economy to changing affect. In an attempt to simplify an otherwise overly complicated set of results we chose to focus on the strongest and weakest relationships evident from the data. Criteria for strength and weakness in this context are essentially and necessarily arbitrary, but we chose to look at relationships where the Phi statistic was greater than 0.25 and less than 0.10<sup>6</sup>. This left us with six relatively strong associations and ten weak ones :

**Table 6.18 Strongest and Weakest Provisional Relationships**

<u>STRONGER</u>		
Sociotropic	-	Hot/Cold
(t2)	0.37	(t2)
Partisan	-	Local
(t1)	0.29	(t2)
Sociotrop.	-	Partisanship
(t1)	0.29	(t1)
Local	-	Hot/Cold
(t2)	0.28	(t2)
Sociotrop.	-	Partisanship
(t1)	0.27	(t2)
Sociotrop.	-	Partisanship
(t2)	0.26	(t3)

(continued over page)

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<sup>6</sup> Bryman and Cramer note, in their analysis of contingency tables, that an illustrative example had a Cramers' V of 0.24. In this instance they submit it suggests a "...weak relationship" (Bryman and Cramer, 1990, p.176). We thought it not unreasonable to use this as a bench mark.

	<u>WEAKER</u>	
Local	-	Partisanship
(t1)	0.00	(t2)
Local	-	Hot/Cold
(t2)	0.03	(t3)
Pocket.	-	Partisanship
(t2)	0.05	(t3)
Local	-	Partisanship
(t3)	0.05	(t3)
Partisan.	-	Local
(t2)	0.07	(t3)
Local	-	Hot/Cold
(t3)	0.07	(t3)
Pocket	-	Hot/Cold
(t3)	0.07	(t3)
Pocket	-	Partisanship
(t2)	0.08	(t2)
Partisan.	-	Pocketbook
(t1)	0.08	(t2)
Pocketbook	-	Hot/Cold
(t2)	0.08	(t2)

There are a few fairly obvious points that need to be made with respect to the results. The first is that no single perceptual level is dominant throughout. A provisional conclusion might be that different economic factors are prominent at differing times. It does appear at first, however, that sociotropic perceptions figure fairly prominently in the stronger relationships table, local perceptions only once and pocketbook elements not at all.

Obvious qualifications need to be entered straight away. The first concerns the connection between economic perceptions and changes in affect. This is a cross sectional approach tying change in affect to change in economic perception over the same period. We cannot simply assume that the economy influences change; change in affect occasioned by other factors could impact on economic perception. To explore this issue in regard to sociotropic-to-hot/cold, and local-to-hot/cold, we controlled for partisanship. The question here is, does partisanship influence

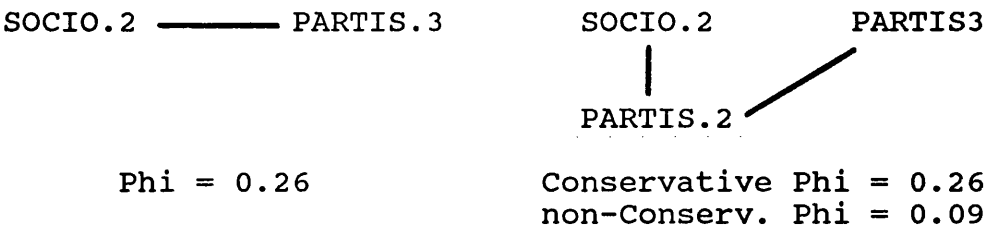
both economic perception and the individual's feelings of warmth or coolness towards the Government? For the relationship of sociotropic (t2) to hot/cold (t2), controlling for partisanship did not have a great deal of impact.  $\Phi=0.37$  for the original relationship dropped to  $\Phi=0.23$  for Conservatives;  $\Phi=0.36$  for all non-Conservatives. In the case of local to hot/cold  $\Phi=0.28$  drops to  $\Phi=0.0$  for Conservatives, but stays at  $\Phi=0.29$  for non-Conservatives. The relationship is sustained for the non-Conservative majority (though still fairly weakly, it must be said). Numbers here are obviously small, given sample size, but the signs are that the relationship between economy and change in affect is not simply a function of rolling partisan attachment.

If we turn to the relationship between sociotropic perceptions and following partisanship, a different problem emerges. The issue is relevant to the relationships : sociotropic (t1) to partisanship (t2); and sociotropic (t2) to partisanship (t3). The question is, does preceding partisanship - at (t1) and (t2), respectively - influence the sociotropic perception and the following partisanship? Is the relationship we have highlighted only testimony to the maintenance of a pre-existing partisan attachment? This would imply a very different interpretation of the relationship. We controlled for preceding partisan affiliation :

<u>Table 6.19      Partisan Control on Sociotropic - Partisan Relationship</u>			
SOCIO.1	————	PARTIS.2	SOCIO.1      PARTIS2
			/
			PARTIS.1
			Conservative $\Phi = 0.21$
			non-Conserv. $\Phi = 0.15$
	$\Phi = 0.27$		

The calculations for the second relationship are as follows :

**Table 6.19 (cont)**



The results suggest that while the relationship is less close when we control, it does not disappear altogether (at least for the Conservative segment). In this sense the relationship is sustained. Although partisanship influences sociotropic perceptions, they in their turn impact on partisanship.

Little can be said about the cross sectional relationship on which we focused on : sociotropic (t1) to partisan (t1). The reciprocal causation issue renders interpretation difficult. But given that the calculations above suggest partisanship (t1) influences sociotropic perceptions at (t1) as well as partisanship (t2), the result is hardly surprising<sup>7</sup>.

If we go on to look at the relationships that appear singularly weak in our estimation, the splitting of the sample into its two sections becomes crucially important. The arithmetic of the disaggregated cross tabulations may, in this respect, highlight strong relationships where none obtained in the aggregated group. The relationships which survive this test include the following :

(see over page)

<sup>7</sup>. It might be noted though that all the primary relationship noted above withstand the diagnostic test of splitting of the sample into its two component segments to determine whether the root of the relationship remains.

**Table 6.20 Weak Relationships Surviving Partisan Control**

Local	t3	-	Partisanship	t3	Phi = 0.05
Partisan.	t2	-	Local	t3	Phi = 0.07
Local	t3	-	Hot/Cold	t3	Phi = 0.07
Pocketbook	t3	-	Hot/Cold	t3	Phi = 0.07
Partisan.	t1	-	Pocketbook	t2	Phi = 0.08

In none of the remaining relationships does the splitting of the sample take the respective segments into the Phi = 0.26+ category, and in only one case does it take it beyond Phi = 0.20 (and in the case of Pocketbook (t2) to Hot/Cold (t3), the very small numbers mean we can have little confidence in the result). The local and pocketbook elements still figure largely with respect to weak linkage.

Returning to the elements where relatively strong relationships pertain, it is important to test whether the link between elements is due to other economic perceptions. Is the connection between, say, sociotropic t2 to hot/cold t2, a function of the another underlying association (pocketbook t2 to hot/cold t2)? The calculations as ever suffer from low small cell frequencies. However, we chose to control for pocketbook perceptions in each of the relationships that featured sociotropic and dependent variables. The results were mixed and suggest something of a moderated relationship (Bryman and Cramer, 1990, p.225) :

**Table 6.21 Sociotropic Perception Against Affect, Controlling for Pocketbook Perceptions**

Sociotropic - Hot/Cold					
t2	0.37	t2			
<u>Pocketbook t2 (Better/Same)</u>			<u>Pocketbook t2 (Worse)</u>		
Sociotropic - Hot/Cold			Sociotropic - Hot/Cold		
t2	0.42	t2	t2	0.07	t2

(see over page)

**Table 6.22**                    **Sociotropic Perception (t1) Against Partisanship (t2), Controlling for Pocketbook Perceptions (t1)**

Sociotropic - Partisanship					
	t1	0.27		t2	
<u>Pocketbook t1 (Better/Same)</u>			<u>Pocketbook t1 (Worse)</u>		
Sociotropic - Partisanship			Sociotropic - Partisanship		
	t1	0.24		t1	0.22    t2

**Table 6.23**                    **Sociotropic Perception (t2) Against Partisanship (t3), Controlling for Pocketbook Perceptions (t2)**

Sociotropic - Partisanship					
	t2	0.26		t3	
<u>Pocketbook t2 (Better/Same)</u>			<u>Pocketbook t2 (Worse)</u>		
Sociotropic - Partisanship			Sociotropic - Partisanship		
	t1	0.32		t1	0.08    t2

**Table 6.24**                    **Sociotropic Perceptions (t1) Against Partisanship (t1), Controlling for Pocketbook Perceptions (t1)**

Sociotropic - Partisanship					
	t1	0.28		t1	
<u>Pocketbook t1 (Better/Same)</u>			<u>Pocketbook t1 (Worse)</u>		
Sociotropic - Partisanship			Sociotropic - Partisanship		
	t1	0.26		t1	0.16    t1

Bearing in mind that the relationship 'sociotropic - hot/cold' is in our strong category at the same time as 'local - hot/cold', we felt it was necessary that we control for local perception in the case of 'sociotropic - hot/cold' :

**Table 6.25**                    **Sociotropic Attitudes Against Affect, Controlling for Local Perceptions**

Sociotropic - Hot/Cold					
	t2	0.37		t2	
<u>Local t2 (Better/Same)</u>			<u>Local t2 (Worse)</u>		
Sociotropic - Hot/Cold			Sociotropic - Hot/Cold		
	t2	0.28		t2	0.42    t2

Finally, it seemed appropriate to look more closely at the relationship between local perceptions and the change of affect variable ('hot/cold'). It is possible that relationship is a

function of other perceptions, so we controlled for both pocketbook and sociotropic attitudes :

**Table 6.26**      **Local Views Against Affect, Controlling for Sociotropic Beliefs**

Local    -    Hot/Cold					
t2	0.28	t2			
<u>Sociotropic t2 (Better/Same)</u>			<u>Sociotropic t2 (Worse)</u>		
Local    -    Hot/Cold			Local    -    Hot/Cold		
t2	0.03	t2	t2	0.24	t2

**Table 6.27**      **Local Perceptions Against Affect, Controlling for Pocket-book Perceptions**

Local    -    Hot/Cold					
t2	0.28	t2			
<u>Pocketbook t2 (Better/Same)</u>			<u>Pocketbook t2 (Worse)</u>		
Local    -    Hot/Cold			Local    -    Hot/Cold		
t2	0.30	t2	t2	0.17	t2

The results from the control experiments presented above are variegated. While they are more complicated than they might seem initially (a point which should not surprise us), there is little to suggest that the sociotropic impact is, in some sense, simply a reflection of pocketbook or local influences. If this were the case "Phi" would drop to zero (or near zero) in both the control condions. What we have is a moderated relationship between sociortopic perceptions and affect (it pertains only where personal perceptions are buoyant). The notion of a moderated impact is somewhat difficult to theorise, and more difficult to explore given small numbers. But it does not negate the notion of a relatively strong sociotropic element in the preferential calculus. With less ambiguity the results suggest that local perceptions, in all but one case, have no distinctive impact on political perceptions.

6.6

If circumstantial evidence points towards the relative importance of the sociotropic elements (over the personal or local) we are still left with the problem of explaining why they are influential at some times and not at others. One possible answer is the intervening variable of attribution of responsibility. The local, national or personal situation may deteriorate or improve, but research from the U.S.A. suggests there is a greater likelihood of this impacting on Government popularity when the Government is, in some sense, held responsible (or if it could have avoided unpleasantness by alternative action).

The wording of our questionnaire allows us to explore this aspect of impact - though with small numbers this can only be done to a limited degree. If we focus on the first shot in particular (where numbers are highest), we find that the pattern of attribution is different at the varying levels. The question was phrased in terms of the effect of Government policy being good, bad, mixed, having little effect, or the individual being unsure. When we collapsed the mixed and no effect categories for the first interview, the results are as follows :

**Table 6.28 Area Specific Attribution of Responsibility**

	Sociotropic Perceptions	Local Perceptions	Personal Perceptions
Good effect	23.6	8.5	21.7
no/mixed effect	47.8	52.2	48.8
Bad effect	18.7	29.9	21.2
Unsure	9.9	9.5	8.4

It is obvious that a very small percentage felt that the Government had a good effect on the local scene. A larger percentage felt the Government had a good effect on personal or

national circumstances. The distributions for personal and sociotropic elements look similar, but we wanted initially to determine whether the attributional responses merely conveyed the individual's partisan attachments. For the first interview, where numbers were greatest, we cross tabulated partisanship with attribution at the three levels. The results are shown below<sup>8</sup>:

**Table 6.29**            Partisan Attachment Against Economic Attribution Strata

<u>Sociotropic</u>	Good Effect	no/mixed Effect	Bad Effect
Conservative	34	25	2
Independent	4	12	4
non-Conservat.	10	58	31

Cramer's V = 0.35

<u>Local</u>	Good Effect	no/mixed Effect	Bad Effect
Conservative	12	41	7
Independent	1	12	5
non-Conservat.	4	52	47

Cramer's V = 0.27

<u>Personal</u>	Good Effect	no/mixed Effect	Bad Effect
Conservative	25	34	4
Independent	4	9	6
non-Conservat.	15	53	33

Cramer's V = 0.25

The strongest association relates sociotropic attribution to partisanship. Interpretatively this could mean that partisans are more or less likely to think the government responsible for the national situation. Conversely it could mean that thinking the Government does harm or good reinforces or detracts from partisanship. The issue of reciprocal causation is still

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<sup>8</sup>. The numbers represent cell frequencies.

relevant.

We decided at this juncture to look at the relationship between partisanship and the so called "feeling thermometer". This indicator is, like partisanship, affective in character. The two are strongly related though not co-extensive (collapsed cross tabulation yields  $\Phi = 0.54$ ). While it is true that the overwhelming bulk of Conservative partisans feel warmth towards the Government it is by no means the case that the bulk of non-Conservatives are coldly disposed. It taps a generalised warmth or coldness towards the Government or party and in a sense we might speculate that, in aggregate, these sentiments form the substance of partisanship. And it is this aspect which interested us. The American literature hints at the importance of attributional inference on vote and perhaps on partisanship. We sought to determine whether this relationship held true for our fraction of the British public.

We looked at the relationship between thermometer reading and attribution at the various levels of perception. As before we have had to resort to collapsing categories. Here we have pitted the benign and inoffensive against the bad. Accordingly good, mixed, neutral and uncertain responses are contrasted with perceptions of bad influence. The results are recorded below, as are the controls for partisanship which we felt were appropriate given its strong relationship with the thermometer<sup>9</sup>:

(see over page)

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<sup>9</sup>. The numbers represent cell frequencies. Difference in control cell frequencies due to uncoded or uncodable cases.

**Table 6.30**      Affect Against Economic Attribution (Sociotropic, Local and Personal - 'Good Effect', 'Mixed Effect', 'No Effect' Against 'Bad Effect'), Controlling for Partisanship

Sociotropic Attribution

			<u>Conservative</u>		
			cold	g/m/n	bad
				5	-
cold	g/m/n	bad	warm	61	2
			Phi = 0.04		
warm	101	9			
Phi = 0.29			<u>Non-Conservat.</u>	g/m/n	bad
			cold	56	28
			warm	4	7
			Phi = 0.20		

Local Attribution

			<u>Conservative</u>		
			cold	g/m/n	bad
				4	1
cold	g/m/n	bad	warm	57	6
			Phi = 0.09		
warm	91	19			
Phi = 0.31			<u>Non-Conservat.</u>	g/m/n	bad
			cold	45	39
			warm	34	13
			Phi = 0.18		

Personal Attribution

			<u>Conservative</u>		
			cold	g/m/n	bad
				5	-
cold	g/m/n	bad	warm	59	4
			Phi = 0.09		
warm	95	15			
Phi = 0.21			<u>Non-Conservat.</u>	g/m/n	bad
			cold	56	28
			warm	36	11
			Phi = 0.10		

The numbers here are small, but the signs seem relatively clear. When we control for partisanship the relationship between perception and temperature is markedly reduced, most

conspicuously in relation to the pocketbook aspect of attribution, though perhaps less so with regard to sociotropic attribution. The empty cells give problems. However, if we were to fill them with the body of one imaginary respondent the results do not look entirely dissimilar. Even if we set aside the notion of reciprocal causation, partisanship bleaches out the influence of attribution on thermometer readings.

We did, however, seek to find out if attribution was a mediating factor in other relationships. We decided to look at the relationship between the three levels of perception and their relationship with the thermometer readings. Since both perception and thermometer were related to partisanship we sought to control for this element to determine if the relationship endured for the partisan sub-groups. The results are reported below :

**Table 6.31      Affect Against Stratified Economic Perception  
(Sociotropic, Local and Personal - 'Better',  
'Same' Against 'Worse'), Controlling for  
Partisanship**

Sociotropic Perception

			<u>Conservative</u>		
			cold	bet/same 5	worse -
cold	bet/same 47	worse 34	warm	44	5
			Phi = 0.10		
warm	74	12			
Phi = 0.31			<u>Non-Conservat.</u>	bet/same	worse
			cold	41	34
			warm	30	7
			Phi = 0.26		

(continued over page)

Local Perceptions

			<u>Conservative</u>	bet/same	worse
			cold	3	-
cold	bet/same	worse	warm	38	20
	37	38	Phi = 0.16		
warm	61	34			
Phi = 0.15			<u>Non-Conservat.</u>	bet/same	worse
			cold	34	37
			warm	23	14
			Phi = 0.14		

Personal Perceptions

			<u>Conservative</u>	bet/same	worse
			cold	5	-
cold	bet/same	worse	warm	56	6
	62	27	Phi = 0.09		
warm	87	20			
Phi = 0.14			<u>Non-Conservat.</u>	bet/same	worse
			cold	57	26
			warm	31	14
			Phi = 0.00		

We are again presented with empty cells. If these are filled by the minimum number possible to render a meaningful - if notional - "Phi statistic", we see a relationship only for non-Conservatives, and then only for sociotropic perceptions. We took this group of non-Conservatives and controlled the relationship between perception and thermometer for attribution of responsibility at that level. The results are shown below (again numbers are cell frequencies) :

(see over page)

**Table 6.32**      **Affect Against Non-Conservative Sociotropic Perceptions, Controlling for Attribution**

**Non-Conservative Sociotropic Perceptions**

			<u>Good/no/mix/unsure</u>	bet/same	worse
			cold	31	16
cold	bet/same	worse	warm	25	6
	41	34	Phi = 0.16		
warm	30	7			
Phi = 0.31					
			<u>Bad Effect</u>	bet/same	worse
			cold	10	18
			warm	5	1
			Phi = 0.37		

We must, of course, be careful not to claim too much from the distribution of such small numbers; but that notwithstanding, for a clearly defined group it would appear that the attributional element has an impact in conjunction with sociotropic perception. One reading of the statistics would suggest that Conservatives are unmoved by the economy (in terms of warmth or coldness). However, for the non-Conservative elements the notion that Government is responsible is important. Those who, for one reason or another, feel the Government 'has done well', 'neither well nor badly', 'do not know' or think the Government 'has no effect', do not respond to sociotropic perceptions. Yet those who consider that the Government has badly affected the national economic circumstances are strongly animated against the Government in respect to the health or otherwise of the national economy.

