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# Aspects of the interrelationships of attitudes and behaviour as illustrated by a longitudinal study of British adults:

## 1. Interactions among attitudes and changing voting intentions

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**Abstract.** Most models of people's voting intentions suggest that the choice of party to support is a function not only of external influences in the individual's home, neighbourhood, and workplace but also of their attitudes—their perspectives on society, their goals and values, their opinions on contemporary social and political issues, and their degree of attachment (if any) to the political parties and their programmes. Those models have been tested in Great Britain on many occasions, though the data employed rarely allow detailed exploration of all aspects of the many interrelationships suggested. In particular, the great majority of studies are cross-sectional in nature, and although most produce the same general findings, indicating stability in attitudes and their links to behaviour at the aggregate level, they do not allow study of whether such stability is also characteristic of individuals. With data provided by the first four waves of a large panel study of British adults (the British Household Panel Survey) this first paper in a series exploring the stability of attitude-behaviour links over time tests five hypotheses regarding the interrelations among attitudes, party identification, and voting (or voting intention) during the period 1991–94, and finds very strong support for all five.

It is a widely held assumption in the social and environmental sciences, sustained by a large number of empirical studies, that mass behaviour and people's attitudes are closely interrelated. In a number of studies that assumption is implicit; it is taken for granted that people in particular social and/or spatial categories share values and attitudes. In other studies, the assumption is made explicit by identifying people's attitudes, usually through data obtained from questionnaires or similar instruments. In the latter case, the attitudes under consideration may be explored through questions designed specifically for the task. Alternatively, people's attitudes may be assessed using a battery of questions from which general attitudinal scales are extracted (in most cases by using techniques such as factor analysis). Those expressed attitudes are then compared with overt behaviour to evaluate the general hypothesis regarding an attitude-behaviour link.

The great majority of such studies in Great Britain are cross-sectional in nature, taking a sample of the population at one point in time, inquiring into their attitudes and behaviour at that point in time, and establishing the veracity of hypotheses regarding links between the two. Even where the surveys are repeated on two or more occasions, they are usually based on different samples so that, although the hypothesised link can be put to further tests, no direct conclusions can be drawn about the stability of that link at the individual scale. For example, a series of separate British studies using the same instruments may show on each occasion that people who favour the redistribution of income and wealth are more likely to support the Labour party than any other, but this need not imply that it is the same people who display that attitude and behaviour pattern over time. There may be aggregate-level stability, but individual-level variability—clear example of the ecological fallacy.

The study of voting behaviour is one of the areas in which such aggregate stability has frequently been demonstrated but, as discussed in more detail below, because investigations of such behaviour in Great Britain are usually based on cross-sectional samples, there has been relatively little work on the degree to which the aggregate-level stability is accompanied by individual-level stability. It is known that considerable numbers (some 25 to 30% over a four to five year period) of voters change their party allegiance over time—though this is usually identified by retrospective questions in cross-sectional studies rather than by tracking the same individuals over time. Such investigations require longitudinal data sets, in which the same individuals respond regularly to the same questions. In this paper, the first of a planned series on the stability of attitude–behaviour links, we use a large British longitudinal data set to explore that issue. In the first two papers our analyses are reported at the aggregate scale, with results that are consistent with those produced by other studies. We then switch scale, and in the remaining papers explore the extent of consistency and continuity in individuals' attitudes.

### **Attitudes and behaviour in the British electorate**

Many studies have identified differences in attitudes between the supporters of Great Britain's various political parties (as in the classic investigations of Butler and Stokes, 1969; 1974; Heath et al, 1985; 1991; Sarlvik and Crewe, 1983), and, despite some argument to the contrary (see, for example, Rose and McAllister, 1986; 1990), there is wide agreement that each party's supporters can be distinguished from its opponents' by their attitudes (see, for example, Johnston and Pattie, 1988). Most of those studies use only a few questionnaire items to explore attitudes, however, and virtually none is able to trace the consistency or otherwise of individuals' attitude structures over time. Indeed, the link between values and attitudes is weakly specified in some psephological studies: the main exception is Scarbrough's (1984) seminal work, which used a small cross-sectional sample only in its empirical component. [One of the few studies by social psychologists of voting in Great Britain similarly uses only a few attitudinal items (Sabucedo and Cramer, 1991).] In addition, although some British psephological studies have adopted the US practice of identifying the strength by which voters identify with a political party, rather than just which party they would vote for should a general election be held imminently, there has been little analysis either of changes in party identification over time or of their links to attitude structures (Johnston and Pattie, 1996).

The seminal political science studies of the British electorate in the 1960s by Butler and Stokes (1969; 1974) included chapters which used a small number of questions to tap political attitudes (on nuclear weapons, nationalisation of industries, the Common Market, immigration, the death penalty, the monarchy, and business power); these were used to suggest a left–right ideological continuum of views, consistent with Downs's (1957) classic model. There was no statistical analysis beyond simple correlations, however, and no attempt to test the validity of the assumed unidimensional structure. Subsequent studies of the British electorate in the 1970s had a slightly wider range of attitude questions and used a discriminant analysis to predict votes in 1979 (Sarlvik and Crewe, 1983), which identified a predominant single-dimensional structure to those attitudes (with just three parties, only two dimensions were possible). In a companion volume using the same data, however, Robertson (1984) used factor analysis to derive a two-dimensional attitude structure: the first factor was identified as the conventional 'left–right' dimension, whereas the second, orthogonal to the first, was interpreted as a liberal–authoritarian continuum.