The temptation to extrapolate to the broader context must be resisted given the smallness of the sample and its mode of construction (constituency oriented rather than nationally). But we might suggest that with respect to the Lewisham constituencies

(relatively marginal as they were and are) there was ideological mileage for the government in convincing the population that in no sense did their policies impact adversely on the national economy. Given that the controls on partisanship would suggest that we are not just dealing with Conservatives who thought the economy was doing well, the Government had a good influence on things and who therefore felt warmly towards it, we might start to enquire from whence the individuals got their ideas about the impact for good or ill of Government policies.

## 6.7

What have we learned from the chapter's analysis? Clearly the most consistent results relate to the independence of the respective levels of perception. They strongly suggest that sociotropic perceptions in particular are independent of both personal and local level observations. This is not only the case in cross sectional terms, but it stands the test of longitudinal analysis. The notion that the degree of association between levels of perception fluctuates over time is, we feel, further testimony to the notion that the levels themselves are discrete and independent. We appear here to have the makings of some form of law-like generalisation with regard to people's perception of the economic world.

The levels of perception are not only autonomous, but as we might expect, they show at least some degree of independent variability. The identification of variability is awkward. But we feel confident that it is not a crude reflection of individual response sets (in the sense that individuals signalled appreciation of change, but not the same signals over the three shots). The conclusion does have to be qualified here in one respect though. As we followed the sample across time the economic situation did deteriorate. In this context it was not surprising that there was some convergence evident over time.

If we examine the results with an eye to exploring the consistency in individual perceptions across levels, we again find that it is largely independent of partisanship. Strong partisans are not necessarily driven, as we might expect, towards consistency across the levels of economic perception. In this

respect our longitudinal, small scale survey gives encouraging support to our cross sectional analysis of consistency.

The core of this chapter has explored the notion of the causal aspects of economic perception. Notwithstanding the problem of reciprocal causation it can be argued that there was a consistent, if qualified, case for the notion of the effect of sociotropic perceptions on political preferences (the independent variables in question being partisanship and alteration in affect). These relationships withstood the diagnostic techniques we felt were appropriate as a function of sample construction. They also withstood our attempts to control for overlapping causal patterns and the impact of prior partisanship. In this sense we tried to establish whether a strong relationship between one level of perception and our dependent variable was simply a manifestation of the impact of a different level of perception. The conclusion was that sociotropic perceptions are influential (albeit in a complicated fashion). On the other hand local and personal perception seemed to have an intermittent or limited impact (subject as far as was possible to the limitations imposed by the small numbers we were dealing with).

We went on to explore this notion of discontinuous impact in terms of attributional inference. Attribution of responsibility did appear to relate quite strongly to partisan attachment (most obviously with respect to sociotropic attribution though with personal and local not far behind). Switching the dependent variable to the feeling thermometer - a measure related to but not co-extensive with partisanship - we explored the direct impact of attribution on warmth toward the

government. The results suggested little direct impact. However, we went on to explore its mediating impact between economic perception and thermometer reading. The results here suggest, with respect to sociotropic perception alone, that attribution can be a significant component in the development of political preference. The small numbers we were dealing with obviously qualify that result. But we feel that the results suggest that further attention to this facet of public perception would be appropriate.

One interesting facet of our results was the extent to which the Downsian elements in our analysis largely failed to register an impact. We seek in the next chapter to pursue this issue using the open-ended responses we gathered. We also wish to explore the impact of attributional inference and the nature of sociotropic perceptions.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ATTRIBUTION, AFFECT AND DEPENDENCY REVISITED

#### 7.1

Our survey allowed us an insight into personal level attributions through the open-ended comments of the respondents. The object is to look at the Downsian thesis in relation not just to vote, but to affect. Does perception of personal distress or plenty animate the individual (rather than merely informing judgements)? Does attribution mediate the impact of personal circumstances (ie. do we only feel angry about personal circumstances when we feel the Government is to blame)? A limited open-ended question approach was also used to explore the issue of comprehension in relation to attribution for personal circumstances in particular. The question - how do respondents explain their personal circumstances?

Our chosen tactic grouped individuals according to a number of criteria. These were a) consideration of improvement or deterioration in personal conditions, b) deliberation on the Government's responsibility or otherwise for the individual's predicament, and, finally c) partisanship. The resultant matrix is reproduced below<sup>1</sup> :

(see over page)

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<sup>1</sup>. The numbers are simply convenient tags for the various groups. Bracketed numbers refer to the average thermometer reading for the group. The dash symbols (-) represent categories which were largely unrepresented.

**Table 7.1 Grouping of Open Ended Responses by Pocketbook, Attribution and Partisanship**

**Those who considered that their lot had improved**

GOVT. ATTRIB.	GOOD EFFECT	NO EFFECT / UNSURE	BAD EFFECT
Conservative Voters	1 (76)	2 (74)	-
Independents	-	3 (54)	-
Non-Conservat.Voters	4 (30)	5 (35)	6 (11)

**Those who considered that their lot had deteriorated**

GOVT. ATTRIB.	GOOD EFFECT	NO EFFECT / UNSURE	BAD EFFECT
Conservative Voters	-	7 (62)	-
Independents	-	8 (45)	-
Non-Conservat.Voters	-	9 (36)	10 (29)

The responses to the open-ended questions which asked people to account for their personal situation are reported below; beside them are the readings from the thermometer question (expressions of warmth or coldness towards a party with 1° as cold and 100°as very warm). The first set refer to groups 1 and 4 (with one residual "Independent" included)<sup>2</sup> :

**Table 7.2 Open Ended Responses of Groups One and Four**

**THOSE WHO WERE BETTER OFF AND WHO THOUGHT THE GOVERNMENT HAD HAD A GOOD EFFECT ON THEM**

**Conservative**

- 60 mortgage rate down, wages up, inflation static
- 70 change of job
- \* 80 pay rise
- 100 prices stabilised
- 90 new job
- \* 50 training at work
- 100 income tax down; mortgage down
- \* 70 perks in the job - bonuses
- 60 improved work situation - more steady work
- 80 getting more for his pension than he was a year ago;

<sup>2</sup>. Each written entry represents the response of a specific individual. The preceding number refer to the thermometer response that same individual gave with respect to the Government. Averaging seperately across these thermometer readings for the Conservative, Independents and Non-Conservatives gives the figures in brackets in Table 7.1.

pen. more valuable

- 70 business success
- \* 100 good pay rise
- \* 80 pay increase, promotion
- \* 60 husband earning more; both increased wages

### Independents

- \* 60 pay rises

### Non-Conservative

- \* 55 promotion
- \* 40 husband's prospects have improved
- \* 50 pay rise
- \* 20 promotion
- \* 0 wife's higher salary
- 60 new job
- \* 20 just had a rise
- 30 deduction in taxation
- 0 better job
- 0 tax changes
- \* 50 additional earnings other than salary

The starred versus unstarred responses are the product of an attempt to differentiate on what we felt were common themes. The most obvious themes embodied the distinction between what we chose to call proximate causes (relating to immediate, family or job related factors such as wage increases), and exogenous causes which are, or could be, Government driven<sup>3</sup>. These included changes in inflation, tax, job availability and changes in employment. This has intuitive appeal only in the sense that we considered that individuals may more easily associate the Government with unemployment and inflation, than with salary increases and promotion within the company. The only problem we saw in this was the incidence of public sector employment. Individuals who stated they account for changes in conditions due to pay rises (for it was rises predominately) may have meant what we consider an exogenous influence.

As we can see the Conservative group split 50:50 on

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<sup>3</sup>. Starred responses refer to 'proximate' causes.

proximate to Government responses. However, from these responses alone it is difficult to establish whether the proximate responses reflect the belief that Government activity penetrates to company level with respect to wages and promotion in particular (they did, after all, state that the Government had a good effect on their personal circumstances). Non-Conservatives are only marginally more likely to give proximate responses (the corresponding ratio is 64:36. Yet they do appear to be quite different in their thermometer reactions (Conservative average is 76 to the non-Conservative average of 30).

The difficulty in interpreting the open responses for groups 1 and 4 is evident if we compare them with those for groups 2, 3 and 5 <sup>4</sup> :

**Table 7.3 Open Ended Responses of Groups Two, Three and Five**  
**THOSE WHO WERE DOING WELL, BUT THOUGHT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO EFFECT OR WERE UNSURE**

<b><u>Conservative</u></b>	
*	75 do not have to buy that much for the children
	70 husband is self-employed; he has more work and less tax
*	80 wages increase
*	80 wage increase
*	70 pay rise
*	100 pay rise of husband
	80 changed jobs
* ?	60 sold house
*	75 pay rise
*	70 children left home
*	75 pay increase
*	75 had a pay rise
	80 better job
*	80 lost husband and so loss of income
*	80 home investment; general salary increase
	30 pay increases greater than inflation

**Independent**

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<sup>4</sup>. Again starred responses relate to proximate themes. Question marks (?) reflect mixed or ambiguous answers.

- \* 75 hard work
- \* 75 pay rise
- 50 job at the weekend
- 35 found a job
- 40 started job from school
- \* 50 promotion at work

#### Non-Conservative

- \* 0 pay rise
- \* 0 higher scale job
- \* 30 wage rise
- \* 50 promotion
- \* 10 pay rise of husband
- 50 now has a job
- 75 mortgage paid off
- 30 not spending as much; more "temping" work for the wife
- \* 50 working harder
- 30 got a job in the last year
- \* ? 20 promotion, pay rise, increment, possibly tax cuts
- \* 0 pay rise
- \* 50 pay rise
- \* 50 attendance allowance increase
- \* 10 biannual wage increase
- \* 10 wage increase
- \* 40 improved work situation
- \* 70 work situation

Again we have differentiated between 'proximate' (\*) and 'exogenous' causes. It should be noted that these three groups, though doing well, replied that the Government had no effect, a mixed effect or that they were unsure. We might be safer here in inferring that those designated 'proximate' dissociate the personal from the overtly political. We might also be tempted to consider that the Conservative Government would profit from convincing the non-Conservative voters that they were responsible, had it not been for the fact that those who do think the Government responsible for their good fortune (group 4 above) show little sign of overtly rewarding the Conservatives. They do not feel particularly warm towards the Government, and are on average colder towards it. The thermometer reading is 30 to the 35 of those who were better off, but thought the Government had no effect on them or were unsure.

The third cluster we focused on was group 6 (with residual Conservative and Independent included). These non-Conservatives felt their personal lot had improved over the last twelve months, but that the Government policies had had a bad effect on their own finances. The open-ended responses are reported below :

**Table 7.4 Open Ended Responses of Group Six (with Residuals)**

**THOSE WHO WERE BETTER OFF, BUT THOUGHT THE GOVERNMENT HAD HAD AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THEIR PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

**Conservative**

70 self-employed for about a year

**Independents**

\* 50 more overtime

**Non-Conservatives**

- \* 0 pay award
- \* 0 strike action led to wage rise
- 0 getting a job
- 0 new work :part-time to full-time about to occur
- 0 got a better job
- \* 25 pay rise
- \* 30 pay rise
- \* ? 50 husband increase in salary; low mortgage rates
- 0 got job

The average thermometer reading (at 11) is very low. However, the nominally exogenous (unstarred) responses seem to have a positive connotation. Given that the individuals attested to the Government's negative impact on personal finances, this would seem suggest that positive, job related explanations need not be associated in respondents mind with Government responsibility (perhaps not surprisingly, if relief of cognitive dissonance is a factor).

Moving on, perhaps it is significant that virtually no one said they were doing badly, and that the Government had a good effect on their financial situation. However, it is interesting to contrast the responses of groups 4 and 5 (shown above) with

those of 9 and 10. Few Conservatives were prepared to say they were worse off and that the Government had a neutral effect on finances, but Non-Conservatives were less reticent. There responses are given below<sup>5</sup> :

**Table 7.5 Open Ended Responses of Group Seven, Eight and Nine**  
**THOSE WHO WERE WORSE OFF, BUT WHO THOUGHT THE GOVERNMENT HAD A NEUTRAL EFFECT, OR WERE UNSURE**

**CONSERVATIVE**

- \* 50 change of personal circumstances
- \* 70 less money in job
- 70 inflation
- 50 loss of business agency (?)

**INDEPENDENT**

- \* ? 40 unemployed and a baby
- \* ? 50 don't really know
- \* 40 misfortune

**NON-CONSERVATIVE**

- 20 inflation
- \* ? 100 lack of money/accommodation for four children
- \* 0 spouse retired
- 40 change of job
- 25 because of loss of job
- 25 unemployed at the moment
- 20 less 'temping' work
- 70 shopping costs up
- 90 unemployed
- 65 bills seem to be increasing, ie. telephone
- 10 rise in the cost of living
- \* 40 just more in the bank account; could spend more (?)
- 0 because prices go up
- 30 changed job
- \* 40 now saved money pays for house
- wasn't paying rates, now has to
- \* 50 became a student again
- \* 0 retired

It is clear that the non-Conservatives in particular favour the extraneous or exogenous over the proximate in explaining their circumstances. We might not find this particularly startling. Individuals are more likely to attribute responsibility for

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<sup>5</sup>. Again the starred (\*) responses reflect proximate or personal themes, with associated numbers showing thermometer.

unpleasant circumstances to external, exogenous factors (Gergen and Gergen, 1981). On the other hand, individuals are more likely to attribute satisfying circumstances to their own endeavours. Not only does attributional self-protection drive those who are doing badly to proffer external explanations, but as non-Conservatives they may be more willing to cite Government 'controlled' economic features as root causes. Yet the link is difficult to make given that they do actually state that the Government had no effect on them or that they were unsure

One notable feature is the average temperature of the thermometer reading for the non-Conservative group. At 36 it is of the same order of magnitude as that for groups 4 and 5 (30 and 35 respectively). It would seem that neither personal circumstances themselves nor attribution for those circumstances have any impact on the temperature of the respondents. This is confirmed if we look at the last section of open-ended responses. Group 10 responses are reported below (with one residual Conservative response included) :

**Table 7.6 Open Ended Responses of Group Ten**

**PEOPLE WHO WERE WORSE OFF AND WHO THOUGHT THE GOVERNMENT HAD A BAD EFFECT**

**CONSERVATIVE**

50 rising prices

**NON-CONSERVATIVE**

- \* 0 wife has stopped work, because of baby
- \* ? 40 1.retirement 2.rent
- \* ? 80 no entitlement to benefit while hospitalised
- 20 price rises
- \* 10 retired this year from part-time job
- \* ? 50 rent increased
- \* 30 change in personal situation - not necessarily the country's
- \* 25 spent on buying own home
- 25 cuts in social security and housing benefit
- 20 increased prices

60 civil servants underpaid compared to private sector; pay  
  rises far behind

50 price of goods; when goes to the shops, everything has  
  gone up

50 pension does not keep up with inflation (gas,  
  electricity, rent: all

0 inflation

0 handling of the economy

0 rents going up; rates up

This group is of particular interest. Not only do they think the their present situation is deteriorating, but they expressed the opinion that the Government was responsible and a goodly number cited exogenous explanations. However, the average thermometer reading is 29. This is comparable with those non-Conservatives saying they were better off and the Government was responsible (30), and those who said things were better (though the Government had not effected them - 36). This is something of a mystery given that, in the Downsian canon, group 10 would be the most likely to punish the Government for its behaviour, or certainly more likely to punish than those in groups 4 or 5).

The explanation may revolve around the question of the validity or otherwise of the survey elements. The questions themselves may be tapping mental constructs that are altogether too complicated to be rendered down to a single response. Likewise the truncated open-ended question may not be the best technique to probe attributional inference. Notwithstanding these issues it would seem that Downsian model is weakened in this case by the complete lack of any differentiating pattern among those who were both impoverished and held the Government responsible. If these questions cannot be answered here, we wanted to go on to explore the nature of global perceptions. Were these perceptions generated from a reading of the

inflationary and unemployment context? Or were they reflected in the individual's perceptions of how well, in general, the Government was handling the economy?

7.2

Having explored the underlying patterning of attribution and its impact, we ought to turn our attention to sociotropic perceptions and their substance. Are they derived in a clear and unambiguous way from perceptions of inflation and unemployment? We can explore this using responses drawn from the first survey shot. In terms of raw aggregates perceptions were distributed as follows :

Table 7.7 Aggregated Economic Perceptions at t1

	Unemploy Percent	Inflation Percent	Sociotropic Percent
better	41.4	18.7	34.5
same	29.1	23.6	26.1
worse	17.7	41.9	22.7
unsure	11.8	15.8	16.7

It seems fairly clear that the majority felt unemployment would get better, and that the inflation rate would get worse. On the state of the national economy perceptions were more evenly balanced.

We wanted to know if evaluations of inflation or unemployment bleed into judgements on the national economy. Again we chose cross tabulation as a measure of association, though we were aware that this form of test is in no sense ideal. Having collapsed the categories for the respective perceptions into 'better', 'worse', neutral or 'unsure' we cross tabulated sociotropic with inflation and unemployment impressions. The results are reported below <sup>6</sup> :

Table 7.8 Sociotropic Perceptions Against Inflation & Unemployment

Sociotropic X Unemployment	: Cramer's V = 0.27
Sociotropic X Inflation	: Cramer's V = 0.21

<sup>6</sup>. Splitting the sample to accommodate temporal disparity does not suggest the results need significant modification.

It would appear that neither element contributes decisively to perception of the national economy. If we are prepared to talk in terms of causal association we might hold that unemployment makes a stronger contribution to global perceptions than does inflation. We were aware, however, that all three measures might simply reflect partisan attachments. The table below gives an indication of the strength of the respective relationships <sup>7</sup> :

**Table 7.9 Partisanship Against Unemployment, Inflation and Sociotropic Perceptions**

<u>Partisanship Against :</u>	
Unemployment	V = 0.22
Inflation	V = 0.19
Sociotropic	V = 0.29

With the partisan element in mind we sought in as far as possible to determine whether our initial description of the relationship between inflation or unemployment, and global appreciations still held. :

**Table 7.10 Sociotropic Perceptions Against Unemployment with Partisan Control**

<u>All</u>	
Sociotropic	X Unemployment
Cramer's V = 0.27	
<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Non-Cons./Independ.</u>
Cramer's V = 0.31	Cramer's V = 0.30

The figures have to be treated with some caution. The four-by-four cross tabulations left cells empty in the 'Conservative' sub-group (though not in the other). Corresponding figures for inflation are shown below, though again the statistic for the Conservative sub-group are likely to be unreliable as a function

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<sup>7</sup>. To maintain cross tabulation symmetry we dropped the 'unsure' category from our calculation and ranged 'Conservative', 'Independent' and 'non-Conservative' against 'Better', 'Worse' and 'Same'.

of empty cells :

**Table 7.11      Sociotropic Perceptions Against Inflation with  
Partisan Control**

<u>All</u>	
Sociotropic	X Inflation
Cramer's V = 0.21	
<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Non-Cons./Independ.</u>
Cramer's V = 0.24	Cramer's V = 0.20

The figures would tend to suggest that the correspondence between perceptions of inflation or unemployment, and broader national circumstances are not simply the product of underlying partisanship (for one sub-group at least). We might interpret the results as suggesting that people do in some measure draw on their sense of fluctuation in inflation and unemployment when judging the global environment. However, there seems to be more substance to sociotropic perceptions than can be accounted for by inflation or unemployment alone.

This perhaps should not surprise us. The issues of inflation and unemployment were chosen because they were (and still are) the issues on which the Government and Opposition sought to fight so many of their rhetorical battles. Obviously this was not done to the exclusion of other economic issues. The national debt, taxation and interest rates, competitiveness and productivity, public sector borrowing requirement, and the balance of payments are ready alternatives. So though we have shown that unemployment and inflation are important elements in voter's perceptions of the broader economy, they are by no means the most salient or determinate.

If inflation and unemployment have a bearing on sociotropic perceptions we also wanted to know if these, in turn, were

articulated to a broader concept of government performance. To this end we used responses to a question concerning the handling of Britain's problems ("In general, how well do you think the Government is handling the country's problem?"). Again, in the absence of detailed open ended material, we used cross tabulation to give us an idea of the structure of the relationship between the respective cognitive elements.

There was a danger that we might mistake dual partisan perception for a simple pattern of association between global impression and general handling of problems. The 'handling' question was more closely associated with partisan alignment than most others (Cramer's  $V = 0.48$ ). In this instance, any correspondence between the response on handling problems, and perceptions of the national economy might simply reflect partisan commitment.

The results suggest that sociotropic evaluations are more closely associated with 'handling' responses than either unemployment or inflation<sup>8</sup>. Though we realise that sociotropic, inflation and unemployment perceptions are not unrelated, we thought it appropriate to treat them individually :

**Table 7.12      Handling Against Economic Perceptions, Controlling for Partisanship**

	<u>All</u>	<u>Conservative</u>
Handling X Sociotropic		Cramer's $V = 0.47$
Cramer's $V = 0.30$		<u>Non-Cons./Independ.</u>
		Cramer's $V = 0.27$

(continued over page)

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<sup>8</sup>. Again four by four calculations mean the Conservative control sub-group has empty cells and the associated statistic is thus unreliable.

All

Handling X Unemployment  
Cramer's V = 0.19

Conservative

Cramer's V = 0.23

Non-Cons./Independ.

Cramer's V = 0.19

All

Handling X Inflation  
Cramer's V = 0.13

Conservative

Cramer's V = 0.18

Non-Cons./Independ.

Cramer's V = 0.15

The relationship is closest for sociotropic perceptions and is sustained for the non-Conservative control group. There is a lesser degree of association with the other variables (though the degree of association is still sustained in the non-Conservative control group). We can only speculate on whether the relationship would look different for the Conservative had our controls avoided empty cells. Given the different positions of the parties we might have expected their partisans to have differed in the significance they assigned to fluctuations in unemployment and inflation. We might expect to see some difference in control groups. Research involving larger numbers of respondents is the only way we can test such speculation. In the meantime all we can say is that for non-Conservatives the associations we have identified for the sample as a whole are still evident.

### 7.3

Having looked at attribution, and the construction of sociotropic perceptions, we wanted to explore the link between these evaluative elements and emotional expression. A number of authors have attempted to extend the analysis of attribution into the field of emotional reaction. Smith and Kluegel established that the form of attribution one makes about an occurrence mediates the type of emotional reaction to the object seen as causal agent (Smith and Kleugel, 1982). Conover and Feldman look at emotional reactions to national and personal circumstances and try to assess the impact of those reactions on the evaluation of the President (Conover and Feldman, 1985). We would have liked to have tackled both these questions, but this project would have been much too ambitious. Instead we looked at emotional reactions to Government as object and sought to determine if this was affected by attribution concerning the impact of Government on the respondents or on the economy more generally.

Conover and Feldman's factor analysis isolates two dimensions of negative emotional reaction to the economy (national and personal). Anger and disgust are contrasted with uneasiness and fear. They speculated that the former may be associated with externally caused conditions that are controllable by others (namely Government), and those which are externally caused and uncontrollable. On the positive side of the emotional equation they isolated feelings of pride, hope, happiness, confidence and sympathy (though these were not seen as tied to an attributional calculus). On the other hand Smith and Kluegel note the association between positive emotional

reaction and the individual's ability to operate with some freedom. Negative reactions are induced by being thwarted as a consequence of the actions of others (ibid., pp.133).

We could not hope to fully replicate the structure of these studies. What we did do was look at emotional reactions to Government using a slightly modified version of Conover and Feldman's emotional categories. We then examined those reactions in the light of respondent's thoughts on whether the Government had a positive or negative effect on the national economy or their personal situations.

First we looked at the degree of exclusivity of the emotional reactions to the Government. Conover and Feldman state that,

"..by no means are positive and negative emotions completely collinear; the mention of a positive reaction to the economy does not preclude the possibility that a person has also reported negative feelings." (ibid., p.61).

Although the object of our analysis was not the economy but the Government, it is clear from the following tables that the mix of emotion, the authors highlight is scarcely in evidence. We cross tabulated Conover and Feldman's four negative categories (angry, disgusted, uneasy and afraid) with each of the positive indicators (happy, hopeful, pleased, proud and relaxed). The table represents the percentage who showed neither emotive response (N), those who showed one emotional response but not the other (E), and those who showed both simultaneously (S). It is the latter we are interested in :

(see over page)

**Table 7.13**      **Consistency Across Positive and Negative Affective Responses**

Consistency Across Positive and Negative Affect

	angry/hap.	angry/hope.	angry/ple.	angry/proud	angry/relax.
N	18.9%	10.4%	15.9%	27.0%	21.9%
E	72.2%	70.6%	70.7%	65.5%	68.7%
S	8.5%	18.9%	13.4%	7.5%	9.5%
	disg./hap.	disg./hope.	disg./ple.	disg./proud	disg./relax.
N	26.6%	15.4%	22.9%	37.0%	31.3%
E	70.1%	74.1%	71.1%	59.0%	63.2%
S	3.0%	10.4%	7.0%	4.0%	5.5%
	uneas/hap.	uneas/hope.	uneas/ple.	uneas/proud	uneas/relax.
N	19.4%	10.0%	17.4%	25.5%	21.4%
E	72.7%	72.6%	68.7%	69.0%	70.7%
S	8.0%	17.4%	13.9%	5.5%	8.0%
	afrai/hap.	afrai/hope.	afrai/ple.	afrai/proud	afrai/relax.
N	30.8%	15.4%	25.4%	39.0%	32.8%
E	65.5%	77.6%	68.6%	58.0%	63.7%
S	3.5%	7.0%	6.0%	3.0%	3.5%

Conover and Feldman maintain that both positive and negative emotions can be felt simultaneously. This may be true in the U.S.A. for personal circumstances and views on the national economic situation. It is certainly not true for reactions to the Government in Britain. It might have been surprising if something akin to Conover and Feldman's results had been replicated. However, at least we can say with some certainty that mutual incompatibility of emotional expression is strongly evident. We might speculate that there are varying degrees of emotional exclusivity (depending on the object of attention and the country of origin).

The obvious next step was to look at the relationship between emotional reactions and our main focus of interest (economic and personal attributions and perceptions). Exploring the area was not without its difficulties. We collapsed the emotional responses into two categories (numbers prevented

further refinement). Those who expressed the emotion (at whatever strength) formed one category, and those who did not constituted the other. The collapsing of categories for perceptions and attributions proved more difficult. An example will illuminate the problem. A respondent may well say they felt anger towards the Government; at the same time they had the option of saying they thought the Government had a good, a bad, and a mixed effect on them (or the economy), or that they made no difference - some might be unsure.

It is not intuitively clear how the positive or neutral elements should relate to the angry/not angry response (though we might well think a negative attribution might induce anger). We finally decided that for cross tabulations on positive emotions (pleased, happy etc.) we would collapse negative and neutral responses and juxtapose them with positive attributional or perceptual answers. A mirror image was used for negative emotions (angry - not angry cross tabulated with positive/neutral - negative) :

**Table 7.14            Modelling the Relationship Between Affect and Attribution or Perception**

	<u>ATTRIBUTION</u>			<u>PERCEPTION</u>	
	good effect	bad/mixed effect/unsure		better same/unsure	worse
no response	X	X	no response	X	X
happy	X	X	angry	X	X

The results are shown in Appendix II, the figures showing 'Phi' for the two-by-two crosstabs. We controlled for partisan attachment as an obvious intervening variable. The star (\*) refers to crosstabs where one cell has less than four occupants.

One star denotes one cell with less than four; two, that two cells fall below four. Three stars denotes that the crosstab had an empty cell. Due to the low numbers many of the Conservative control crosstabs have low or empty cells. As a result the corresponding statistics have to be treated with considerable scepticism<sup>9</sup>.

Three things strike us in these tables. First the relationships are not simply the product of partisan attachment. It is not the case non-Conservative partisan necessarily or automatically feels a negative emotion and at the same time feels the Government is responsible for the state of the national economy or that global economic conditions have necessarily deteriorated. In many instances controlling for partisanship does not negate the relationship which holds for the group as a whole.

The second feature of the cross tabulations is that the relationships, while weak overall, are most prominent for national perception, national level attribution and for personal attribution (in roughly that order). Personal level perceptions are rarely associated with either positive or negative emotions after we allow for partisanship. This has a bearing on our last point which deals with the hoary old problem of reciprocal causation. Are non-Conservatives angry with the Government because the national economy is getting worse; or are those who feel anger towards the Government merely more disposed to say the economy is in decline? Or are we looking at a complex

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<sup>9</sup>. It proved too difficult to reproduce the tables in the body of the text. We clustered the crosstabs together for ease of comprehension.

interconnection? We would tentatively submit that we are not simply talking about emotion leading to economic or attributional inferences. If this were the case we might expect the relationship between personal economic experience and emotional reaction to look more like that for national perception, national attribution and personal attribution.

A last point that has to be made as a caveat concerns the similarity in some of the cross tabulations. This holds true for the crosstabs on emotional reaction and national attribution, perception of the national economy and attribution of responsibility for personal circumstances. The cell frequencies, and hence the associated statistics on association, look quite disturbingly similar in many instances. We cannot be certain that there is an overlooked variable that unites the three responses, but sadly we do not have the numbers to explore this as fully as we might have liked. What we can say is that the uniting element is not necessarily partisanship.

7.4

We have, so far, examined attribution, the structure of global economic perceptions and their emotional concomitants. Questions concerning the source of the global attitudes in particular are, however, still outstanding. In our chapter on the Gallup Political Index we attempted to isolate those we nominally considered dependent on the mass media for sociotropic information. We did this by identifying those whose observations of the global environment differed from their experience of personal changes in circumstances. The assumption was that if individuals were not drawing on their own experience to flesh out sociotropic perceptions (this showing up in a lack of correspondence between levels), then their cognitions must have alternative sources.

The obvious problem with this assumption is that individuals could be drawing on vicarious experience. In our question on the state of the local economy we have a surrogate measure which might be suitable for testing this notion. We showed earlier that this measure is not closely associated with sociotropic perception. However, it is entirely possible that a combination of personal experience and local observation in some sense cue or inform our global calculations. With this in mind we sought to isolate those whose sociotropic observations differed from both their personal and local perceptions (we termed these 'dependent'). The results for the three survey shots are outlined below :

**Table 7.15 Retrospective Dependency Across Three Survey Shots**

	<u>shot 1</u>	<u>shot 2</u>	<u>shot 3</u>
Dependent	44.1%	28.8%	39.3%
Independent	55.9	71.2	60.7

We also noted that though the 'dependents' represented a substantial proportion at all three shots, these individuals did not represent a core group of perennially dependent voters. We looked at those who were, by our definition, 'dependent' at all three stages in our survey. They constituted only 4.2% of the sample consisting of the 167 individuals who made it to the end. We might safely say in this context that we are not talking about a core or homogenous group of media dependents - even if our definition is accepted. The different percentages at different times can be explained by recourse to the notion of independent starta of thought. 'Dependents' are simply those whose personal and global perceptions do not match (their global perceptions cannot be contaminated by personal circumstances - we can thus make inferences about how the media influence this group). But that degree of matching will change over time as personal circumstances change - so the size of the dependent group is bound to change over time.

We obviously have to stress that the terms 'independent' and 'dependent' are still provisional. We do not seek to claim that in performing our calculation we have in fact isolated the 'truly dependent'. Suffice it to say that we feel that this group is more likely to be dependent on the mass media for cues than the 'independent', or that they are less likely to be extrapolating from unrelated experiences.

We were aware, however, that there was one last prospective source of non-mediated economic information : namely interpersonal communication. Notions of two-step-flow have long been prevalent in communication studies, though the concept has

attracted critical attention on occasion (Gitlin, 1978, Ball-Rokeach, 1985, Severin, 1988). The theory normally gives opinion leaders the role of communicating a mediated version of reality to the broader public. We felt that personal communication, as a potential source of information, obviously merited attention. To this effect we sought to isolate those we considered to be free of personal or local influences and isolated those that had stated that they "never", or only "occasionally" or "rarely" talk to "family, friends, neighbours or workmates" about politics. We felt the question cast sufficiently broad a net to isolate the 'two-step-flow' component of sociotropic perception. The question is, how many of those whom we consider 'dependent' on the mass media are talking to others about politics. We looked at those whose sociotropic perceptions differed from both local and personal experience. Taking this group, we tried to determine what percentage did not report talking about politics. The results are reported below (the percentages for 'dependents' are those which do not match personal and global, and who do not talk about politics - so are less likely to derive global perceptions from others' personal experience) :

**Table 7.16 Non-Communicative Dependents Across Three Shots**

	<u>shot 1</u>	<u>shot 2</u>	<u>shot 3</u>
Dependent	33.7%	23.7%	32.7%
Independent	66.3	76.3	67.3

We felt that this was a much more rigorous test of media dependency than simply isolating those with divergent personal and global judgments (though it has to be noted that we had to use a single response on political conversation from the first shot to help define media dependents for shots two and three). Individuals who are not extrapolating from the personal or the

local, and who, at the same time, do not talk about politics with immediate associates, are prime candidates for identification as 'media dependents'. In this respect it is somewhat surprising to see the size of the group so identified. Between a quarter and a third of individuals are at any one time dependent on the mass media for their national perceptions on the economy. A significant number by any standards.

What were the social and ideational characteristics of this group that we called 'media dependent'? The more obvious social groupings were unrelated to dependency. Dependents were as likely to be old as young; as likely to be male as female. Those who were not dependent were a little more likely to have undertaken no part-time or full-time studies; but are as likely as the rest to have gone to FE or have professional or technical training. On the other hand, they are a little less likely to have gone to university. On social class, dependents were fractionally less likely to be A/B than independents; as likely to be C1 or C2; and 10% more likely to come from social class D than 'independents'. As such the dependents seemed socially undifferentiated.

Looking at ideational rather than structural categories it was clear the picture is more complicated. One disturbing feature appears in the cross tabulation of dependency with sources of political information<sup>10</sup> :

(see over page)

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<sup>10</sup>. The cells represent percentages summing to 100% horizontally; the brackets, row numbers.

**Table 7.17 Dependency by Main Source of Political News**

	Family Friends Etc.	Radio	TV	News Papers	Mix	None	
Depend.	11.8	2.9	50.0	19.1	14.7	1.5	- 100% (68)
Indep.	6.0	6.7	39.6	27.6	17.9	2.2	- 100% (134)

There are two points worth making here. First, the row percentages do not differ much. Although not significant in itself, we can say that the media sources specified by are likely to be informing their global perceptions (something we cannot say about 'Independents'). Second, our assumption was that media dependents were not part of a causal chain that featured interpersonal communication. Eleven percent of the 'dependency' group cited this as the main source of information. We may be heartened that this is as small as it is representing only eight out of sixty eight.

It may be considered significant that only a segment of 'dependents' use papers as a source of information (19.4%), while some may use them from time to time (14.7%). In this context we would not expect the weight of Conservative dominance of the press to be, in any sense, determinate in there impact. Other ideational factors of interest include respondent's interest in politics and their partisanship. The cross tabulation results are reported below<sup>11</sup> :

**Table 7.18 Political Interest & Partisanship Against Dependency**

	Depend	Indep.		Depend	Indep.
Very Inter.	1.5	14.9	Conserv.	43.4	29.3
Fairly Int.	59.7	56.0	Indep.	6.0	12.0
Not V. Int.	28.4	21.6	Non-Con.	50.7	58.6
Disinterest.	10.4	7.5		100%	100%
	100%	100%		(68)	(134)

<sup>11</sup>. Cell figures represent column percentages.

It seems clear that 'dependents', are less likely to be very interested in politics, but in all other respects are similar to 'independents'. There is a tendency for dependents to be more Conservatively inclined; for 'independents' to be non-Conservative partisans. Otherwise, the dependents seem relatively unremarkable with regard to their social and ideation composition. However, if we are to explore more fully the significance of 'dependency' we need to look beyond these surface characteristics.

7.5

Looking at the relationship between 'dependency' and the three levels of perception we had identified earlier, we hypothesised that the magnitude of influence of dependency would more than likely differ from our 1981 sample. Economic circumstances differed markedly and, we might hazard that so did media coverage of those circumstances. However, we felt that if our projection was correct, dependency would be associated with buoyancy in sociotropic perception (sociotropic perceptions would be established in a media context generally, though not wholly favourable to the Conservatives). We felt that it would be impossible to hypothesise a relationship with local perceptions. Dependency on national media for national level perceptions does not entail any necessary local, or indeed personal level, concomitant. Limiting ourselves to retrospective perceptions we did not possess a surrogate for immediate, personal level perceptions, and as a result we were unable to fully replicate our representative sample analysis.

However, the results from our analysis are presented below. We controlled for party loyalty as the most likely intervening variable though numbers dictated we collapse 'independents' and 'non-Conservatives' into the one category<sup>12</sup> :

<u>Table 7.19</u>		<u>Dependency Against Economic Perceptions,</u>		<u>Controlling for Partisanship</u>	
		<u>Conservative</u>			
		Phi = 0.09			
<u>All</u>					
Dependency	X Sociotropic			<u>Non-Cons./Independ.</u>	
Phi = 0.16				Phi = 0.15	

<sup>12</sup>. None of the cross tabulations had problems with empty cells.

**Table 7.19 (continued)**

		<u>Conservative</u> Phi = 0.08	
		<u>Non-Cons./Independ.</u> Phi = 0.05	
		<u>Conservative</u> Phi = 0.06	
		<u>Non-Cons./Independ.</u> Phi = 0.13	

The findings are in one sense in concurrence with our hypothesis - though there is a degree of ambiguity. The straight cross tabulation on sociotropic perception seems to confirm the hypothesis, though when we control for partisan attachment the relationship is only sustained for non-Conservatives.