The British Election Studies (BES) of the 1980s (Heath et al, 1985; 1991) also used attitude questions (relating to nuclear weapons, an unemployment–inflation trade-off,

taxes and social services, nationalisation, and law and order). These were employed to suggest a similar two-dimensional attitude structure to that identified by Robertson, although separate countryside and nuclear scales were also posited in the later book. Employing those same data (with a number of other attitude questions asked by the BES), but using factor analysis, Rose and McAllister (1986) derived four attitude dimensions in 1983 (left–right, social services, traditional morality, and racialism) and two six-dimensional structures in 1987 (Rose and McAllister, 1990); these were used to identify clusters of voters with similar opinions (see also Scarborough, 1984).<sup>(1)</sup>

The most detailed psychological study of voting in Great Britain was by Himmelweit et al (1984). Their cognitive model of vote choice (page 11) has a central strand which postulates:

1. strong links between individuals' goals and values on the one hand and their political attitudes, party preferences, and party identification on the other,
2. strong interactions among political attitudes, party preferences, and party identification; and
3. strong links between political attitudes, party preferences, and party identification on the one hand and vote choice on the other.

This model was tested using the small panel studies carried out as part of the BES for 1963–70 and 1974–79. The results indicated clearly articulated sets of beliefs within all sections of society, covering not only which party respondents voted for but also how strongly they identified with a party and whether they were likely to change their allegiance (for a similar model, see van Deth, 1995). Their conclusion in terms of predicting how people voted was that

“Attitudes matter more than past vote. Prediction based on attitudes proved better than prediction based on vote in the previous election” (Himmelweit et al, 1984, page 85). The data available to them, however, included information only on changes in voting behaviour between general elections, and did not address either changes in voting intentions or strength of party identification during the interelection periods, when people may focus less on politics and political issues—attitudes may ‘firm up’ in the campaign period prior to an election, and any stability in views that is indicated by surveys taken in the context of those contests may be an artefact of conducting research at the peaks of the ‘attitudinal cycle’ only.

A common characteristic of this literature is that it is dominated by cross-sectional data which can be used to provide insights into changing aggregate patterns of attitudes over time (by addressing questions such as ‘is the population becoming more right wing?’) but not into whether individuals' attitudes change over time. In the first edition of their book, Butler and Stokes (1969) had a short chapter on “Patterns in political attitudes” which included a brief section on “The structure of stable opinions”. In this they used their small panel study, members of which had been interviewed on three separate occasions, to see whether people's opinions were stable across a number of items, such as their attitudes to nuclear weapons and to nationalisation. No data were reported on what proportion had stable attitudes, however. The section was reproduced unchanged in their second edition, but a new section did explore attitude stability over time in a little more detail. In the chapter on “The analysis of short-term conversion”, Butler and Stokes (1974) charted changes in attitudes to nationalisation over four waves of their panel (1963, 1964, 1966, and 1970). On those four occasions, the percentages saying that ‘a lot more’ industries should be nationalised were 10, 8, 8, and 10 respectively, but between the first two dates only, of the 10% who agreed that ‘a lot more’ should be nationalised in 1963 less than one third (3% of the total) gave the same

<sup>(1)</sup> For the most recent general review of this body of work, see Norris (1997).

answer 15 months later. Over the full period, the percentages saying that either 'a lot more' or 'a few more' should be nationalised were 24, 25, 25, and 26, but only 6% gave one of those two answers on each of the four occasions, indicating very great variability in response by the same people to the same question. This is the only attitude on which they provide full details, but they make it clear that the same pattern is repeated for others. Their conclusion (page 283) is that "There is quite enough circulation of opinion to shatter any idea that the bulk of the electors hold to fixed views, as the unchanging total proportions in successive polls might suggest." Furthermore, they also suggest that much of the individual-level variability reflects 'sheer uncertainty' rather than a 'longer-run movement of individual position', that it is 'short-run reshuffling of views' rather than 'real and cumulative attitude change'. This clearly has important implications for the role of attitudes as a major influence on partisan choice, which is the core issue that we explore in this sequence of papers.

Himmelweit et al (1984) used the same panel data to investigate whether attitudes were stable over time. But their analyses were at the aggregate scale only, and used multidimensional scaling to show that the same pattern of attitudes emerged on each occasion, thus sustaining their argument that attitudes were clustered in the same groups over time but not indicating whether this meant that individuals reported the same attitudes at different dates. The former can occur without the latter: if people who are against nuclear weapons are also pro-nationalisation at both dates, then a consistent structure will emerge, but this does not necessarily mean that the same people are both against nuclear weapons and pro-nationalisation at each date.

Last, Heath et al (1994) used the first two waves of a panel to test for stability in attitudes at the individual scale. They had four indices—socialism; left–right; libertarianism; and postmaterialism (the last two were measured on both a 'long' and a 'short' scale)—and they correlated the responses between the two surveys. Their correlation coefficients ranged only from 0.41 to 0.75, and in just one case (the 'long' libertarian scale) was as much as half of the variation at the second date accounted for by the variation at the first. These findings clearly indicate that the aggregate-level stability identified in cross-sectional studies, and also in those longitudinal studies such as Himmelweit's which focus on that scale, are not consistent with an assumed stability at the individual scale. Heath et al did not draw this conclusion, however, and instead used the data in cross-sectional mode to predict voting behaviour.

There is a major lacuna in this area of attitude–behaviour studies relating to stability at the individual rather than the aggregate scale, therefore, that those who have employed panel data have not explored. We seek to fill that gap in this series of papers, looking first at aggregate patterns, to establish commonality of findings with the earlier studies, and then shift from aggregate stability to individual variability.

### Hypotheses

These analyses use a large panel survey with a wealth of attitudinal information, although unfortunately the same attitude data are not collected each year. On the basis of our appreciation of the literature reviewed above, we formulated the following five hypotheses to be tested with such longitudinal data:

1. The attitudes of British voters have well-defined, consistent dimensional structures at the aggregate level.
2. Supporters of the various political parties occupy separate locations on those dimensional structures.
3. Among each party's supporters, there are clear differences in location on the dimensional structures according to strength of identification with the party.

4. Those voters who change their partisan allegiance differ in their location on the dimensional structures from those who remain loyal to one party.
5. Within each party, those whose strength of identification changes differ in their locations on the dimensional structures from those whose strength of identification remains constant.

### The data and methods

The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) is a core element of the ESRC-funded Inter-Disciplinary Research Centre on Micro-Social Change at the University of Essex.<sup>(2)</sup> Its annual survey, initially targeted on 5000 households (approximately 10 000 adult individuals) selected according to a clustered random design, is undertaken in the autumn, and data for the first four waves (1991–1994 inclusive) are analysed here, relating to the 7131 individuals who responded in all of those waves.

The BHPS questionnaire, given in appendix 1, uses a standard suite of questions to elucidate party identification and its strength. These are also employed in other studies such as the annual British Social Attitudes survey (BSA) and the regular BES and so have proved valuable in the study of electoral behaviour over more than two decades. Note that a slightly different set of questions was asked in 1992; instead of inquiring how people who indicated no affiliation with any political party would vote if there were a general election tomorrow, they were asked how they voted in the election held on 17 April of that year.<sup>(3)</sup>

The surveys also include a number of suites of questions [most used in alternate years on a rotational basis, and many of which have also been used in other surveys such as the BSA and BES (see also Heath et al, 1994)], designed to elucidate peoples' attitudes in the following areas:

- family values*—there are two batteries of items, used in different years:
  - the family and women's role in the household (family values 1); and
  - the nature of family life (family values 2);
- health care provision* in the public and private sectors;
- social issues* relating to the structure and operation of society;
- important *political issues*; and
- political attitudes* regarding how governments work.

The full list of questions is in appendix 2, which also indicates when they were asked. Our research design has two main elements. To test the first hypothesis we use principal components analyses to identify attitude dimensions, and then derive scores for the original respondents on those components to define their locations on the 'attitude maps'. Next, we use analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the second, third, and fourth hypotheses, thus investigating whether people defined by the party that they support, by the strength of their attachment to that party, and by changes in the party supported differ in their positions on the attitude maps. Last, we use *F*-tests of the differences of means to test the fifth hypothesis, again with scores on the various attitude dimensions as the dependent variables.

<sup>(2)</sup> Full details regarding the survey can be obtained from the extensive user documentation (Taylor, 1995) or contact bhpsug@essex.ac.uk. See also Buck et al (1994).

<sup>(3)</sup> It may well be that people respond differently to questions about voting intention when an election is due compared with other periods. However, none of the data used here was collected immediately prior to or after an election (the 1991 survey was in the field approximately six months before the 1992 general election and the 1992 survey was being undertaken six months after). In any case, with only one election year and three 'off-years' such an assertion cannot be evaluated.

**Table 1.** The principal component loadings.

Question	Component loadings					
	1991			1993		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
<i>Family values 1</i>						
FAM1	0.81	-0.10	0.03	0.81	-0.10	0.06
FAM2	0.82	-0.19	0.01	0.82	-0.20	0.02
FAM3	-0.33	0.64	-0.12	-0.30	0.67	-0.04
FAM4	-0.06	0.75	0.12	-0.04	0.74	0.12
FAM5	-0.01	0.79	0.04	-0.01	0.79	0.06
FAM6	0.75	-0.01	-0.14	0.76	-0.02	-0.08
FAM7	0.26	0.05	0.81	0.31	0.05	0.77
FAM8	-0.37	0.11	0.63	-0.39	0.12	0.69
FAM9	-0.51	0.10	-0.05	-0.56	0.06	-0.02
Percentage variation	31	16	11	32	17	11
	1992		1994			
	A	B	A	B		
<i>Family values 2</i>						
FAM10	0.72	-0.24	0.78	-0.05		
FAM11	0.57	0.39	0.50	0.44		
FAM12	-0.17	0.88	-0.33	0.87		
FAM13	0.70	-0.03	0.72	0.10		
FAM14	0.72	-0.12	0.74	0.05		
Percentage variation	39	19	39	19		
	1991		1993		1994	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
<i>Health care provision</i>						
HC1	-0.76	0.31	-0.77	0.29	-0.77	0.29
HC2	0.84	0.20	0.86	0.15	0.86	0.17
HC3	-0.02	0.96	-0.04	0.97	-0.03	0.97
Percentage variation	44	34	46	33	46	34
	1991		1993			
	A	B	A	B		
<i>Social issues</i>						
SOC1	-0.12	0.85	-0.11	0.86		
SOC2	0.20	-0.79	0.20	-0.78		
SOC3	-0.54	0.37	-0.52	0.41		
SOC4	0.64	-0.16	0.67	-0.10		
SOC5	0.70	-0.14	0.71	-0.10		
SOC6	0.75	-0.07	0.70	-0.18		
Percentage variation	40	16	40	16		

Table 1 (continued).