The weak nature of the relationship is also significant, though much of the detail is lost in the collapsing of categories. If we look at the uncollapsed cross tabulation a slightly different picture emerges<sup>13</sup> :

**Table 7.20      Sociotropic Perceptions Against Dependency, Controlling for Partisanship**

	<u>All</u>	
	DEPEND.	INDEP.
BETTER	35.3	34.3
SAME	20.6	28.4
WORSE	10.3	29.1
UNSURE	33.8	8.2
	(68)	(134)

(continued over page)

<sup>13</sup>. Cells represent column percentages; parenthesis refers to column marginal frequencies.

<u>Conservative</u>			<u>Non-Conservative</u>		
DEPEND. INDEP.			DEPEND. INDEP.		
BETTER	44.4	46.2	BETTER	28.9	29.8
SAME	13.8	35.9	SAME	23.7	24.5
WORSE	3.4	10.3	WORSE	15.8	37.2
UNSURE	37.9	7.7	UNSURE	31.6	8.5
	(29)	(39)		(38)	(94)

The non-Conservative component is interesting. Dependents here are as likely as independents to say they are doing better. However, they are much less likely to say they are worse off (dp=21.4%). The weak relationship in the collapsed cross tabulation appears to have important underlying features which are more clearly consistent with our hypothesis.

When we turn to personal perceptions the uncontrolled, collapsed cross tabulation seems to show no relationship between 'dependency' and perceptions at this level. When controlling for partisan attachment the relationship reemerges (though only for non-Conservatives). The nature of the relationship is, however, idiosyncratic<sup>14</sup> :

**Table 7.21**      Personal Perceptions Against Dependency,  
Controlling for Partisanship

			<u>Conservative</u>	Dep.	Indep.
			bet/same	93.1	89.5
bet/same	Dep.	Indep.	worse	6.9	10.5
	72.7	76.5		(29)	(38)
worse	27.3	23.5			
	(66)	(132)	<u>Non-Conservat.</u>	Dep.	Indep.
			bet/same	58.3	72.0
			worse	41.7	28.0
				(36)	(93)

<sup>14</sup>. Cells represent column percentages. The numbers in brackets represent column marginal frequencies.

Here non-Conservative 'dependents' are less likely to say they are better off or the same, and more likely to say they are worse off, than 'independents'. Our hypothesis does allow us to live with this degree of idiosyncrasy. It is not clear how individual level, backward regarding perceptions might be influenced by media dependency, if at all. And with the limited numbers at our disposal it is impossible to pursue the case much further. At local level the situation is clearer. Neither at the superficial nor at the controlled level does 'dependency', as we have defined it, impact on perception.

Clearer results come from the exploration of the relationship between 'dependency' and perception of Government's handling of the country's problems. As we suggested earlier, economic elements may be important, though certainly not exclusive criteria by which the public judge the Government's competence. We might hypothesise that the global media environment is as good to the Conservatives on the issue of handling the country's problems as it is in respect of economic reportage, though clearly we must be cautious in relating sociotropic dependency to perceptions of overall handling of the economy. However, if our assumption is correct we might expect the dependent to have a rosier or at least a less gloomy picture of reality than independents. We tested this hypothesis, and the results are outlined below. Again we controlled for partisan attachment as the most likely confounding variable :

(see over page)

**Table 7.22**      Perception of Government Handling of Problems Against Dependency

	<u>All</u>	
	DEPEND.	INDEP.
WELL	41.8	26.9
NEITHER	26.9	24.6
BADLY	16.4	36.6
UNSURE	14.9	11.9
	100%	100%
	(67)	(134)

The initial cross tabulation suggests that sociotropic dependency is related to perception of handling the economy in the way we expected. This might lead us to speculate that the 'handling' question probes perceptions with a strong sociotropic element. We went on to control for partisan attachment.

**Table 7.24**      Control on Partisanship for Handling Against Dependency

<u>Conservative</u>			<u>Non-Conservative</u>		
	DEPEND.	INDEP.		DEPEND.	INDEP.
WELL	75.9	61.5	WELL	15.8	12.8
NEITHER	10.3	23.1	NEITHER	39.5	25.5
BADLY	----	7.7	BADLY	28.9	47.9
UNSURE	13.8	7.7	UNSURE	15.8	13.8
	100	100		100	100
	(29)	(39)		(38)	(94)

While almost inevitably we have empty cells, a distinguishable pattern continues to emerge. The pattern is consistent with our hypothesis.

Our results are somewhat different from our earlier analysis of a representative sample. Relationships are weaker, though still broadly as we might have imagined them. This may be as much to do with the timing of the respective surveys as the

phenomenon of dependency itself. However, we would not expect dependent individuals to be, in any sense, 'delivered' by the Conservative dominated press. It is clear from our media exposure indices that the sample live in a complex, differentiated and media-rich environment. In this context we would not expect Conservative press to dominate in any real sense. The most we might expect would be for it to shift the centre of balance of coverage in their favour of the Government. It is to this media mix that we now turn.

## 7.6

The media exposure profile of our sample is particularly complex. The split between quality and tabloid in our sample is probably of the same order as it would be nationally (10.8% to 88.4% - with 1.0% uncoded). The daily and Sunday newspaper intake were as follows :

**Table 7.24 Reported Newspaper Readership : Daily and Sunday**

No paper	18.4 %	No Sunday	19.2 %
Quality only	8.5 %	Telegraph	2.0 %
Sun	22.4 %	Times	4.9 %
Mail	10.5 %	Observer	8.4 %
Express	4.5 %	The Sport	0.5 %
Star	3.4 %	News of World	25.6 %
Today	3.4 %	Sunday Express	7.9 %
Mirror	28.4 %	Mail on Sunday	8.9 %
Daily News	<u>0.5 %</u>	People	10.8 %
		Mirror	10.3 %
	n = 201	News on Sunday	<u>1.5 %</u>

The evening papers were read by 36.5 % of our sample. This combined with exposure in many cases to second and third dailies, Sundays and 'other' newspapers gives a rich mixture of exposure that is extremely difficult to squeeze into unambiguous categories.

Television adds a new layer of complexity. If television news exposure is our focus; the figures are as follows :

**Table 7.25 Television News Viewing and Channel Selection**

non-viewers	9.4 %
every evening	57.6 %
3/4 per week	16.3 %
1/2 per week	5.4 %
occasional	11.3 %

The favoured channels are as follows :

Mainly BBC	32.6 %
Mainly ITN	34.8 %
Mainly CH4	3.8 %
Mixed	28.8 %

Current affairs material was viewed by 70 % of respondents either

"often" or "occasionally", while 30 % watched it rarely or not at all.

We tried to establish whether exposure to Conservative daily tabloids affected respondent's perceptions of the global economic climate. We grouped Sun, Mail, Express and Star readers together and contrasted with the rest. The results are presented below:

**Table 7.26       Sociotropic Perception Against Press Exposure, Controlling for Partisanship**

		<u>All</u>	
		CONSERV EXPOSE.	NON-CON. EXPOSE.
BETTER		34.5	34.5
SAME		27.4	25.2
WORSE		19.0	25.2
UNSURE		19.0	15.1
		100 (84)	100 (119)

		<u>Conservative</u>		<u>Non-Conservative</u>	
		CONSERV EXPOSE.	NON-CON. EXPOSE.	CONSERV EXPOSE.	NON-CON. EXPOSE.
BETTER		39.5	53.3	BETTER	30.4
SAME		28.9	23.3	SAME	26.1
WORSE		2.6	13.3	WORSE	32.6
UNSURE		28.9	10.0	UNSURE	10.9
		100 (38)	100 (30)	100 (46)	100 (86)

The cross tabulations make it clear that simple exposure alone has no unambiguous effect on sociotropic perceptions. Though we are dealing with small numbers it would appear that Conservative readers of Conservative newspapers are actually less optimistic than readers of non-Conservative output. Non-Conservatives in contrast are wholly unmoved.

As another focus of analysis we explored media use. We looked at secondary as well as primary press use, following Dunleavy and Husbands who (rightly) suggest we cannot look at primary sources alone :

**Table 7.27**        **Sources of Political Information ("Most Important" and "Second Most Important")**

	<u>PRIMARY</u>	<u>SECONDARY</u>
friends etc.	7.9%	11.3%
radio	5.4%	8.4%
television	42.9%	23.6%
newspapers	24.6%	36.5%
mixed	16.7%	8.9%
none specified	2.5%	11.3%
	n = 203	n = 203

We were anxious to employ an indicator reflecting usage rather than relying simply on exposure (though we appreciate some studies hint at the importance of "passive learning" - Keeter and Zukin, 1983; Zukin and Synder, 1984). To this end we isolated those who said they used papers either as their primary or their secondary source of political information. We found that 61.1% of our sample claimed to used papers as their primary or secondary source of political information - a considerable percentage by any standards.

We sought to find out whether their appreciation of economic circumstances matched those of non-users. The resultant cross tabulation is outlined over page (with controls on partisanship reported below). There are some signs of a relationship here which emerge more clearly if we control for partisan affiliation:

(see over page)

**Table 7.28      Sociotropic Perception Against Paper Use,  
Controlling for Partisanship**

		<u>All</u>	
		PAPER	NONPAP
BETTER		38.7	27.8
SAME		23.4	30.4
WORSE		21.0	25.3
UNSURE		16.9	16.5
		(124)	(79)

		<u>Conservative</u>				<u>Non-Conservative</u>	
		PAPER	NONPAP			PAPER	NONPAP
BETTER		50.0	36.4	BETTER		32.5	25.5
SAME		21.7	36.4	SAME		23.4	25.5
WORSE		4.3	13.6	WORSE		32.2	30.9
UNSURE		23.9	13.6	UNSURE		13.0	18.2
		100%	100%			100%	100%
		(46)	(22)			(77)	(55)

There are signs that something is going on. The percentage difference for the Conservative group between paper-users and non-users is 13.6% (in the category thinking things got better). The corresponding percentage difference for the non-Conservatives is a modest 7%. Otherwise, there are few signs that paper use affects perceptions either pessimistically or optimistically. Yet the increased optimism among paper users (though small) is consistent with our thesis. Even this is surprising given that many paper readers were using newspapers which were critical of the Conservative Government.

We sought to elaborate the thesis by isolating those who reported using television as their primary source of political information. Were television users more or less bullish about

the economy? The results are complex, but interesting. The initial crosstabulation suggests that television users are more buoyant and less bleak than the rest :

**Table 7.29       Sociotropic Perception Against Television Use, Controlling for Partisanship**

	<u>All</u>	
	TV	NON-TV
BETTER	37.9	31.9
SAME	23.0	28.4
WORSE	17.2	26.7
UNSURE	21.8	12.9
	100%	100%

However, if we control for partisan attachment a different picture emerges :

	<u>Conservative</u>			<u>Non-Conservative</u>	
	TV	NON-TV		TV	NON-TV
BETTER	38.2	52.9	BETTER	37.7	24.1
SAME	26.5	26.5	SAME	20.8	26.6
WORSE	5.9	8.8	WORSE	24.5	35.4
UNSURE	29.4	11.8	UNSURE	17.0	13.9
	100%	100%		100%	100%
	(34)	(34)		(53)	(79)

Here Conservative television users are less bullish than non-television users. Non-Conservatives, on the other hand, are more buoyant and less bleak than their non-watching counterparts. We might speculate that the more balanced nature of televisual output is responsible for the resultant distributions. Conservatives are lured away from the untrammelled 'optimism' we might expect from partisans. The non-Conservatives are not as assured in their negative perception of a country run by

Conservatives.

The strength of the relationships we have examined are small (as are the cell frequencies). But this is not difficult to explain if we look at the overall complexity of patterns of exposure and use of the media. The table below shows television and newspaper overlap and the incidence of mixed exposure. We looked at all daily, evening and Sunday papers and at nightly television. Overlaps and isolated exposure to one or other media are highlighted (as is lack of media use). As Conservative newspapers we took The Sun, The Daily Mail, The Daily Express, The Star, The Evening Standard, The Mail On Sunday, The Sunday Express, News of the World, The Sunday Telegraph and The Sunday Times. The non-Conservative papers we took as Today, The Mirror, The Daily News, The Evening News, News On Sunday, The Observer, The Sunday Mirror and The Sunday People (MacArthur, 1989). The resultant calculation yield the table below<sup>15</sup> :

**Table 7.30 Mixed Media Exposure**

TV + QUALITY PAPER	6.9%
TV + CONSERVATIVE PAPER	20.2%
TV + NON-CONSERV. PAPER	9.9%
TV + MIX OF PAPERS	32.0%
CONSERVATIVE PAPER ONLY	6.4%
NON-CONSERV. PAPER ONLY	2.0%
BROADSHEET PAPER ONLY	4.4%
MIX OF PAPERS ONLY	3.4%
TV ONLY	12.3%
NO TV <u>OR</u> NEWSPAPERS	2.5%

n = 201

It is perhaps significant that the largest single category is for television in combination with a mix of newspapers (32%). In this sense our sample is exposed to mixed information.

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<sup>15</sup>. The figures include evening as well as dailies, and multiple dailies of mixed political complexion.

If we look instead at what respondents say is their most important source of political information, the picture is not really simplified in any significant way. We took the 'most important source of political information' and matched it with the type of exposure the respondents reported :

**Table 7.31 Combined Use and Exposure**

PAPER : QUALITY PAPERS	7.4%	n = 190
PAPER : UNIFORMLY CONSERVATIVE	6.3%	
PAPER : UNIFORMLY NON-CONSERV.	2.6%	
PAPER : POLITICAL MIX OF TITLES	8.4%	
TELEVISION	42.1%	
RADIO	5.8%	
MIXED MEDIA SOURCES	18.9%	
FAMILY, FRIENDS AND WORKMATES	8.4%	

The table suggests that the media diet of our sample was omnivorous. Only 6.4% of the sample were uniform in their use of Conservative papers alone. In this context it is hardly surprising that we do not see a greater impact of press source dependency on public perceptions. Sadly the size of our sample prevents us from exploring much further the role of the media in influencing sociotropic perceptions.

## 7.7

What can we conclude from the preceding analysis as a whole? First, it seems clear that the straightforward Downsian account of voter calculation is further weakened. Average temperature for those whose positions had deteriorated (and who thought the Government responsible) was the same as those for respondents whose financial situation got better and thought the Government had caused this. The findings are decidedly counter-intuitive and the open-ended questions do not really clarify matters. The structure of responses to these questions is somewhat confusing, though there may be some support for attribution theory emphasising external causes for unpleasant circumstances. What is clear is that more work remains to be done not least in clarifying what exactly respondents mean by their attributional reports. Analysis might also be extended to the open-ended probing of sociotropic perceptions and attributions.

It is similarly clear that there is more to sociotropic attitudes than perceptions of unemployment and inflation. Although these elements play a significant part, in no sense are they determinate. The same might be said in relation to the sample's perceptions of the Government's handling of the country's problems. Economic issues figure strongly here, but obviously not to the exclusion of other concerns. The results, while hardly very surprising help place 'economic' models firmly in perspective.

On the issue of emotional reaction, and with specific reference to the Government, it is clear from our results that there is a degree of emotional exclusivity. This again might

hardly surprise us. However, it draws attention to the emotional patterning that may underlie the less cerebral or cognate elements of partisanship. What is clear and significant is that emotional responses are much more closely related to national perceptions and attributions (and to a lesser degree personal attribution) than they are to perceptions of personal wellbeing. Here there is more scope for the fruitful extension of the preceding analysis. All three elements have a global aspect and the issue of dependency ought to figure in their appreciation.

Our analysis of the structure of our sample's perceptions throws further light on this concept of media dependency. With our emphasis on local cues and interpersonal communication we applied much more stringent tests on the validity of dependency as a concept. The result show that it is more prevalent than we might imagine and that 'dependents' (if they may be so termed) are not homogeneous, but a fluid and heterogeneous group of between one third and one quarter of the sample. With the timing of our survey differing widely from that of the representative sample we analyzed in a previous chapter, it would have been surprising if the effects of dependency had been replicated in our sample. However, we do suggest there are some signs that the group we isolated are affected as a function of their dependency. The effects are not large, yet have to be viewed in the perspective of glacial rather than radical shifts in public opinion.

A search for an explanation for modest effect focused on the complexity of media exposure and use. Although as a function of our sample size conclusions are at best tentative, we found that

patterns of use rather than exposure explain some of the differences in perception highlighted earlier. Use of the press as primary source was associated with a greater buoyancy in perception. Television use, on the other hand, was associated with the moderation of the position of the respective partisan groupings.

If we were to offer a synthesis from the preceding analysis it would highlight several features. First, that so called 'sociotropic' perceptions have an important role in cuing emotional reactions. Second, that dependency and media use have an important role in affecting sociotropic perceptions (perhaps independently, but more likely in tandem). Third, that size of effect changes over time and can range from the modest to the substantial. And that lastly, the size of effect might be explained by the type of prevailing conditions and the complex and overlapping nature of media exposure and use.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

What overall conclusions can we draw from the preceding analysis? The evidence we have accumulated suggests that sociotropic perceptions are important, though not determinant elements in the calculus which forms political preference, this notwithstanding small number problems in the latter sections. We are obviously not claiming to have established this beyond doubt. The small numbers question means our conclusions are provisional, qualified and tentative. However, we have attempted to control for intervening variables and entertain competing alternatives. It is our contention that a sophisticated model will have room for the notion of glacial shift in public perception; a media influence on political preference; and the sharper impact of exceptional political phenomenon.

Our initial contention is that voting behaviour studies are still carrying the dead weight of class analysis - and suffer accordingly. Despite recent attempts at rehabilitation, we feel that the initial premises were laboured and that the original model was applicable to a smaller subsection of the population than was formerly imagined. Ultimately the problem lies with the interpretation of the link between self and party, and self and class. It is less than clear from the work of Butler and Stokes that the link in either case is 'fraternal' and based unambiguously on class solidarity.

The attempts to resurrect the class thesis using refined definitional categories have been less than fully successful. We contend that the notion of class has to contain a clear

ideational element. The classes must represent clear ideational communities of some sort. This goes well beyond having ideas in common. The class unit must also possess more than an element of self-identification (awareness of class 'for itself' to borrow Marxist terminology). The evidence presented by those who wish to salvage the class thesis is insufficiently clear on both these counts. The work of Heath, Curtice and Jowell suffers in this respect. The policy responses of their respective classes fail to show any clear community of preference. Little of the work we have done suggests that class clearly differentiates perception of the economy. Work in progress on disaggregated 'econometric' models suggests that differences between classes are fairly modest (though it should be stressed that the research results are provisional - Marsh, Ward and Sanders, 1990<sup>1</sup>).