Question	Component loadings			
	1992		1994	
	A	B	A	B
<i>Political issues</i>				
ISS1	0.07	0.78	0.01	0.80
ISS2	0.84	0.20	0.82	0.22
ISS3	0.27	0.60	0.19	0.69
ISS4	0.86	0.15	0.88	0.10
ISS5	0.13	0.71	0.21	0.59
Percentage variation	43	19	41	20
	1992		1994	
	A	B	A	B
<i>Political attitudes</i>				
POL1	0.81	-0.14	0.83	-0.11
POL2	-0.71	0.11	-0.62	0.41
POL3	-0.05	0.95	-0.01	0.94
POL4	0.78	0.15	0.78	0.15
Percentage variation	44	24	44	25

Note: questions listed are given in full in appendix 2.

### Results: the attitude dimensions

The results of the principal components analyses are given in table 1, which shows the loadings on each of the (Varimax-rotated) components, plus the percentage of the variation accounted for by each dimension (its eigenvalue). Two components were elicited in all except the analyses of the first suite of family values questions, for which three were extracted.

All of the attitude dimensions were extremely consistent over time at this aggregate scale, as indicated both by the loadings on the individual variables and by the percentage of the variation accounted for by each component.<sup>(4)</sup> Not only does each variable load most heavily on the same component in each analysis, but in most cases its loading has the same value to at least the first decimal point. At the aggregate scale over a four-year period, British adults displayed a consistent set of attitude dimensions underlying their responses to the various issues addressed in the questionnaires. [All of these are independently related to voting intention, as we have shown in a study of changing regional variations in support for the Labour party over the period 1991–95 (Johnston and Pattie, 1998).]

The *family values* questions asked in 1991 and 1993 (family values 1) are decomposed into three separate attitudinal constructs reflecting different aspects of gender roles: (A) Three questions load strongly on the first component, and another less so. All relate to the *domestic division of labour*—those with high positive scores (who disagree with the three statements) favour mothers joining the workforce and do not believe that preschool children and family life suffer if they do; those with high negative scores

<sup>(4)</sup> Given the very close correspondences we decided that it was unnecessary to test the hypothesis of consistent attitude dimensional structures more formally by using confirmatory factor analysis.

agree with the sentiments expressed in the statements (and thus support 'traditional views' on the domestic division of labour).

(B) A further three questions load on the second component, all of them relating to the role of *women in the labour force*. Those with positive scores disagree with the statements (and, by implication, believe that men should dominate at the workplace), whereas those with negative scores agree with them.

(C) The final two items that load heavily on this third component relate to *childcare*. People who agree that both parents should be involved in it also favour employer-provided childcare facilities at workplaces. They have high negative scores, compared with high positive scores for those with more 'traditional' views regarding fathers' roles and the need for childcare facilities.

The questions asked in 1992 and 1994 (family values 2) were concerned with moral issues, and the answers were decomposed into two separate sets of attitudes:

(A) The strong loadings for the first, fourth, and fifth items on the first component identify a *traditional morality* set of attitudes, with those having high negative scores disagreeing with statements that men should be household heads, that cohabiting is wrong, and that adult children should care for elderly parents, as well as accepting a literalist interpretation of the Bible.

(B) The high loading for a single item on the second component indicates a separate dimension regarding *attitudes to divorce*—those with high positive scores disagree with the statement that divorce is preferable to an unhappy marriage whereas those with negative scores tend to the opposite opinion.

The three items regarding *health care provision* were asked in three of the four surveys, producing virtually identical results in each case:

(A) The first component contrasts agreement with the statement that all health care should be free with disagreement that those who can afford it should be required to take out private health care insurance, and vice versa. It forms a *traditional National Health Service* continuum of views: those with positive scores prefer a free health service for all and those with negative scores believe that those who can afford to should pay for it.

(B) The second component has a single high loading, for the item relating to 'queue jumping' in the NHS: those with high positive scores believe that paying to 'jump the queue' is fair whereas those with high negative scores do not.

Attitudes among the British population to health care provision differ not only over the extent to which the state should provide a free service for all from general taxation (component A) but also on whether wealthier people should be allowed to buy priority within such a service (component B): some who believe in a free NHS are not concerned over the second issue, it seems, but others are.

The six *social issues* items asked in 1991 and 1993 tap different aspects of views on the role of the state in the economy and on the distribution of income and wealth within the country. The two components that emerge represent separate elements of the traditional left-right polarisation of British society:

(A) The first component focuses on the *economic role of the state*. High positive scores indicate disagreement with the final three statements regarding state ownership, the desirability of full employment policies, and the need for strong trades unions, and agreement with the statement that private enterprise offers the best solutions to Britain's economic problems—all views that are usually associated with 'market liberals'—whereas high negative scores indicate support for government involvement in the economy.

(B) The *distribution of wealth and power* is the focus of the second component, with high positive scores for those disagreeing with the statement that 'ordinary people get their fair share' of the country's wealth and agreeing with the view that there is 'one law for the rich and another for the poor'.



Separation of these components indicates that people differentiate between 'ends' and 'means': beliefs in the organisation of the labour market are independent of views on its outcomes.

Views on the salient *political issues* of the day are clearly polarised according to the next set of components, with separate dimensions distinguishing environmentalists from materialists:

(A) High loadings for the two *environmental issues* (destruction of the ozone layer and biodiversity) on the first component distinguish those who give both the highest priority (indicated by high negative scores) from those who do not.

(B) The high loadings for the two *economic issues* on the second component (prices and unemployment), with which they associate declining moral standards, separates out those most concerned with such materialist issues (high negative scores) from those who do not.

The association of concern with material and moral issues on the second component is intriguing; it suggests that people may link inflation, unemployment, and declining moral standards to the same set of changes in modern (postmodern?) society.

Last, the four questions relating to *political attitudes* split between:

(A) *Faith in government*, with high positive scores on the first component indicating disagreement with the statements that British governments reflect the popular will and put nation above party.

(B) Differences on the desirability of *income-capping policies* (in a period of considerable public debate over high salaries paid to small numbers of individuals, notably those running the recently privatised public utilities)—respondents with high negative scores on the second component agree that such a policy is necessary.

Overall, these dimensions clearly sustain our first hypothesis that at the aggregate scale British voters have well-defined and consistent attitude structures.<sup>(5)</sup>

## Results 2: attitudes, votes, and voting intentions

The BHPS surveys (appendix 1) asked respondents not only how they voted in the 1992 general election (in 1992 only) and how they would vote if there were a general election imminent (in 1991, 1993, and 1994), but also the strength of their identification with their preferred political party. These data allow exploration of several aspects of the links between attitudes and voting behaviour.

### Attitudes and partisan choice

Our second hypothesis is that the supporters of Great Britain's political parties occupy different locations along the consistent attitude dimensions identified by the principal components analyses. ANOVAs were used to test this, contrasting the mean scores on each of the 28 separate attitude dimensions identified above for those indicating support for the following parties: Conservative; Labour; Liberal Democrat; Scottish Nationalist; Plaid Cymru; Green. The results (table 2, see over) show a statistically significant difference (at the 0.009 level or better) across the six parties in every one of the 28 tests, providing very strong evidence of a link between all attitude dimensions and partisan choice.

In all but one case, supporters of the Conservative and Labour parties have mean scores with opposing signs. (Even in the exceptional case, the first component for health

<sup>(5)</sup> We also conducted components analyses on all of the attitude questions asked in each year. These showed that the separate groups were clearly tapping different attitude sets: in each, the variables in each group almost entirely loaded on the same component as the others in that group, and on different components from those in other groups. This justifies our separate treatment of the various groups here.

**Table 2.** Mean values on each component by political party supported, and results of the ANOVA tests.

Component group	Party supported						Significance level
	C	L	LD	SNP	PC	G	
<i>Family values 1</i>							
A 1991	-0.11	0.13	-0.00	0.58	0.24	0.61	0.00
A 1993	-0.14	0.16	0.03	0.33	0.54	0.50	0.00
B 1991	0.13	-0.10	0.02	-0.17	0.22	0.06	0.00
B 1993	0.11	-0.09	0.11	-0.08	0.64	0.14	0.00
C 1991	0.10	-0.15	-0.11	0.02	-0.30	-0.11	0.00
C 1993	0.15	-0.16	-0.13	-0.34	0.07	-0.14	0.00
<i>Family values 2</i>							
A 1992	-0.02	0.07	0.14	0.24	0.33	0.71	0.00
A 1994	-0.06	0.11	0.14	-0.04	0.78	0.71	0.00
B 1992	0.07	-0.09	0.08	-0.14	0.06	-0.05	0.00
B 1994	0.07	-0.07	0.05	-0.18	-0.23	-0.05	0.00
<i>Health care provision</i>							
A 1991	-0.03	0.11	0.17	-0.15	0.20	0.02	0.00
A 1993	-0.04	0.14	0.08	0.14	0.63	0.15	0.00
A 1994	0.01	0.13	0.03	-0.04	0.61	0.07	0.00
B 1991	0.37	-0.32	-0.16	-0.30	0.20	-0.18	0.00
B 1993	0.42	-0.32	-0.10	-0.51	-0.56	-0.19	0.00
B 1994	0.43	-0.27	-0.04	-0.48	-0.61	-0.28	0.00
<i>Social issues</i>							
A 1991	0.57	-0.63	0.06	-0.23	-0.20	-0.09	0.00
A 1993	0.66	-0.59	0.02	-0.41	-0.35	-0.12	0.00
B 1991	-0.41	0.37	0.21	0.52	0.62	0.17	0.00
B 1993	-0.46	0.32	0.17	0.50	0.69	0.21	0.00
<i>Political issues</i>							
A 1992	0.04	-0.05	-0.18	0.35	0.14	-0.60	0.00
A 1994	0.05	-0.02	-0.20	0.18	0.57	-0.68	0.00
B 1992	0.03	-0.19	0.03	0.20	0.09	0.48	0.00
B 1994	0.21	-0.17	0.01	-0.11	-0.31	0.37	0.00
<i>Political attitudes</i>							
A 1992	-0.42	0.38	0.23	0.49	0.62	0.19	0.00
A 1994	-0.52	0.25	0.13	0.22	0.70	0.28	0.00
B 1992	0.23	-0.30	0.06	0.13	0.36	0.26	0.00
B 1994	0.32	-0.22	0.00	-0.16	-0.19	0.13	0.00

Notes: C, Conservative; L, Labour; LD, Liberal Democrat; SNP, Scottish National Party; PC, Plaid Cymru; G, Green.

care in the 1994 questionnaire, the Conservative supporters were, as expected, to the 'right' of their Labour counterparts.) Compared with Labour supporters, in general Conservatives:

- are more 'traditional' in their views on the domestic division of labour, childcare, morality, divorce, and the role of women in the workforce;
- are less likely to support a free health service for all and less likely to think that purchasing priority treatment is unfair;
- are less likely to see prices and jobs as major political issues;
- are less concerned about environmental issues;
- have greater faith in government;
- are against income capping;

believe that private enterprise rather than the state offers the best route for resolving the country's economic problems; and are less concerned about the distribution of wealth and power.