The vogue in voting behaviour analysis is now the issue model. The model posits the significance of the correspondence between the issue preferences or 'shopping list' of voters and their behaviour in the polling booth. But causal understanding is elusive. Dunleavy and Husbands quite rightly pointed out that voter inconsistency in issue deliberation is an important factor (Dunleavy and Husbands, 1985). Likewise, Dunleavy has highlighted the deficiencies of Himmelweit's seminal study of the topic (Dunleavy, 1982). Detailed dissection of Sarlvik and Crewe's research results suggests that we need to be guarded about taking on board the unvarnished issue model. The central problem lies with the role of partisanship. We are concerned

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<sup>1</sup>. The paper was a draft text, and represents work in progress.

that insufficient attention has been paid to partisan misperception or partisan preemption. The question is, do partisans state an issue position they know to be associated with the party they feel closest to? Are they capable of misperceiving their own party's position and that of the least favoured alternatives? Insufficient theoretical or empirical attention has been given to the role of partisanship in this equation. Likewise virtually no work has been done on how much voters actually know about issues, or on the extent to which they understand the details behind them. Mardle and Taylor suggest that, for British youth at least, knowledge and comprehension of politics and its personalities is very limited (Mardle and Taylor, 1987). We would contend that attention to the measurement of political knowledge, consistency and sophistication is a crucial missing element in the issue voting thesis.

We also hold that it is insufficient to dismiss the notion of partisan interference by suggesting that party attachments have no independent significance - that they are simply the same thing as decisions to support a party. It is not merely another form of raw preference (Rose and MacAllister, 1986). We consider that it is more appropriate to consider partisanship as affective, emotive and visceral. Work in the United States and elements of our own study suggest that there are more dimensions to the affective realm (of which partisanship is a part) than have been explored, either in Britain or elsewhere. It is clear from work in psychology and media studies that the concept is not without explanatory utility. It cannot be dismissed as an a

adjunct to or re-expression of a party preference.

The issue voting approach, while the most popular, has not been the only alternative to the old class voting thesis. Some considerable attention has been given to the spacial dimension in explaining voter preference. The work on the social class background of constituencies has appeal if the object is to rehabilitate aspects of the old class model. There is also an interest in the regional dimension of vote distribution. The work in this sphere is at a comparatively early stage, and work continues. However, the conceptualisation of underlying ideational dynamics is as yet under-theorised. We await the empirical exploration on which theorising can be based.

Economic models (often conflated with issue voting approaches) are a possible alternative to the voting model outlined above. The hypothetico-deductive approach is employed to give provisional explanatory leverage on the issue of ideational dynamics. Much ink has, and continues to be spilled on the logical integrity and opening premises of the various models (Dunleavy, 1991). On a number of criteria the models developed by the rational choice school might be considered superior. What is asked of the electorate, in terms of information processing and knowledge, is not excessive. It is contended that the voter can take his or her own financial position as a datum. In the baldest form, Downs requires only that we be aware of how governments, past and present, have affected our own financial position.

Analysts have put flesh on Downs's deductive bones largely, though not exclusively, through aggregate modelling of government

popularity. There has been a fair degree of success in this endeavour. Focusing on statistics on the state of the 'real' economy, they model popularity using time series techniques. The explanation of underlying attitudinal processes is still essentially Downsian. The statistics are an indicator of the effects of economic fluctuations on the 'real' lives of the electorate. We have tried to show that in some instances the attempt to do this is somewhat strained (Husbands, 1985). The problem lies with the instability of the model parameters over time. A variable reflecting one form of aggregate fluctuation is significantly associated with popularity at one time, but not at another. Hence, for instance, balance of payments or real disposable income figure prominently at one point, but fail at another. Unemployment offers a significant parameter over one period, but not over another.

We feel this evident deficiency is testimony to the lack of attention to underlying ideational dynamics. Only a few of the authors who use econometric techniques have addressed the issue directly in attitudinal terms. Sanders, Ward and Marsh have added aggregated attitudinal elements to their global model of public opinion. In doing this they take an important step beyond the earlier research by placing perceptual elements on the independent variable side of the equation.

The initial investigation into the more advanced econometric models was comparative in character. We submit that the comparison highlights the need for a closer integration of media analysis into an explanatory framework. The thesis might be criticised for failing to compare like with like. There might

be something about the Scottish context which disallows a straight comparison. National identity, strongly radical Labour roots or differing political system might figure in such a critique. We would accept that this is a problem, but not if the ideational dynamics behind the model are firmly Downsian. For Downs even the correspondence between party ideology and utility maximisation is tested against 'reality' by the rationally calculating individual. In this sense alone we might expect rational actors to react if not similarly, then comparably.

Alternatively, we might be committing a form of logical error associated with the 'ecological fallacy'. Bulmer looks at the problems associated with aggregate level analysis, and in cataloguing them he highlights,

.."fallacies of aggregation from one subpopulation to another at the same level of analysis." (Bulmer, 1986, pp.229).

The danger is that the aggregated sub-populations are assumed to have the same aggregate features as the whole population. It is a fallacy to assume a necessary correspondence. But in the case of Downsian analysis, again we assume comparable processes at work in the calculation of party differential - for one aggregate, as for the other.

A glance at the overall shape of Government popularity in Scotland suggests an admittedly flattened U-shape (or 'downswing-upswing'), as it does for Britain as a whole. The conclusion that might be drawn from this is that economic decline and recovery processes are at work. Yet in Scotland the Falklands period is anomalous. This is the period where, for Sanders, Ward and Marsh, the restored and revitalised economy began to impact

on Government popularity. But no such effect is registered. We conclude that the only way we can accommodate this is by hypothesising the impact of media presentation - an impact that is not closely related in any way to the economy *per se*, but reflects the conservative leanings of much of the press.

The study does not suggest a means by which this may be carried out. Yet it was our feeling that an overarching model of the Government's inter-electoral popularity must allow that the media may displace the economy when its attention is turned to politically traumatic events. What is more we felt that an understanding of the role of the media in mediating economic perception is crucial to fleshing out such a model.

It is significant that the Downsian thesis does not require a media element. The voter is supposed to be able to calculate the party differential without the help of the media. This assumption might be acceptable if the resultant, tested models show personal conditions to be important (either directly, or as a means of calculating what might happen in the future). But so much of the literature in the United States and elsewhere stressed the role of national level perception over calculations made on personal experience. If this is also the case in Britain there might be a *prima facie* case for exploring the role of the media in prompting changes in global perceptions of the economy. Our attempt to re-specify a model of popularity was occasioned by this consideration. We wanted to know whether the sociotropic elements were, indeed, important. We also wanted to consider how the electorate were judging the future if personal level calculations were not uppermost in the mind.

Our results suggest that retrospective perceptions definitely need attention. They figure strongly and clearly in the models we tested (whether in isolation or combined with prospective evaluations). The two we tested most successfully were sociotropic in character. The general retrospective variable relates to the global circumstances, and it implies no necessary Governmental responsibility. The variable on 'handling the economy' is sociotropic and focuses on the present, though the Government is a significant part of the equation. The question is worded, 'Do the Government's policies for tackling the economic situation give you the feeling that they are or are not handling the situation properly?'.

These models perform quite well by the standards Sanders, Ward and Marsh set. The one element that fails to figure is personal retrospective. We considered it particularly worrisome that this element, of all others, should fail to figure in most of our regression models. If economic turbulence were affecting the populace directly it would show up in this indicator. This in turn would impact upon Government popularity. This is the classical Downsian theory on vote preference and the economy. No evidence was found to support this form of explanation. Personal retrospective perceptions figured in some of our models, but this was generally where sociotropic variables were excluded, or where multicollinearity obscured the picture.

We became worried by the very notion of the inclusion of aggregate economic statistics at this juncture. We were doubly concerned that Sanders, Ward and Marsh's earliest models seemed to fuse the Downsian and sociotropic approaches together.

Exchange rates, public sector borrowing requirement and unemployment variables were explained, provisionally, in terms of media presentation. Personal expectations were framed in Downsian terms. But, to our mind all economic statistics have a dualistic element; they have a dual or parallel existence. They reflect economic turbulence, but they are also pawns in the broader rhetorical battle (over 'the economy' and how the Government is handling it). In the course of any parliament the Government and Opposition front benches regularly clash at the despatch box using economic statistics as rhetorical weapons. This is a context in which we feel it is extremely important to distinguish between their sociotropic and the 'pocketbook' manifestations.

The issue is particularly important given that the personal retrospective variable fails to figure in aggregated experiments. We felt that if 'the economy' was affecting Government popularity through its impact on the lives of the electorate, then this variable, of all others, should have a marked influence. In the event it did not. If 'the economy' was significant, we have to look at other, possibly sociotropic, ways to theorise its influence. One obvious way is through the media's role in transmitting information on the state of the economy.

The media's role obviously cannot be taken for granted. Mechanisms and routes of influence have to be established empirically. However, theorising the impact of economic news (as opposed to or in conjunction with pocketbook impact) provides a provisional explanation for the instability of past 'econometric' models of Government popularity - specifically for those models

focusing exclusively on Government statistics. Downs submits that economic ups and downs will register in voter's 'party differential' calculations, and will do so consistently. Of interest here are voter's actual experiences of deprivation or abundance. On the other hand, we find that the media focus on different economic signals in different historical periods. Sociotropic signals differ over time. The balance of payments or unemployment reflect the poor or good state of the national economy at particular times (the 1960s or early 1970s respectively). At others, the public sector borrowing requirement or money supply figure more prominently (in the early 1980s). So if the 'Government statistics' elements of regression models were functioning as sociotropic signals rather than in their capacity as pocketbook surrogates, we would actually expect the parameter to be unstable over time.

If this is the case we would also anticipate other results. Instability of parameters would afflict models including statistical and attitudinal elements as it would those which used Government statistics alone. However, it would afflict the statistical parameters alone - not the attitudinal. Sociotropic variables in general, and national retrospective perceptions in particular would, theoretically, figure in all time periods. They would, in essence, reflect prevailing economic diversions.

There are some signs of this. Sanders, Ward and Marsh have experimented with different parameters since 1987. Exchange rates lagged twelve months, unemployment and PSBR was the original choice of variables with a direct impact. Yet, latterly the Essex team have experimented with a misery index made up of

inflation (which did not figure anywhere in the original model), unemployment and an official index of the sterling price of imported goods and services. Most recently, interest rates and a Poll Tax measure have figured in models (Sanders, 1991). On the other hand the original model of personal expectations included consumer durable expenditure, short-time working, taxation, and interest rates. The short-term working has now been dropped, and the authors have experimented with industrial production, unemployment and the Poll Tax measure. Personal expectations still figures consistently in the equation, and continue to be highly significant (though a lag of some three months is now considered appropriate). As Sanders, Ward and Marsh point out,

"In previous studies we have established that, throughout the 1980s, the only 'economic' variable that consistently influenced directly was personal economic expectations" (Sanders, Ward and Marsh, 1991, pp.18)

Theorising apart, we felt it was appropriate to explore the structure of individual level perception. The importance of such an exercise is underscored by the theorists of method. They point to the danger of making mistaken inferences about individual level processes from data at higher levels of aggregation (Galtung, 1970; Williamson et al, 1977; and Bulmer, 1986). The danger is alarming and ever-present in aggregate analysis. However, the authors give reassuring examples of studies where this particularly troublesome feature is exposed. Studies which emphasised the mistaken leap of inference are, or tend to be taken from individual level analyses, or individual

level research on process. We felt the issue had to be addressed in respect to aggregate economic analyses, and the Gallup material offered an ideal opportunity.

The most striking early feature of our results was the conclusion that there was a marked degree of inconsistency in the sample. Half the sample gave different responses for different levels of perception (both backward and forward looking). A small minority were consistent across all perceptions. For a substantial element of the population the different levels are independent. There was also no suggestion that strong partisanship drives people to consistency across levels of perception.

We might regard this conclusion as unexceptional. But it is testimony to the complex nature of the individual level perceptions that underlie aggregate models. Our results on the partisanship and preference change were, we feel, more significant. Using collapsed categories we found that general prospective and general retrospective more closely associated with vote and partisanship than personal prospective perceptions. Personal retrospective perceptions are least closely associated. This latter finding confirms our misgivings about models (aggregate or individual level) which are grounded in Downsian assumptions. The term 'association' is used advisedly since the problem of reciprocal causation is obviously an issue. Dunleavy is correct in enquiring,

.."how can we analyse two-way causation flows between voting behaviour and a wide range of correlated variables? What relationship is there between voting, issue attitudes and evaluations of party competence in government? Or between voting and economic expectations?" (Dunleavy, 1990, p.7).

The question is, obviously, do economic perceptions influence partisanship, or does partisanship impact on economic evaluations. Our data here does not allow us to address this issue, but we can say something. We can suggest that it is worrisome that personal economic variables show such a weak association. For general evaluations we can say that they may affect or may be affected. But as correlations advance toward the weaker end of the spectrum it is more difficult to maintain either notion of causal direction. This was significant with respect to both of the personal variables we looked at. Our attempt to isolate individuals with diametrically opposite evaluations of the personal and global situations took us no further on the issue of direction of causation, but it tended to confirmed the notion of the prevalence of general over personal components of the party preference equation.

When we turned our attention to respondent's change in party preference the results were a little disappointing. The majority seemed to be either stable in preference or switching between opposition parties. Nevertheless, general prospective evaluations followed by personal prospective perceptions tended to show the closest association with change. We were, though, sceptical about the lack of clear results. We were looking for sea changes where a focus on glacial shift may be the more appropriate (Harrop, 1987). We were also concerned by the difference between actual vote in 1979, and reported vote in our sample. As we reported, the sample's memory of actual voting behaviour in 1979 differed from know national figures :

(see over page)

**Table 8.1 Comparison of Sample's Vote and Known Result**

	Known 1979 <u>Vote</u>	Sample's Reported <u>Vote 1979</u>
Conservative	44%	41%
Labour	37%	45%
Liberal	14%	11%

We were concerned that underlying the observed stability of our sample lay a degree of selective memory loss. It is impossible to address the issue more fully, but we felt it important to flag it.

There was more encouragement from the results of the analysis of the unemployed as a group. We were concerned that the unemployed had been used as an example of a group whose behaviour contradicts the economic voting models (Heath et al, 1985; Scarborough, 1987). Our analysis focused on the unemployed as a possible attitudinal community, rather than as a category characterised by their employment status alone. Our results suggest that they are not a particular good test bed for the Downsian thesis. The unemployed may be poor in absolute terms. But the difference between themselves and the employed on their perceptions of how their personal predicament has changed are marked rather than outstanding. It seems, therefore, wholly inappropriate that we judge economic models by the behaviour of the unemployed alone (even if we confine our view to models of a Downsian variety). This is further confirmation that we really have to go beyond occupational or employment categories and concentrate more closely on the underlying attitudinal terrain.

The picture is further clouded as the unemployed differ from the employed on general prospective perception in the same degree as in personal retrospective. So in this context, though we can

say the unemployed are less favourably inclined towards the Conservatives, we cannot even declare that this is simply a function of Downsian calculation.

Our results were clearer when we focused explicitly on media dependency. And they suggest that there is some utility in the concept. Dependency has an important place in media theory on political effects (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976). The approach has a system focus and relates dependency to social change, conflict and instability (McQuail and Windahl, 1981). Dependency is seen as contingent on a variety of factors from historical context to social class. Elites in particular are in a privileged position of independence as a function of better access to multiple media sources.

Our results suggest that though social change (and in this context we mean economic change) is an important feature, dependency need not be associated with societies riven by conflict or instability (Severin, 1988). Moreover, in our estimation the A/B classes were more dependent on the media than the subordinate classes. We may speculate that this is a function of individual prosperity among the higher groups, but in an overall context of economic decline. The notion of strong effects associated with the dependency model need not necessarily apply in this particular context, as it is still probably the case that the higher socio-economic groupings have a wider access to a variety of different media material.

It is also clear that when individuals make predictions about the future they are not acting as primitive inductivists (assessing future prospects from past change). If this were the

case we would expect there to be a greater correspondence between personal retrospective and personal prospective perception than we actually identified. With respect to personal prospective evaluations, we have to make it plain, though, that the approach we took isolated those more likely to be media dependent rather than those who are actually dependent.

The distinction is an important one. Individuals may be in a position where they do not have to extrapolate from previous experience. This is particularly relevant with respect to personal prospective perceptions. They may be aware that they will be in a different position next year because of changing job situation, new additions to the family or whatever. Although they have different personal prospective and retrospective evaluations they are scarcely 'dependent' in any meaningful sense. Despite this caveat, we do hope that our mode of approach isolates some who are genuinely 'dependent' on the mass media. They are more likely to be represented in the 'dependent' category we have isolated.

For personal prospective 'dependency' we estimated the group at 43.3% of the sample. The implication of this finding for aggregate level analysis is important. For this group prospective perceptions are not rooted exclusively in individual experience. We would submit that they are a product of personal experience and media output. It would seem there is a sociotropic element to the raw, nominally personal level survey data. Only qualitative analysis can establish what the balance here is (coincidence of forward and backward looking evaluations does not entail extrapolation in itself).

We also attempted to isolate general prospective dependents by assuring no contamination from personal prospective evaluations (personal expectations influencing global optimism). Yet bearing in mind the notion of a sociotropic element in personal expectations, it might be as appropriate to think of the causal connection running from the appreciation of the nation environment to personal expectations. Either way, we need to reassess the explanatory elements of Sanders, Ward and Marsh's thesis. The indirect, 'economic' influences on personal expectations can no longer be theorised in Downsian terms alone (or in Downsian terms at all).

On the other hand the general prospective and retrospective indices have a strong media component. Of our sample, 36.7% and 34.3% respectively were considered dependent. We felt that there was less chance of individual level signals contaminating the calculation. Severin notes that,

.."people have various dependencies on the media and that these dependencies vary from person to person, group to group, and from culture to culture." (*ibid.* p.325)

We might add that in relation to economic perception this dependency extends to a very significant proportion of the population. Moreover, the experience of dependency does not appear to be as differentiated by class as we might expect it to be.

In respect to the notion of reciprocal causation, we were less worried about dependency and its 'effect' than we might have been by the correspondence between two overtly attitudinal elements. Dependency is an artificially constructed category and in this sense cannot be 'affected' by economic perception in the

same way as we might expect economic perception to be affected by partisanship. When assessing the effects of dependency we did, however, take the precaution of controlling for partisan attachment. Having controlled we found that dependency had a significant effect on all economic perceptions. General retrospective dependency had the least effect across the board. The impact was restricted to the 'floating' element of our sample (in media effects terms that most vulnerable to influence - Robinson, 1974). General and personal prospective dependency, on the other hand, seemed to have an impact on all partisan sub-categories. Our hypothesis that a media environment whose weight falls on the Conservative side of the balance, has an impact on the electorate's perceptions is, we feel confirmed.