Such differences have been the foundations of the two parties' separate ideologies for most of the twentieth century, and clearly continue to dominate popular attitudes.

Some commentators (for example, Rose and McAllister, 1986; 1990) believe that supporters of the Liberal Democrat party, the third largest in Great Britain, fall between the Conservatives and Labour in their attitudes, but this is not the case on every attitudinal dimension identified here (table 2). Liberal Democrats, for example, are even more 'liberal' than Labour supporters on the traditional morality component but more 'hard-line' than the Conservatives on the desirability of divorce; they are also more concerned about environmental issues than the supporters of either of the other two parties. Thus there is a complex, multidimensional attitude structure encompassing the supporters of the three main parties in Great Britain and, as Heath et al (1985) have argued, Liberal Democrats should not be presented as simply 'middle-of-the-road' on the national attitudinal map (see also Johnston and Pattie, 1988).

Regarding the other three minority parties, the means in table 2 indicate that their small bands of supporters have relatively extreme views on a number of issues. Those who supported the Green party were by far the most concerned about environmental issues, as expected (political issues A), but they were also the most liberal on the traditional morality component (family values 2A, 1992 and 1994) and the most 'modern' regarding the domestic division of labour [family values A, 1991 and 1993; this situation is usually associated with postmaterialist views (Inglehart, 1977)]. Supporters of Plaid Cymru were also liberal and modern on these dimensions, and in 1993 and 1994 (but less so in 1991) very strong too both in their support for a free National Health Service (health care provision A) and in their opposition to 'queue jumping' there (health care provision B). They were also more 'left-wing' in their views on the distribution of wealth and power (social issues B) and in their lack of faith in government (political attitudes A). Scottish Nationalists shared many of these attitudes with their Welsh contemporaries, though not quite to the same extent. (In recent years the Scottish National Party has positioned itself to the 'left' of Labour in Scotland, a strategy that appears sensible in the light of these findings.)

#### **Attitudes and party identification**

The third hypothesis suggests not only that supporters of the various parties occupy separate areas of the attitudinal maps but also that differences in the strength of identification within each party's support base are related to their attitudes: in general terms, people who identify strongly with a party should be more 'extreme' in their adherence to the attitudes which characterise that party's supporters than are those with only weaker affiliations. This hypothesis is also tested by using ANOVA, for Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat supporters only,<sup>(6)</sup> and the results are given in tables 3, 4, and 5, respectively. In each case, the mean values should get smaller from left to right across each row—from those with a very strong attachment to a party to those with no attachment but would vote for it rather than any other.

The results provide considerable support for the hypothesis with regard to the Conservative and Labour parties (17 and 22 significant differences, respectively, out of 28), but much less so for the Liberal Democrats (only 9 significant differences). Not all of the differences are statistically significant, although the direction of the differences

<sup>(6)</sup> The number of respondents was too small for similar analyses of the other three parties: the number of respondents identifying with the SNP, Plaid Cymru, and the Green Party, respectively in each of the four years were—1991: 101, 13, 109; 1992: 88, 10, 40; 1993: 91, 9, 76; 1994: 113, 12, 102.

**Table 3.** Mean values on each component by strength of attachment to the Conservative party, and results of the ANOVA tests.

Component group	Strength of attachment					Significance level
	VS	FS	NVS	C	WV	
<i>Family values 1</i>						
A 1991	-0.55	-0.23	-0.09	0.02	0.17	0.00
A 1993	-0.66	-0.31	-0.15	-0.02	-0.21	0.00
B 1991	0.21	0.12	0.16	0.12	0.08	*
B 1993	0.05	0.13	0.11	0.13	0.00	*
C 1991	0.12	0.12	0.19	0.09	-0.10	0.00
C 1993	0.13	0.15	0.22	0.11	0.03	*
<i>Family values 2</i>						
A 1992	-0.31	-0.12	0.01	0.14	0.05	0.00
A 1994	-0.50	-0.22	-0.04	0.08	0.07	0.00
B 1992	0.08	0.05	0.08	0.00	0.06	*
B 1994	0.28	0.04	0.13	0.03	-0.06	*
<i>Health care provision</i>						
A 1991	0.01	-0.07	0.00	-0.03	-0.01	*
A 1993	-0.11	-0.11	0.00	-0.01	-0.06	*
A 1994	-0.20	-0.02	0.01	0.05	0.09	*
B 1991	0.71	0.47	0.35	0.30	0.14	0.00
B 1993	0.67	0.60	0.41	0.32	0.10	0.00
B 1994	0.55	0.60	0.49	0.29	0.07	0.00
<i>Social issues</i>						
A 1991	1.00	0.71	0.59	0.48	0.17	0.00
A 1993	1.11	0.77	0.69	-0.57	-0.26	0.00
B 1991	-0.80	-0.58	-0.43	0.20	0.17	0.00
B 1993	-0.88	-0.71	-0.43	-0.30	-0.15	0.00
<i>Political issues</i>						
A 1992	0.06	0.04	0.05	0.03	-0.04	*
A 1994	0.03	0.02	0.04	0.06	0.17	*
B 1992	0.10	0.02	0.17	0.13	-0.12	0.00
B 1994	0.07	0.11	0.24	0.22	0.28	*
<i>Political attitudes</i>						
A 1992	-0.91	-0.78	-0.41	-0.19	0.17	0.00
A 1994	-1.16	-0.83	-0.44	-0.31	-0.34	0.00
A 1992	0.57	0.30	0.25	0.26	0.00	0.00
A 1994	0.41	0.44	0.35	0.31	-0.11	0.00

Notes: VS, very strong identifier; FS, fairly strong identifier; NVS, not very strong identifier; C, felt closer to that party than any other; WV, would vote for that party if there were a general election tomorrow; \* not significant at 0.10.

is in most cases as expected: the weaker the attachment to a party the 'less extreme' the attitude.

For Conservative supporters, the expected sequence of smaller means moving from left to right along the rows occurred for 9 of the 17 sets of significant differences (table 3), with only 1 slight deviation from the expected sequence in a further 6 cases, so that the hypothesis was completely falsified in just 2 instances: the comparable figures for Labour were 8, 8, and 6 (table 4) and for the Liberal Democrats 0, 5, and 4 (table 5). Thus the stronger a person's identification with either the Conservative or the Labour party, the more intensely he or she displayed the attitudes associated with that party: very strong Conservatives were very strongly against state ownership (social issues A, 1991), for example, whereas very strong Labour supporters were very strongly for it.

**Table 4.** Mean values on each component by strength of attachment to the Labour party, and results of the ANOVA tests.

Component group	Strength of attachment					Significance level
	VS	FS	NVS	C	WV	
<i>Family values 1</i>						
A 1991	0.04	0.15	0.19	0.19	0.01	*
A 1993	0.15	0.14	0.13	0.22	0.14	*
B 1991	-0.19	-0.11	-0.04	-0.07	-0.12	*
B 1993	-0.25	-0.03	-0.06	-0.14	-0.10	0.00
C 1991	-0.33	-0.27	-0.10	-0.07	-0.02	0.00
C 1993	-0.39	-0.21	-0.08	-0.10	-0.11	0.00
<i>Family values 2</i>						
A 1992	0.13	0.10	0.05	0.18	0.01	*
A 1994	-0.03	0.16	0.12	0.15	0.03	0.09
B 1992	-0.30	-0.08	-0.10	-0.06	-0.09	0.09
B 1994	-0.22	-0.04	-0.08	-0.07	-0.03	*
<i>Health care provision</i>						
A 1991	0.22	0.17	0.00	0.10	-0.17	0.00
A 1993	0.19	0.22	0.17	0.10	-0.02	0.01
A 1994	0.25	0.21	0.07	0.14	-0.02	0.00
B 1991	-0.63	-0.39	-0.36	-0.17	-0.18	0.00
B 1993	-0.47	-0.40	-0.33	-0.22	-0.16	0.00
B 1994	-0.60	-0.40	-0.28	-0.20	-0.02	0.00
<i>Social issues</i>						
A 1991	-1.06	-0.83	-0.61	-0.42	-0.42	0.00
A 1993	-1.00	-0.73	-0.57	-0.36	-0.42	0.00
B 1991	0.56	0.43	0.32	0.33	0.25	0.00
B 1993	0.69	0.42	0.25	0.29	-0.01	0.00
<i>Political issues</i>						
A 1992	-0.38	-0.06	-0.06	0.02	0.03	0.00
A 1994	-0.21	-0.12	0.05	0.07	0.01	0.01
B 1992	-0.25	-0.19	-0.18	-0.10	-0.09	*
B 1994	-0.46	-0.25	-0.14	-0.12	-0.07	0.00
<i>Political attitudes</i>						
A 1992	0.57	0.39	0.30	0.29	0.32	0.00
A 1994	0.54	0.26	0.19	0.26	0.15	0.00
B 1992	-0.43	-0.30	-0.24	-0.18	-0.25	0.07
B 1994	-0.38	-0.29	-0.24	-0.16	-0.07	0.00

Notes: VS, very strong identifier; FS, fairly strong identifier; NVS, not very strong identifier; C, felt closer to that party than any other; WV, would vote for that party if there were a general election tomorrow; \* not significant at 0.10.

Most of the exceptions to this general pattern involve Liberal Democrat supporters, the majority of whom identify only relatively weakly with the party, which has few very strong identifiers.<sup>(7)</sup> The latter recorded the highest average score in 23 of the 28 analyses (table 5), with a value at least double that recorded for the fairly strong identifiers in 16 cases. Thus the few deeply committed Liberal Democrats have stronger attitudes than their counterparts whose attachments are weaker. The others who identify with the party are much closer to one of the other two, which is in line with many views of the party as the 'home' for Conservatives who feel unable to 'defect' to Labour, and vice versa.

<sup>(7)</sup> It should be noted that one of the major concerns of the Liberal Democrat party and its supporters (constitutional change and electoral reform) was not covered by the attitude questions; hence the relative weakness of many of our findings relating to this party.

**Table 5.** Mean values on each component by strength of attachment to the Liberal Democrat party, and results of the ANOVA tests.