The situation was unchanged when we applied a more stringent test of dependency in the later sections of chapter seven. We were anxious that the dependency we had identified was a valid construct and not just an artifact. We made sure that the elements we isolated were incapable of extrapolating from local knowledge. They were also reluctant to discuss politics with their peers. Although the economy might not constitute 'politics' we were more confident that the group we isolated were indeed 'dependent'. The views of this group were skewed in the direction we hypothesised, though the impact was quite small. We felt that the construct merits further attention, with larger samples, and differentiated media use and exposure indices.

Although we had established with some confidence the notion of the impact of media dependency, we had yet to address frontally the issue of how important changing economic

perceptions might be. We could have accepted Sanders, Ward and Marsh's notion that expectations have a commanding impact on voting preference. Alternatively we could have stuck by our earlier time series analysis and maintained that the media have an impact via the general retrospective perceptions of floating voters. Or, from the same analysis we could have hypothesised the impact on preference via dependency and general prospective evaluations. We chose instead to use a panel format to explore the impact of retrospective perceptions and attributions.

The results we obtained make us more confident in our descriptive than in our relational conclusions (this notwithstanding the small numbers issue). It was fairly clear that there is more volatility at the individual level than at the aggregate level. Gross volatility at the individual level underlies the modest net volatility. The results confirm the notion that a reliance on measures of net volatility can be very misleading (Miller et al. 1990, pp.26-35).

We also established beyond doubt that personal and sociotropic perceptions are in no sense coextensive. They show different levels of gross volatility; personal evaluations are only modestly related to their sociotropic counterparts. The levels seem distinct and show different degrees of association with partisanship. Moreover, it is clear that those who share perceptions at the two levels are not doing so as a function of partisan drive towards consistency. Those who are consistent are no more nor less likely to be strong partisans (or old, or female for that matter). If we turn to the relationship between local and sociotropic perceptions we find comparable features. Indeed,

the relationship between these levels is weaker than between sociotropic and personal levels. What we seem to be looking at are discrete perceptual strata which may vary independently.

We can be less sure of the relationship between these levels of perception and changes in partisan attachment, or the thermometer indices. If we are to sketch a broad picture it would be one stressing the significance of the sociotropic over the personal and the local. Our prime interest, having isolated the strongest associations, was in the relationship between changing perception and changing affect (the notion of feeling warmer or cooler towards the Government). While not ideal, it offered a gauge of impact. In this instance we felt that having controlled for partisanship we were not simply looking at dissonance reduction strategies. It was not the case that Conservative partisans felt that the economy had got better, and had become warmer. On the other hand, it was not the case that non-Conservatives thought the economy was deteriorating and at the same time grew colder towards the Conservative Government. Something approaching a clearer understanding of causation begins to emerge with respect to sociotropic and local (though for the latter, confined to non-Conservatives).

Turning attention to 'leading' economic perceptions and their impact on 'following' partisanship, the results are more ambiguous. Again, having controlled for leading partisanship, it seems relatively clear that we are not just talking about partisanship colouring perception. The complication comes when effects thus isolated are confined to one partisan element. Sadly we have to remain silent on the issue as numbers problems

prevent fuller exploration. Yet impact does seem apparent.

The last point of interest in relation to the material in chapter six concerns the combinations where nothing seemed to be going on. Here the pocketbook variables were fairly heavily represented. It would appear to us that the Downsian thesis is severely weakened by our results. Here the emphasis is not on reciprocal causation. For this to be an interpretative or explanatory issue there needs to be an association worth interpreting. Our results incline us to believe that there is no such association.

The approach to assessing impact could be refined and extended if we threaded together perceptual and affective change questions. The interviewer might ask, 'Over the last twelve months did your personal/did the national situation get worse stay the same or get better?' Having got a response the next step might be to ask 'Did this make you feel warmer or colder towards the Government, or did it have no effect?'. Assuming that personal and sociotropic questions were not one after the other in the survey we might expect to isolate the effected cohort (if effects there were). The advantage is that we have a gauge of the meaning of the response (whether it be optimistic or pessimistic). This gets us round some of the more intractable questions associated with interpreting decontextualised responses. In positing strong media effects Harrop strongly emphasises affirmative responses to the question 'Has television coverage helped you decide who to vote for?' (Harrop, 1987). The volatile elements of the electorate and new voters show the most marked propensity to answer 'yes' to this question. However, the

responses are decontextualised and could mean anything from 'changed my whole life and political philosophy' to 'more firmly entrenched my prejudices against Party X'. The technique we advocate would help us avoid such ambiguities.

The approach would also serve three further functions. Firstly, we could determine the degree of impact associated with the respective levels of perception. Second, by controlling for partisanship we could filter out noise created by partisan misperception. And lastly, we might be able to judge the impact of attribution indirectly. For if individuals think things have got worse and think the Government was responsible this should show up in the affective response (likewise on the optimistic side). On the other hand, if they think things are changing, but that the Government is not doing enough, this should register too. The format has the added virtue of picking up affective change in response to lack of change (ie. the notion that individuals might think nothing changed, but that it certainly should have). If this sort of calculus is prevalent it should show up in affective responses.

The issue is of significance with respect to some aspects of aggregate analysis. Typically the calculation of an integer representing the state of play on economic perceptions, subtracts the number thinking things 'get worse' from those thinking things have or will 'get better'. The technique cannot pick up on indignation which might be generated by the perception of no change. An answer of 'the same' is not taken into consideration. Peffley certainly points to the importance of this attributional aspect, and we feel it requires attention (Peffley, M. 1984;

Peffley and Williams 1985).

Our approach to attribution focused on its mediating role. Attribution on its own did not have an impact net of partisan attachment. We were, however, able to isolate at least one group for whom attributional inference was important in mediating the impact of sociotropic perception. Thermometer readings seemed to respond to sociotropic perception, but this was, to an extent, contingent on attributional inference. The notion of contingency puts a further question mark over the aggregate approach to economic modelling. It is far from clear how the two elements might be represented in a regression analysis. We might question the utility of entering two time series (one for perception, one for attribution) - even if month to month data on attribution were available. We found that attribution on its own seemed to have no effect over and above partisanship; independently attribution made little difference. Only in conjunction with sociotropic perception did attribution of responsibility have an effect (albeit modest).

Where it might be possible to fuse the individual and aggregate level approaches might be over the notion of dependency. Thus far, Sanders, Ward and Marsh have looked at press coverage and its relationship with 'actual' economic events or, rather, government statistics (Sanders, Ward and Marsh, 1991). They have also looked at the relationship between press output and both consumer confidence (personal prospective perceptions), and Government popularity. The authors suggest that while coverage affects consumer confidence, it does so to a modest degree. The impact is, however, exclusively indirect

(via expectations). Coverage provokes no alteration in popularity itself.

Our results would suggest an elaboration on this theme. An alternative would be to isolate the 'dependent' and 'independent' groups for each of the monthly segments. We can then construct a time series for the two cohorts on any of the perceptual dimensions we care to focus on (global or personal; forward or backward looking). We isolated a sociotropic element to people's personal expectations; and we might suggest that this is a clear focus for assessment of the impact of coverage. We might also suggest that the same coverage indices be used to model the general retrospective and general prospective time series. Lastly, we are sceptical about adding a 'coverage' variable to a model that already includes personal expectations. This may be somewhat misleading as consumer confidence itself has a strong sociotropic component. We feel we can establish that our exercise would give us as firm a platform for testing trends in media presentation against perceptual alterations and Government popularity as that of Sanders, Ward and Marsh.

The strategy just outlined would not, however, take us any further on the attributional front. Our final substantive chapter suggest that here the perceptions of the electorate are complicated and confused. The only thing we were clear about in our analysis of personal level attribution was that neither ourselves nor our sample were clear. The relationship between truncated open-ended response, and the closed-ended question on attribution was often obscure. What does seem a little clearer is that the combination of personal level perception and personal

level attribution tend to have no 'impact', if by impact we mean thermometer response. The non-Conservatives who thought their situation had improved, and suggested at the same time that the Government had had a good effect upon them were - on average - no more hot or cold than those non-Conservatives who thought things had got worse and that the Government had had a bad effect on them. Either this is another blow for the Downsian thesis, or we are dealing with questionnaire items whose construct validity is in question. We sense that the answer is probably a combination of the two. Certainly more work has to be done to tease out the issue. Possibly focus group analysis or sustained unstructured interviews are the methods most appropriate for the examination of this complicated perceptual area.

We would also contend that more work needs to be done on the affective component of the electorate's perceptual calculus. Our analysis of affective response to economic change suggests that there are distinctively patterned responses to economic perceptions. Individuals are gladdened, made happy, filled with disgust, are hopeful and angry. In short, they are animated by a range of emotive reactions. Yet these emotions seem to be generated in response to sociotropic rather than personal considerations. Given that the structure of the respective cross tabulation tables were similar, we are almost sure we need to look for some underlying structure.

The question is, what underlying structure? We are still of the opinion that not only do sociotropic perceptions have strong media roots, but attributions likewise. Those in the public sector may be the best placed to tie together the

attributional inferences at sociotropic and personal level. The Government's role in controlling policy affecting staffing, pay and job security cannot possibly be lost on public sector workers. This group will also be aware of more general turbulence in the economy. And they may make the perceptual connection across the personal and sociotropic dimensions. This is less easy for the broad mass of the British public who will not have the same direct, vocational connection with Government activity. These individuals need to find reasons why the country stands as it does. The media offer one ready source of explanation. In this sense, we feel that the element combining the perceptual structures which are associated with affective impact are essentially sociotropic in character (national perceptions, national attributions and personal attributions). It is to this common feature that we must turn for a fuller understanding.

However, we feel that answers will require a step beyond the closed-ended question format. The exercise, though difficult, is not impossible, and has been performed successfully by some media analysts (Morley, 1980; Corner *et al.*, 1990). The authors track media output and plumb audience understanding of the issues involved. This form of exercise is a rich source of data, and all the more difficult to digest for that richness. Yet it is our feeling that analysis of economic perceptions (and especially of attributional inference) desperately needs this sort of individual level, qualitative strategy.

If we are to look at the media's contribution in this respect, our analysis suggests we be sensitive to complex and

overlapping patterns of media exposure and use. Our sample had complicated media preferences. Output from different partisan newspapers frequently overlaid television news and current affairs programming. What we have is a rich *melange*. As the most trusted and respected we might focus on television, but all are significant since our sample used a variety of sources and (we might speculate) get mediated information at one step removed through friends, relatives and acquaintances. Here there may be a need to focus on 'consonance' in media output (to use Noelle-Nuemann's term); on the incidence or otherwise of complementary or similar news items appearing on a range of media.

We were obviously unable to do this in our study. But the approach is recommended if we are to achieve a full and rounded understanding of why the population think the way they do. We need to look at television and press output in tandem. The approach would differ from that taken by the Glasgow University Media Group. Their lack of attention to mechanisms of media influence, and their consequent catch-all approach has come in for considerable criticism (Harrison, 1985; Anderson and Sharrock, 1979). They claimed to have identified structures of media output that could not be understood by the audience as anything other than hostile to organised trade unionism and the Labour Party. The jump is essentially from content to attitude (though as the critics were quick to point out, no audience work was undertaken).

The approach we have outlined would avoid this pitfall. The move would be from empirically established avenues of effect to analysis of content. The perceived role of global appreciations

and attributions offer a platform for establishing more securely grounded content analysis categories. The social psychology and public opinion literature already gives us leverage on the issue (Page, Shapiro and Dempsey, 1987; Severin, 1988). Output ought to be categorised by source characteristic - relating specifically to source credibility. However, our work suggests we might also look at the attributional inferences of those 'neutral' or 'expert' sources. Information relating to the national economy may be analysed on its own. We might also focus on the extent to which it is given a temporal focus. Is it viewed in the context of past trends? Do the press make projections about likely future trends? Is the notion of blame addressed directly or indirectly? Are trends typically placed in a framework of likely impact on specific sectors (as when budget alterations are viewed in the context of impact on stereotypical family groupings)?

The joy of this integrated strategy is that it can be used on a wide variety of issues. The obvious candidates are crime, policing and health care. Have individuals been unfortunate enough as to have come into contact with criminals? Are they aware of policing techniques? Have they benefited recently from NHS care? If the answer is 'no' to all these questions, and the individuals do not have vicarious experience through close associates, there is considerable room for media dependency (likewise for prompting on attribution of responsibility in the respective realms). There is a prospective research agenda here. The problem lies with finding opinion polls where the relevant combination of questions is asked ('Have you experienced this

recently?'; 'Do you know anyone who has?'; 'Have you learned anything from that person's experiences?'). The combination would give us the capacity to make stronger inferences about dependency than hitherto.

The research agenda here is rather ambitious. With respect to the analysis of economics, our aims need to be a little more modest. First, we feel there is a need to assess the impact of a host of economic perceptions. Although we have focused on the sociotropic, it is our feeling that all the perceptual strata are in some respect important. General retrospective, general prospective and personal prospective perception are all likely to play an independent part in conditioning political preferences. However, it is important to bear in mind that, with respect to time series analysis, we are shackled to an ongoing opinion measurement project (the Gallup Political Index). The path we have chosen and the techniques we have deployed are as much a function of structures of availability, as they are the implicit significance of the strata isolated. There are, in short, more things in heaven and on earth than are included in a month on month questionnaire. This issue notwithstanding, we need a way to tie a variety of perceptual strata together.

Gallup have used composite measures in the past to assess the cumulative impact of a variety of perceptions. They use standardised indices constructed from a number of questionnaire responses - sociotropic, savings, consumer confidence, and price and unemployment expectations among them (Gallup, 1991). This particular tack has much to commend it, but the R-Squared values are much lower than those obtained by Sanders, Ward and Marsh

(and our own unreported experiments with standardized sociotropic and personal indicators tended to support this).

If we need more attention to multiple strata, support for opposition parties also needs consideration. Almost all the research on economic voting has focused on the number of people expressing the intention to vote for the Government. The division of support among the Opposition parties is almost wholly ignored. Spencer, Dunn and Curtice have addressed the issue, and modelled Government and Opposition support using economic trend and political event variables (Spencer, Dunn and Curtice, 1991). Three equations are derived from this effort : one for Government support, one for Labour and one for the Liberals. The approach still focuses on Government economic statistics alone, and as such, in our estimation need elaboration. The political event elements are also a little under theorised. The authors do not fully explain why the Brighton bombing was an asset to the Conservative Party, a liability for the Alliance, and insignificant for Labour support. Why, on the other hand, did the Falklands War favour the Conservatives, detract from Labour prospects, and mean little for the Alliance? It is our contention that this area of analysis, while potentially fertile, needs greater attention to the exploration of individual level dynamics.

The issue of 'multiple causation' (the economy affecting more than one party) still leaves us with a number of problems. However, the technique we have advocated (asking about perceptions, asking how perceptions influenced affect, and controlling for partisanship) can at least in part address the

issue of reciprocal causation. In this context we would not be relating discrete attitudinal elements, but the respondent's perception of the relationship. There is a potential problem here over the veracity of such responses, but it is no more serious than that which any survey analysts would have to contend with.

We would hope that the technique would also be sensitive to the development of negative evaluations (Crewe, 1980). Dunleavy is essentially correct in his plea for multiple preference indicators (Dunleavy, 1990). We do need an empirical handle on positive as well as negative perceptions of political parties. It is difficult to envisage how such indicators might figure in a single aggregated regression analysis. Yet we do need to stop regarding intention to vote solely as a positive support orientation. The technique we advocate has the potential to place such multiple preference indicators in developmental perspective. It would go some way towards an understanding of the Government as object (whether that be in positive or negative terms).

Needless to say there is a great deal of speculative and empirical work to be done. It is our hope that our research has provide a platform for the attempt.

**APPENDIX ONE  
SURVEY SCHEDULES**

**INITIAL CONTACT SURVEY**

**TELEPHONE DELIVERED**

**LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS**

NAME :  
ADDRESS:  
  
TEL. No. :

SERIAL No.  
AREA No.  
DATE  
INTERVIEWER

"Just a few background questions for the moment."

1. ARE YOU A PENSIONER AT THE MOMENT?

Y  
N
2. DID YOU VOTE IN THE LAST GENERAL ELECTION?

Y  
N
3. DO YOU READ THE TIMES, THE GUARDIAN, THE TELEGRAPH, THE INDEPENDENT OR THE GUARDIAN?

Y  
N

4. DO YOU READ A DAILY NEWSPAPER?

N Goto  
5.

WHICH WOULD THAT BE?

- HOW OFTEN IS THAT?

EVERY DAY \*  
3/4 TIMES A WEEK \*  
1/2 TIMES A WEEK \*  
ONLY OCCASIONALLY \*

If More Than One Read

WHICH WOULD YOU SAY WAS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT  
SOURCE OF POLITICAL INFORMATION

Star The Relevant Publication

5. DO YOU READ AN EVENING NEWSPAPER?

N Goto  
6.

WHICH WOULD THAT BE?

- HOW OFTEN IS THAT?

EVERY DAY \*  
3/4 TIMES A WEEK \*  
1/2 TIMES A WEEK \*  
ONLY OCCASIONALLY \*

6. DO YOU READ A SUNDAY NEWSPAPER?

N Goto  
6.

WHICH WOULD THAT BE?

- HOW OFTEN IS THAT?

EVERY SUNDAY \*  
1/2 A WEEK \*  
ONLY OCCASIONALLY \*

7. DO YOU READ ANY OTHER NEWSPAPERS (AT WORK  
OR WHEN YOU ARE WITH FRIENDS OR NEIGHBOURS)? N Goto  
8.

WHICH?

WOULD YOU READ IT / THEM	QUITE OFTEN	*
	OCCASIONALLY	*
	OR RARELY	*

8. DO YOU WATCH BREAKFAST TELEVISION? N Goto  
9.

DO YOU WATCH IT	EVERY MORNING	*
	3/4 TIMES A WEEK	*
	1/2 A WEEK	*
	ONLY OCCASIONALLY	*

9. DO YOU REGULARLY WATCH THE EVENING NEWS  
ON TELEVISION AT SIX, NINE OR TEN O'CLOCK? N Goto  
10.

DO YOU WATCH IT	EVERY EVENING	*
	3/4 TIMES A WEEK	*
	1/2 A WEEK	*
	ONLY OCCASIONALLY	*

IS THAT	MAINLY BBC	*
	MAINLY ITN	*
	MAINLY CH4	*

---

Do Not Prompt	A MIX	*
---------------	-------	---

10. DO YOU EVER WATCH CURRENT AFFAIRS  
PROGRAMMES SUCH AS PANORAMA, NEWSNIGHT,  
T.V. EYE OR WORLD IN ACTION? N (Thanks)

WOULD YOU WATCH THEM	OFTEN	*
	OCCASIONALLY	*
	OR RARELY	*

Thank You Very Much; You Have Been More Than Helpful

MAIN FIELDWORK SURVEY

HOUSEHOLD COMPLETION

NEWCROSS

NAME :  
ADDRESS:

SERIAL No.  
AREA No.  
DATE  
INTERVIEWER

TEL. No. :

TIME STARTED  
TIME FINISHED  
TOTAL TIME

---

We are interested in people's attitudes towards there standard of living and towards the state of the country, in the run up to the next general election. It's not intended to test you knowledge of politics or economics.

We are also interested in people's attitudes towards the political parties and in voting. However, any information you give us will be held in the strictest confidence.

---

GENDER        M  
              F

INTERVIEWEE STATUS        A  
                              B

### Could We Start With Some Background Questions

1. COULD YOU TELL ME THE AGE BAND YOU FALL INTO?
- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 15 - 24 | * |
| 25 - 34 | * |
| 35 - 44 | * |
| 45 - 54 | * |
| 55 - 65 | * |
| 65+     | * |
2. a) ARE YOU A MEMBER OF A TRADE UNION AT PRESENT?
- |     |         |
|-----|---------|
| Y   | Goto b. |
| N   | Goto c. |
| n/a | Goto c. |
- b) WHICH? .....
- c) HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A MEMBER OF A TRADE UNION?
- |     |         |
|-----|---------|
| Y   | Goto d. |
| N   | Goto 3. |
| n/a | Goto 3. |
- d) WHICH? .....
3. a) ARE YOU A MEMBER OF A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OR BODY?
- |     |         |
|-----|---------|
| Y   | Goto b. |
| N   | Goto 4. |
| n/a | Goto 4. |
- b) WHICH? .....
4. WHAT AGE WERE YOU WHEN YOU LEFT SCHOOL? .....
5. DO YOU HAVE ANY 'O' OR 'A' LEVELS?
- |   |
|---|
| Y |
| N |

---

### Now Some General Questions On The Country's Economy

6. a) WOULD YOU SAY THAT, IN GENERAL, THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS BETTER, WORSE OR ABOUT THE SAME AS IT WAS A YEAR AGO, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?
- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| B | Goto b. |
| W | Goto b. |
| S | Goto 7. |
| U | Goto 7. |
- b) IS THAT A LITTLE OR A LOT?
- |    |
|----|
| LI |
| LO |

- |       |  |                        |  |
|-------|--|------------------------|--|
| 7. a) | WOULD YOU SAY THAT, IN GENERAL,<br>THE INFLATION RATE IS BETTER, WORSE<br>OR ABOUT THE SAME AS IT WAS A YEAR<br>AGO, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?  | B<br>W<br>S<br>U       | Goto b.<br>Goto b.<br>Goto 8.<br>Goto 8.               |
| b)    | IS THAT A LITTLE OR A LOT?   | LI<br>LO               |  |
| 8. a) | WE'VE ASKED ABOUT SPECIFICS, BUT<br>WOULD YOU SAY THAT, <u>OVERALL</u> , THE<br>COUNTRY'S GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION<br>IS BETTER, WORSE OR ABOUT THE SAME<br>AS IT WAS A YEAR AGO, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?                                   | B<br>W<br>S<br>U       | Goto b.<br>Goto b.<br>Goto 9.<br>Goto 9.               |
| b)    | IS THAT A LITTLE OR A LOT?   | LI<br>LO               |  |
| 9. a) | WITH REGARD TO THE COUNTRY'S<br>GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION WOULD<br>YOU SAY THAT - SINCE 1983 - THE<br>GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES HAVE HAD A<br>GOOD EFFECT, A BAD EFFECT, A MIXED<br>EFFECT OR MADE LITTLE DIFFERENCE,<br>OR ARE YOU UNSURE? | G<br>B<br>M<br>ND<br>U | Goto b.<br>Goto b.<br>Goto 10.<br>Goto 10.<br>Goto 10. |
| b)    | WOULD YOU SAY THAT WAS A FAIRLY<br>..... EFFECT OR A VERY .....<br>EFFECT?   | F<br>V                 |  |

---

**Now If I Could Ask A Few More Background Questions**

- |        |  |                  |                      |
|--------|--|------------------|----------------------|
| 10. a) | DO YOU OWN YOUR OWN HOME OR HOLD A<br>MORTGAGE ON IT?  | Y<br>N           | Goto b.<br>Goto c.   |
| b)     | DID YOU BUY YOUR HOUSE FROM THE<br>FROM THE LOCAL COUNCIL?   | Y<br>N           | Goto 11.<br>Goto 11. |
| c)     | ARE YOU PAYING RENT AT THE MOMENT?   | Y<br>N           | Goto d.<br>Goto 11.  |
| d)     | ARE YOU PAYING RENT TO.... LOCAL AUTHORITY<br>HOUSING ASSOCIATION<br>PRIVATE LANDLORD<br>SOME OTHER BODY OR PERSON | *<br>*<br>*<br>* |                      |
-

Now I'd Like To Ask You Some Very General Questions About Your Own Financial Situation

- 11.a)

WOULD YOU SAY THAT, FINANCIALLY,  
YOU ARE BETTER OFF, WORSE OFF, OR  
ABOUT THE SAME AS YOU WERE A YEAR  
AGO, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?

B  
W  
S  
U

Goto b.  
Goto b.  
Goto 12.  
Goto 12.
- b)

IS THAT A LITTLE OR A LOT?

LI  
LO

Goto c.  
Goto c.
- c)

YOU'VE SAID YOU ARE .....  
IN GENERAL TERMS, HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR THIS?

.....  
.....  
.....
- 12.a)

DO YOU THINK THAT OVER THE LAST  
YEAR YOUR INCOME HAS GONE UP MORE  
THAN THE COST OF LIVING; HAS FALLEN  
BEHIND; OR HAS STAYED ABOUT EVEN  
WITH THE COST OF LIVING, OR ARE  
YOU UNSURE?

UPM  
BEH  
EVN  
UNS

Goto b.  
Goto b.  
Goto 13.  
Goto 13.
- b)

IS THAT A LITTLE OR A LOT?

LI  
LO
- 13.a)

WITH REGARD TO YOUR OWN  
FINANCIAL SITUATION WOULD  
YOU SAY THAT - SINCE 1983 - THE  
GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES HAVE HAD A  
GOOD EFFECT, A BAD EFFECT, OR MADE  
LITTLE DIFFERENCE, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?

G  
B  
ND  
U

Goto b.  
Goto b.  
Goto 14.  
Goto 14.
- b)

WOULD YOU SAY THAT WAS A FAIRLY  
..... EFFECT OR A VERY ..... EFFECT?

F  
V
- 14.a)

WITH REGARD TO YOUR PROSPECTS OF  
KEEPING OR GETTING A JOB, WOULD  
YOU SAY THAT - SINCE 1983 - THE  
GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES HAVE HAD A  
GOOD EFFECT, A BAD EFFECT, OR MADE  
LITTLE DIFFERENCE, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?

G  
B  
ND  
U

Goto b.  
Goto b.  
Goto 15.  
Goto 15.
- b)

WOULD YOU SAY THAT WAS A FAIRLY  
..... EFFECT OR A VERY ..... EFFECT?

F  
V

- |   |                  |  |
|---|------------------|--|
| 15.a) WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE GENERAL<br>ECONOMIC SITUATION IN YOUR <u>LOCAL</u><br>AREA IS BETTER, WORSE OR ABOUT THE<br>SAME AS IT WAS A YEAR AGO, OR ARE<br>YOU UNSURE?   | B<br>W<br>S<br>U | Goto b.<br>Goto b.<br>Goto 16.<br>Goto 16. |
| b) IS THAT A LITTLE OR A LOT?   | LI<br>LO         |  |
| 16. IF UNEMPLOYMENT DOES NOT COME DOWN<br>IN THE NEXT YEAR OR SO, DO YOU THINK<br>THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE HELD COMPLETELY<br>RESPONSIBLE, NOT AT ALL RESPONSIBLE,<br>OR PARTLY RESPONSIBLE - OR ARE YOU<br>UNSURE?           | C<br>N<br>P<br>U |  |
| 17. IN GENERAL, DO YOU THINK THE<br>GOVERNMENT <u>HAS IT IN ITS POWER</u> TO<br>SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE THE NUMBER OF<br>UNEMPLOYED - CAN THEY DO A LOT, CAN<br>THEY DO A BIT, OR CAN THEY DO VERY<br>LITTLE, OR ARE YOU UNSURE? | L<br>B<br>V<br>U |  |
| 18. IF INFLATION DOES NOT COME DOWN<br>IN THE NEXT YEAR OR SO, DO YOU THINK<br>THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE HELD COMPLETELY<br>RESPONSIBLE, NOT AT ALL RESPONSIBLE,<br>OR PARTLY RESPONSIBLE - OR ARE YOU<br>UNSURE?              | C<br>N<br>P<br>U |  |
| 19. IN GENERAL, DO YOU THINK THE<br>GOVERNMENT <u>HAS IT IN ITS POWER</u> TO<br>SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE INFLATION<br>- CAN THEY DO A LOT, CAN THEY<br>DO A BIT, OR CAN THEY DO VERY<br>LITTLE, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?                | L<br>B<br>V<br>U |  |

---

P.T.O.

- |   |         |                      |
|---|---------|----------------------|
| 20. a) ARE YOU WORKING FULL TIME AT<br>PRESENT?   | Y*<br>N | Goto b.<br>Goto 21.  |
| b) HAVE YOU BEEN OUT OF WORK IN<br>THE PAST YEAR?   | Y*<br>N | Goto 25.<br>Goto 24. |
| 21. HAVE YOU BEEN IN FULL-TIME WORK<br>AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST YEAR?  | Y*<br>N | Goto 23.<br>Goto 22. |
| 22. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN FULL-TIME<br>EMPLOYMENT?  | Y*<br>N | Goto 23.<br>Goto 23. |
| 23. ARE YOU LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME<br>WORK AT PRESENT?   | Y<br>N  | Goto 25.<br>Goto 25. |
| 24. ARE THERE ANY PEOPLE IN YOUR<br>HOUSEHOLD WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED<br><u>AND</u> WHO ARE LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME<br>WORK? | Y<br>N  | Goto 25.<br>Goto 25. |
- 

25. Only If One Of Above Responses Is Marked \* Otherwise Goto 26.

Now I Want To Ask You About Your Past/Present Job

P.T.O.

25.a) WHAT IS/WAS THE TITLE OF YOUR JOB?  
.....

b) WHAT KIND OF WORK DID YOU DO MOST OF THE TIME?  
.....

c) WHAT TRAINING OR QUALIFICATIONS DO/DID YOU HAVE THAT ARE/WERE NEEDED FOR THAT JOB?  
.....

d) DO/DID YOU SUPERVISE OR ARE/WERE YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WORK OF ANY OTHER PEOPLE?  
Y ----- HOW MANY? .....  
N

e) ARE/WERE YOU AN EMPLOYEE OR SELF-EMPLOYED? E Goto f.  
S Goto 26.

f) IS/WAS THE COMPANY YOU WORK/WORKED FOR .....  
A PRIVATE FIRM \*  
A NATIONALISED INDUSTRY \*  
A LOCAL OR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION \*  
A CHARITY \*  
OR WHAT?  
(Please Specify)  
.....

26. ARE YOU MARRIED OR LIVING AS MARRIED AT PRESENT? Y Goto 27.  
N Goto 32.

27.a) IS YOUR PARTNER WORKING FULL-TIME AT PRESENT? Y\* Goto b.  
N Goto 28.

b) HAS YOUR PARTNER BEEN OUT OF WORK IN THE PAST YEAR? Y\* Goto 31.  
N Goto 31.

28. HAS YOUR PARTNER BEEN IN FULL-TIME WORK AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST YEAR? Y\* Goto 30.  
N Goto 29.

29. HAS YOUR PARTNER EVER BEEN IN FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT? Y\* Goto 30.  
N Goto 30.

30. IS YOUR PARTNER LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME WORK AT PRESENT? Y Goto 31. N Goto 31.

31. Only If One Of Above Responses Is Marked \* Otherwise Goto 32.

Now I Want To Ask You About Your Partner's Past/Present Job

31.a) WHAT IS/WAS THE TITLE OF YOUR PARTNER'S JOB? .....

b) WHAT KIND OF WORK DID/DOES YOUR PARTNER DO MOST OF THE TIME? .....

c) WHAT TRAINING OR QUALIFICATIONS DOES/DID YOU PARTNER HAVE THAT WAS/IS NEEDED FOR THAT JOB? .....

d) DOES/DID YOUR PARTNER SUPERVISE, OR IS/WAS YOUR PARTNER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WORK OF ANY OTHER PEOPLE? Y ----- HOW MANY? ..... N

e) IS/WAS YOUR PARTNER AN EMPLOYEE OR SELF-EMPLOYED? E Goto f. S Goto 26.

f) IS/WAS THE COMPANY YOUR PARTNER WORK/WORKED FOR ..... A PRIVATE FIRM \* A NATIONALISED INDUSTRY \* A LOCAL OR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION \* A CHARITY \* OR WHAT? (Please Specify) .....

**Now I'd Like To Ask You About Your General Interest In Politics  
And About Discussion Of Politics - But I Won't Be Asking About  
Your Own Private Beliefs**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 32. IN GENERAL, HOW INTERESTED IN             | V |  |
| POLITICS WOULD YOU SAY YOU WERE?              | F |  |
| ARE YOU <u>VERY</u> INTERESTED, <u>FAIRLY</u> | N |  |
| INTERESTED, <u>NOT</u> VERY INTERESTED OR     | D |  |
| <u>DISINTERESTED</u> ?                        |   |  |
- 
- |                                   |   |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| 33.a) WHAT WOULD YOU SAY WAS YOUR |   |  |
| <u>MOST</u> IMPORTANT SOURCE OF   |   |  |
| POLITICAL INFORMATION? IS IT..    |   |  |
| FAMILY, FRIENDS & WORKMATES       | * |  |
| <u>OR</u> RADIO                   | * |  |
| <u>OR</u> T.V.                    | * |  |
| <u>OR</u> NEWSPAPERS              | * |  |
- 
- |                        |                |   |
|------------------------|----------------|---|
| <u>(Do Not Prompt)</u> | MIXED SOURCES  | * |
|                        | NONE SPECIFIED | * |
- 
- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| b) WHAT WOULD YOU SAY WAS YOUR         |   |  |
| <u>SECOND</u> MOST IMPORTANT SOURCE OF |   |  |
| POLITICAL INFORMATION? IS IT..         |   |  |
| FAMILY, FRIENDS & WORKMATES            | * |  |
| <u>OR</u> RADIO                        | * |  |
| <u>OR</u> T.V.                         | * |  |
| <u>OR</u> NEWSPAPERS                   | * |  |
- 
- |                        |                |   |
|------------------------|----------------|---|
| <u>(Do Not Prompt)</u> | MIXED SOURCES  | * |
|                        | NONE SPECIFIED | * |
- 
- |                                       |   |                 |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 34.a) DO YOU TALK ABOUT POLITICS WITH | Y | <b>Goto b.</b>  |
| YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS, NEIGHBOURS      | N | <b>Goto 35.</b> |
| OR WORKMATES?                         |   |                 |
- 
- |                                  |    |  |
|----------------------------------|----|--|
| b) WOULD YOU SAY THAT WAS OFTEN, | OF |  |
| OCCASIONALLY OR RARELY?          | OC |  |
|                                  | RA |  |
- 
- |                                      |   |                 |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 35.a) IN THE LAST WEEK OR SO CAN YOU | Y | <b>Goto b.</b>  |
| REMEMBER TALKING TO ANYONE ABOUT     | N | <b>Goto 36.</b> |
| POLITICS?                            |   |                 |
- 
- |               |            |   |
|---------------|------------|---|
| b) WITH WHOM? | FAMILY     | * |
|               | FRIENDS    | * |
|               | NEIGHBOURS | * |
|               | WORKMATES  | * |
- 
- |                |       |  |
|----------------|-------|--|
| c) ABOUT WHAT? | ..... |  |
|----------------|-------|--|
- 
- |                               |   |  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| d) DID YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? | A |  |
|                               | D |  |

Now To Move On To The Political Parties. I'd Like To Ask You About The Feelings You May Have When You Think About Them.

I'll Do This By Asking You If A Particular Party Makes You Feel (For Instance) 'Happy' Or 'Angry' Or 'Proud' (Etc.), And I'll Simply Ask You To Answer 'Yes' Or 'No' (If You Are Unsure Or The Question Sounds Odd, You Should Just Answer 'No').

If You Answer 'Yes' I'll Ask You To Indicate How Strongly You Feel On A Scale From 'One' To 'Five' (Show Prompt Card). Here 'One' Means You Feel The Emotion Weakly And 'Five' Means You Feel It Strongly.

You Can Choose Any Number Between 'One' And 'Five'.

ROTATE QUESTIONS  
36. TO 38.

ORGANISE ACCORDING  
TO STATUS OF  
RESPONDENT

Now If We Could Begin

36. WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE LABOUR PARTY, AS A WHOLE, DOES IT  
MAKE YOU FEEL.....

If Respondent Status 'A'

		Y	N	SCORE
	HAPPY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	ANGRY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	HOPEFUL			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	DISGUSTED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PLEASED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	UNEASY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PROUD			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	AFRAID			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	RELAXED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	UNHAPPY			

If Respondent Status 'B'

		Y	N	SCORE
	UNHAPPY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	RELAXED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	AFRAID			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PROUD			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	UNEASY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PLEASED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	DISGUSTED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	HOPEFUL			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	ANGRY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	HAPPY			

37. WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE ALLIANCE, AS A WHOLE, DOES IT  
MAKE YOU FEEL.....

If Respondent Status 'A'

		Y	N	SCORE
	HAPPY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	ANGRY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	HOPEFUL			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	DISGUSTED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PLEASED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	UNEASY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PROUD			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	AFRAID			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	RELAXED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	UNHAPPY			

If Respondent Status 'B'

		Y	N	SCORE
	UNHAPPY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	RELAXED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	AFRAID			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PROUD			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	UNEASY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PLEASED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	DISGUSTED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	HOPEFUL			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	ANGRY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	HAPPY			

38. WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, AS A WHOLE, DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL.....

If Respondent Status 'A'

		Y	N	SCORE
	HAPPY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	ANGRY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	HOPEFUL			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	DISGUSTED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PLEASED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	UNEASY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PROUD			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	AFRAID			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	RELAXED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	UNHAPPY			

If Respondent Status 'B'

		Y	N	SCORE
	UNHAPPY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	RELAXED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	AFRAID			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PROUD			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	UNEASY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	PLEASED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	DISGUSTED			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	HOPEFUL			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	ANGRY			
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL .....	HAPPY			

Now I'd Like You To Express Your Feelings Of Warmth Or Coldness Towards The Major Political Parties. You Can Do This Through What We Call The 'Feeling Thermometer' (PROMPT CARD).

If You Have A Warm Feeling Towards The Particular Party You Should Give It A Score Between 50 And 100 Degrees, Depending On How Warm Your Feeling Is.1

On The Other Hand, If You Feel; Rather Cold Towards The Party You Should Place Your Score Between 50 and 0 Degrees.

If You Don't Feel Particularly Warm Or Cold Towards It You Should Place Your Score At The 50 Degree Mark.

ROTATE Q.s 39-40

39. FIRST THE LABOUR PARTY. WHERE WOULD YOU PLACE THE LABOUR PARTY ON THE 'FEELING THERMOMETER' ACCORDING TO YOUR FEELINGS TOWARDS IT?

(SCORE IN NUMBERS)

0 - 41

50

51 - 100


40. NOW THE ALLIANCE. WHERE WOULD YOU PLACE IT ON THE 'FEELING THERMOMETER'.?

(SCORE IN NUMBERS)

0 - 41

50

51 - 100


41. LASTLY THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. WHERE WOULD YOU PLACE IT ON THE 'THERMOMETER'?

(SCORE IN NUMBERS)

0 - 41

50

51 - 100


42.a)	GENERALLY SPEAKING DO YOU NORMALLY THINK OF YOURSELF AS CONSERVATIVE LABOUR OR ALLIANCE?	Y N	<b>Goto b.</b> <b>Goto 43.</b>
-------	--	--------	-----------------------------------

b)	WHICH IS THAT?	CON	*
		LAB	*
		ALL	*

c)	HOW STRONGLY DO YOU GENERALLY FEEL? IS THAT <u>VERY</u> STRONGLY, <u>FAIRLY</u> STRONGLY OR <u>NOT</u> VERY STRONGLY?	V F N
----	---	-------------

43.a)	DO YOU EVER THINK OF YOURSELF AS <u>CLOSER</u> TO ONE OF THE THREE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES?	Y N	<b>Goto b.</b> <b>Goto 44.</b>
-------	---	--------	-----------------------------------

b)	WHICH IS THAT?	CON	*
		LAB	*
		ALL	*

**Now Just A Few More Background Questions**

44.a)	AT PRESENT ARE YOU DOING ANY PART-TIME OR FULL-TIME STUDIES?	Y N	<b>Goto b.</b> <b>Goto 45.</b>
-------	---	--------	-----------------------------------

b) WHAT ARE YOU STUDYING? .....

.....

45.a)	HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY UNDERTAKEN ANY PART-TIME OR FULL-TIME STUDIES?	Y N	<b>Goto b.</b> <b>Goto 46.</b>
-------	---	--------	-----------------------------------

b) WHAT DID YOU STUDY? .....

.....

46.a)	WOULD YOU SAY YOUR YEARLY INCOME IS OVER <u>OR</u> UNDER £10,000?	Y N	<b>Goto b.</b> <b>Goto b.</b>
-------	--	--------	----------------------------------

b) IS THAT BEFORE OR AFTER TAX?

47.	DO YOU RECEIVE MONEY WEEKLY, EVERY TWO WEEKS, OR MONTHLY?	W 2 M
-----	--	-------------

48.a) DO YOU OWN OR HAVE REGULAR USE OF A CAR OR VAN?	Y N	<b>Goto b.</b> <b>Goto 49.</b>
b) DOES THE CAR OR VAN COME WITH A JOB?	Y N	

49. ARE YOU ENROLED FOR PRIVATE MEDICINE?	Y N
---	--------

**Now Some General Questions About The Government**

50.a) <u>IN GENERAL</u> , HOW WELL DO YOU THINK THE GOVERNMENT IS HANDLING THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS? IS IT HANDLING THEM <u>WELL</u> , <u>BADLY</u> , <u>NEITHER</u> WELL NOR BADLY, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?	W B N U	<b>Goto b.</b> <b>Goto b.</b> <b>Goto 51.</b> <b>Goto 51.</b>
---	------------------	--

b) IS THAT QUITE ..... OR VERY ..... ?	Q V
--	--------

51.a) WITH REGARD TO YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY, WOULD YOU SAY THAT - SINCE 1983 - THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES HAVE HAD A GOOD EFFECT, A A BAD EFFECT, A MIXED EFFECT OR MADE LITTLE DIFFERENCE, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?	G B M ND U	<b>Goto b.</b> <b>Goto b.</b> <b>Goto 52.</b> <b>Goto 52.</b> <b>Goto 52.</b>
--	------------------------	---

b) WOULD YOU SAY THAT WAS A FAIRLY ..... EFFECT OR A VERY ..... EFFECT?	F V
--	--------

52. HOW FAR HAS THE GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT SINCE 1983? HAS IT CONTRIBUTED A GREAT DEAL, A LITTLE, VERY LITTLE OR NOTHING DIRECTLY, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?	G A V N U
--	-----------------------

53.a)	WITH REGARD TO INFLATION	G	Goto b.
	WOULD YOU SAY THAT - SINCE 1983 -	B	Goto b.
	THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES HAVE	M	Goto 52.
	HAD A GOOD EFFECT, A BAD EFFECT,	ND	Goto 52.
	A MIXED EFFECT OR MADE LITTLE	U	Goto 52.
	DIFFERENCE, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?		

b)	WOULD YOU SAY THAT WAS A FAIRLY	F
	..... EFFECT OR A VERY ..... EFFECT?	V

54. IF THERE WAS A GENERAL ELECTION TOMORROW AND YOUR VOTE DECIDED WHETHER, FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, WE HAD A LABOUR, A CONSERVATIVE OR AN ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT, HOW WOULD YOU VOTE?

WON'T SAY	*
WON'T VOTE	*
DON'T KNOW	*
LABOUR	*
CONSERVATIVE	*
ALLIANCE	*
OTHER	*

55. IS THERE ONE OF THE THREE MAIN PARTIES (CONSERVATIVE, LABOUR OR ALLIANCE) WHICH YOU WOULD DEFINITELY NOT VOTE FOR?

WON'T SAY	*
DON'T KNOW	*
LABOUR	*
CONSERVATIVE	*
ALLIANCE	*

56. DID YOU VOTE IN THE RECENT GENERAL ELECTION? HOW DID YOU VOTE?

DIDN'T VOTE	*
CANNOT REMEMBER	*
WON'T SAY	*
LABOUR	*
CONSERVATIVE	*
ALLIANCE	*
OTHER	*

57.a)	WERE YOU ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN THE 1983	Y	Goto b.
	GENERAL ELECTION WHEN MRS. THATCHER WAS	N	*THANKS*
	FIRST ELECTED?		

b)	HOW DID YOU VOTE IN	DIDN'T VOTE	*
	THAT ELECTION?	CANNOT REMEMBER	*
		WON'T SAY	*
		LABOUR	*
		CONSERVATIVE	*
		ALLIANCE	*
		OTHER	*

FIRST FOLLOW-UP

TELEPHONE DELIVERED

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

SERIAL No.  
AREA No.  
DATE  
INTERVIEWER

- 304

- |       |  |                        |   |
|-------|--|------------------------|---|
| 5. a) | WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN YOUR <u>LOCAL</u> AREA IS BETTER, WORSE OR ABOUT THE SAME AS IT WAS A YEAR AGO, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?  | B<br>W<br>S<br>U       | Goto b.<br>Goto b.<br>Goto 6.<br>Goto 6.            |
| b)    | IS THAT A LITTLE OR A LOT?   | LI<br>LO               |   |
| 6. a) | WITH REGARD TO YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY WOULD YOU SAY THAT OVER THE LAST YEAR THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES HAVE HAD A GOOD EFFECT, A BAD EFFECT, A MIXED EFFECT OR MADE LITTLE DIFFERENCE, OR ARE YOU UNSURE? | G<br>B<br>M<br>ND<br>U | Goto b.<br>Goto b.<br>Goto 7.<br>Goto 7.<br>Goto 7. |
| b)    | WOULD YOU SAY THAT WAS A FAIRLY ..... EFFECT OR A VERY ..... EFFECT?   | F<br>V                 |   |
| 7. a) | <u>IN GENERAL</u> , HOW WELL DO YOU THINK THE GOVERNMENT IS HANDLING THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS? IS IT HANDLING THEM <u>WELL</u> , <u>BADLY</u> , <u>NEITHER</u> WELL NOR BADLY, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?        | W<br>B<br>N<br>U       | Goto b.<br>Goto b.<br>Goto 8.<br>Goto 8.            |
| b)    | IS THAT QUITE ..... OR VERY ..... ?  | Q<br>V                 |   |
| 8. a) | GENERALLY SPEAKING DO YOU NORMALLY THINK OF YOURSELF AS CONSERVATIVE LABOUR OR ALLIANCE?   | Y<br>N                 | Goto b.<br>Goto 9.                                  |
| b)    | WHICH IS THAT?   | CON<br>LAB<br>ALL      | *<br>*<br>*   |
| c)    | HOW STRONGLY DO YOU GENERALLY FEEL? IS THAT <u>VERY</u> STRONGLY, <u>FAIRLY</u> STRONGLY OR <u>NOT</u> VERY STRONGLY?  | V<br>F<br>N            |   |
| 9. a) | DO YOU EVER THINK OF YOURSELF AS <u>CLOSER</u> TO ONE OF THE THREE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES?  | Y<br>N                 | Goto b.<br>Goto 10.                                 |
| b)    | WHICH IS THAT?   | CON<br>LAB<br>ALL      | *<br>*<br>*   |

10.a)	ARE YOU WORKING FULL TIME AT PRESENT?	Y N	Goto b. Goto b.
b)	HAVE YOU BEEN OUT OF WORK IN THE PAST YEAR?	Y N	Goto c. Goto c.
c)	ARE THERE ANY PEOPLE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED <u>AND</u> WHO ARE LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME WORK?	Y N	Goto 10. Goto 10.

11. IF THERE WAS A GENERAL ELECTION TOMORROW HOW WOULD YOU VOTE?

WON'T SAY	*
UNDECIDED	*
CONSERVATIVE	*
LABOUR	*
SLDP	
SDP	*
OTHER	*

12.a)	IS THERE ONE OF THE MAIN PARTIES YOU WOULD DEFINITELY <u>NOT</u> VOTE FOR?	Y N	Goto b. Goto 13
-------	---	--------	--------------------

CON      LAB      SLDP      SDP      OTHER

b)	HOW STRONGLY DO YOU GENERALLY FEEL? IS THAT <u>VERY</u> STRONGLY, <u>FAIRLY</u> STRONGLY OR <u>NOT</u> VERY STRONGLY?	V F N
----	---	-------------

13.a)	SINCE THE LAST TIME WE CONTACTED YOU WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOUR <u>FEELINGS</u> TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT ARE WARMER, COLDER OR ABOUT THE SAME, OR ARE YOU UNSURE?	W C S U	Goto b. Goto b. Goto 14. Goto 14.
-------	--	------------------	--

b)	IS THAT A LITTLE OR A LOT?	LI LO
----	----------------------------	----------

14. DID YOU VOTE IN THE RECENT EUROPEAN ELECTION?

DIDN'T VOTE	*
WON'T SAY	*
CONSERVATIVE	*
LABOUR	*
SLDP	*
SDP	*
OTHER	*

Thank You Very Much For Your Cooperation In The Survey

SOCIAL SURVEYS (GALLUP POLL) LIMITED

GALLUP POLITICAL INDEX

OCTOBER 1981

EXTRACTS

1. a) IF THERE WAS A GENERAL ELECTION TOMORROW, WHICH PARTY WOULD YOU SUPPORT? (Mark first column below).

b) If "Don't Know" : WHICH PARTY WOULD YOU BE MOST INCLINED TO VOTE FOR? (Mark second column below).

	a)	b)
Conservative	1	7
Labour	2	8
Liberal	3	9
Social Democrats	4	0
Nationalists*	5	X
Other party	6	V
Don't know	R	R

2. DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE CLOSE TO ANY PARTICULAR PARTY? IF SO, DO YOU FEEL YOURSELF TO BE VERY CLOSE TO THIS PARTY, FAIRLY CLOSE OR MERELY A SYMPATHISER?

- 1 Very close
- 2 Fairly close
- 3 Merely a sympathiser
- 4 Not close to any party
- 5 Don't know

3. a) HOW DO YOU THINK THE GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THIS COUNTRY HAS CHANGED OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS? (Read Out)

- 1 Got a lot better
- 2 Got a little better
- 3 Stayed the same
- 4 Got a little worse
- 5 Got a lot worse
- 6 Don't know

b) HOW DO YOU THINK THE GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THIS COUNTRY WILL DEVELOP OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS? (Read Out)

- 1 Got a lot better
- 2 Got a little better
- 3 Stayed the same
- 4 Got a little worse
- 5 Got a lot worse
- 6 Don't know

4. a) HOW DOES THE FINANCIAL SITUATION OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD NOW  
COMPARE WITH WHAT IT WAS 12 MONTHS AGO? (Read Out)

- 1 Got a lot better
- 2 Got a little better
- 3 Stayed the same
- 4 Got a little worse
- 5 Got a lot worse
- 6 Don't know

b) HOW DO YOU THINK THE FINANCIAL SITUATION OF YOUR  
HOUSEHOLD WILL CHANGE OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS? (Read Out)

- 1 Got a lot better
- 2 Got a little better
- 3 Stayed the same
- 4 Got a little worse
- 5 Got a lot worse
- 6 Don't know

5. WHICH OF THESE STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBES THE PRESENT  
FINANCIAL SITUATION IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD? (Read  
out - reverse order for alternate contacts)

- 1 We are running into debt
- 2 We have to draw on our savings
- 3 We are just managing to make ends  
meet on our income
- 4 We are saving a little
- 5 We are saving a lot

6. a) HOW DO YOU THINK THE LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT (I MEAN THE  
NUMBER OF PEOPLE OUT OF WORK) IN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE  
WILL CHANGE OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS? WILL IT : (Read out)

- 1 Increase sharply
- 2 Increase slightly
- 3 Remain the same
- 4 Fall slightly
- 5 Fall sharply
- 6 Don't know

b) COMPARED TO WHAT IT WAS 12 MONTHS AGO, DO YOU THINK THE  
COST OF LIVING IS NOW : (Read out)

- 7 Very much higher
- 8 Quite a bit higher
- 9 A little higher
- 0 About the same
- X Lower
- V Don't know

7. a) DO YOU (OR YOUR HUSBAND/WIFE) BELONG TO A TRADE UNION?

- 1 Yes, self
- 2 Yes, husband/wife
- 3 No

b) IF YOU WERE TO SAY WHICH SOCIAL CLASS YOU BELONGED TO, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY? (Read out all five alternatives)

- 4 Upper
- 5 Upper-middle
- 6 Middle
- 7 Lower-middle
- 8 Working

8. CAN YOU TELL ME YOUR DATE OF BIRTH PLEASE? (Write in and code)

- 1 16 or 17
- 2 18 - 20
- 3 21 - 24
- 4 25 - 29
- 5 30 - 34
- 6 35 - 39
- 7 40 - 44
- 8 45 - 49
- 9 50 - 54
- 0 55 - 59
- X 60 - 64
- V 65 or over

9. a) SEX

- 1 Man
- Woman
- 2 Housewife
- 3 Not housewife

b) ARE YOU

- 4 Married
- 5 Single
- 6 Widowed, divorced, separated

c) SOCIO-  
ECON.  
GROUP

- Non-manual
- 7 A
- 8 B
- 9 C1

Manual

- 0 C2
- X D
- V E

**APPENDIX TWO**  
**AFFECT AND THE ECONOMY**

## Affect Against Economic Perceptions and Attributions

### **HAPPY**

#### NATIONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.33  
CON : 0.12  
NON-CON : 0.13

#### PERSONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.28  
CON : 0.22  
NON-CON : 0.13

#### NATIONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION

ALL : 0.29  
CON : 0.20  
NON-CON : 0.28

#### PERSONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION

ALL : 0.10  
CON : 0.09  
NON-CON : 0.02

### **ANGER**

#### NATIONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.29  
CON : 0.11 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.20

#### PERSONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.29  
CON : 0.17 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.20

#### NATIONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION

ALL : 0.37  
CON : 0.39 \*  
NON-CON : 0.25

#### PERSONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION

ALL : 0.15  
CON : 0.21 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.00

### **HOPEFUL**

#### NATIONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.32  
CON : 0.00 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.13

#### PERSONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.21  
CON : 0.06 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.09

#### NATIONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION

ALL : 0.27  
CON : 0.10 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.27

#### PERSONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION

ALL : 0.15  
CON : 0.23 \*\*\*  
NON-CON : 0.08

### **DISGUST**

#### NATIONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.40  
CON : 0.28 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.32

#### PERSONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.34  
CON : 0.17 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.26

#### NATIONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION

ALL : 0.35  
CON : 0.35 \*\*\*  
NON-CON : 0.25

#### PERSONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION

ALL : 0.21  
CON : 0.31 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.05

### **PLEASED**

#### NATIONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.33  
CON : 0.03  
NON-CON : 0.17

#### PERSONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.26  
CON : 0.14  
NON-CON : 0.15

**NATIONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION**

ALL : 0.29  
CON : 0.14  
NON-CON : 0.30

**PERSONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION**

ALL : 0.06  
CON : 0.00  
NON-CON : 0.01

**UNEASY****NATIONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION**

ALL : 0.30  
CON : 0.30 \*\*\*  
NON-CON : 0.20

**PERSONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION**

ALL : 0.33  
CON : 0.29 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.24

**NATIONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION**

ALL : 0.33  
CON : 0.36 \*  
NON-CON : 0.22

**PERSONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION**

ALL : 0.09  
CON : 0.18 \*  
NON-CON : 0.07

**PROUD****NATIONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION**

ALL : 0.30  
CON : 0.12  
NON-CON : 0.17

**PERSONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION**

ALL : 0.31  
CON : 0.27  
NON-CON : 0.18

**NATIONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION**

ALL : 0.26  
CON : 0.27  
NON-CON : 0.17

**PERSONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION**

ALL : 0.00  
CON : 0.00  
NON-CON : 0.09

**AFRAID****NATIONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION**

ALL : 0.36  
CON : 0.04 \*\*\*  
NON-CON : 0.30

**PERSONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION**

ALL : 0.31  
CON : 0.20 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.21

**NATIONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION**

ALL : 0.37  
CON : 0.17 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.31

**PERSONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION**

ALL : 0.15  
CON : 0.07 \*\*\*  
NON-CON : 0.04

**RELAXED****NATIONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION**

ALL : 0.24  
CON : 0.06  
NON-CON : 0.09

**PERSONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION**

ALL : 0.26  
CON : 0.20  
NON-CON : 0.14

**NATIONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION**

ALL : 0.20  
CON : 0.10  
NON-CON : 0.17

**PERSONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION**

ALL : 0.09  
CON : 0.19  
NON-CON : 0.04

(see over page)

**UNHAPPY**NATIONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.34  
CON : 0.19 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.25

PERSONAL LEVEL ATTRIBUTION

ALL : 0.25  
CON : 0.27 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.11

NATIONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION

ALL : 0.33  
CON : 0.22 \*\*  
NON-CON : 0.24

PERSONAL LEVEL PERCEPTION

ALL : 0.14  
CON : 0.03 \*  
NON-CON : 0.03

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