Component group	Strength of attachment					Significance level
	VS	FS	NVS	C	WV	
<i>Family values 1</i>						
A 1991	-0.12	-0.19	-0.09	0.12	-0.05	0.07
A 1993	-0.18	-0.06	0.02	0.06	0.07	*
B 1991	0.07	0.22	0.06	0.02	-0.07	*
B 1993	0.25	0.08	0.08	0.15	0.12	*
C 1991	-0.59	-0.18	-0.07	-0.13	0.01	*
C 1993	-0.46	-0.26	-0.09	-0.16	-0.02	0.05
<i>Family values 2</i>						
A 1992	-0.55	0.15	0.11	0.23	0.13	0.06
A 1994	-0.26	0.03	0.07	0.23	0.15	*
B 1992	-0.07	-0.01	0.11	0.13	0.05	*
B 1994	0.24	0.07	0.08	0.04	0.03	*
<i>Health care provision</i>						
A 1991	0.80	0.20	0.32	0.17	0.06	0.02
A 1993	0.17	0.16	0.03	0.06	0.08	*
A 1994	0.33	0.27	0.06	0.08	-0.09	0.04
B 1991	-0.63	-0.14	-0.05	-0.20	-0.09	*
B 1993	-0.19	-0.10	-0.24	-0.08	-0.05	*
B 1994	-0.10	-0.04	-0.09	-0.06	0.01	*
<i>Social issues</i>						
A 1991	-0.09	0.01	0.13	0.07	0.05	*
A 1993	0.05	0.00	-0.04	0.04	0.03	*
B 1991	0.37	0.27	0.16	0.20	0.18	*
B 1993	0.64	0.32	0.04	0.12	0.18	0.00
<i>Political issues</i>						
A 1992	-0.80	-0.40	-0.31	-0.11	-0.13	0.00
A 1994	-0.60	-0.42	-0.17	-0.25	-0.06	0.01
B 1992	0.49	-0.04	-0.02	0.07	0.07	*
B 1994	0.48	-0.12	0.04	0.07	-0.05	*
<i>Political attitudes</i>						
A 1992	0.79	0.32	0.12	0.29	0.20	0.04
A 1994	0.22	0.30	0.07	0.13	0.09	*
B 1992	0.39	-0.03	-0.08	0.04	0.06	*
B 1994	0.28	-0.02	0.04	0.00	-0.03	*

Notes: VS, very strong identifier; FS, fairly strong identifier; NVS, not very strong identifier; C, felt closer to that party than any other; WV, would vote for that party if there were a general election tomorrow; \* not significant at 0.10.

### Attitudes and interparty shifts

People's partisan preferences change over time, which reflects changes in their own perceived circumstances, in the local and national political context, and in their evaluations of the various political parties. Of the 1867 respondents who supported the Conservative party in 1991, for example, 54 voted Labour in 1992 and 134 voted Liberal Democrat; of the 1489 who supported Labour at the first date, 88% remained loyal at the general election the following year, with 52 switching to the Conservatives and 128 to the Liberal Democrats. (More detailed analysis of these switches is provided in Johnston and Pattie, 1997.)

Our fourth hypothesis is that those who 'leave' a party have weaker attachments to the attitudes associated with it in the year before their departure than do those who

remain loyal to it: the 'deserters' are those least socialised into the set of attitudes associated with that party. To test this we conducted ANOVAs on the average scores for the attitude scales in the relevant years, contrasting those who remained loyal with those who changed their affiliations. (The attitude scales are formed by the standardised component scores on the various dimensions extracted in the component analyses.) We look only at the three largest parties—Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat—because the flows to and from the others were very small, and our analyses use only the scores on the social issues and political attitudes dimensions, for which the earlier analyses (table 2) indicated the greatest interparty and intraparty differences. The results for certain pairs of years only are presented: for adjacent years (1991–92, 1992–93, 1993–94); for the end-years (1991–94); and for the two pairs when the same attitude scales were used in both (1991–93, 1992–94).

Of the 216 tests conducted, only 13 failed to indicate statistically significant differences between the three groups of voters, thereby providing very strong support for our hypothesis (see table 6, over)<sup>(8)</sup>; only one of the latter involved voters who supported the Conservative party at the first of the dates, and the remaining 12 were equally split between the other two parties. Not only were the differences statistically significant, but in almost every case they were in the anticipated direction. In the first block of average scores in table 6, for example, those who remained loyal to the Conservative party between 1991 and 1992 had an average score of 0.64 on the social issues A component, slightly larger than the average for all Conservative supporters then (0.57, see table 2) and characteristic of those who identified with the party in 1991 [the averages for the very strong, fairly strong, and not very strong identifiers then were 1.00, 0.71, and 0.59 respectively (see table 3)]. Those who shifted from Conservative to Labour support averaged only 0.04 on the scale, however, which is less than the average for those who indicated that they would vote for the Conservatives in 1991 but did not identify with the party (0.17); those who shifted their affiliation to the Liberal Democrats had an average score of 0.30, higher than 0.17 but lower than those for any other category of Conservative identifier. In sum, those who deserted the Conservative cause between 1991 and 1992 were not very committed to the Conservative position on the role of the state in the labour market. Nor were they close to the Conservative average (–0.42) on the first political scale in the 1992 attitude data: 'defectors' to both Labour and the Liberal Democrats had positive average scores (0.29 and 0.01, respectively), indicating much greater distrust of government than characterised the average Conservative voter then.

In all of the tests involving individuals who supported the Conservative party in the first of the pair of years, those shifting to the Labour party indicated weaker adherence to the attitude dimension than was characteristic of those who remained loyal to the party. Exactly the reverse was the case with all the significant differences involving voters who supported Labour at the first date: those who shifted to the Conservatives were less committed to the attitudes that characterised Labour supporters than were those who remained loyal to it (that is, those who shifted from Labour to Conservative either had smaller average scores with the same sign or average scores with a different sign). For the Liberal Democrats, with one exception (the political attitudes B dimension in 1992 in the 1992–94 analyses), the two groups of 'defectors' were at opposite ends of the scale, with those remaining loyal in-between. On the social issues A component in 1991 in the 1991–92 analyses, for example, whereas those remaining loyal had an average score of 0.08, those shifting to the Conservatives averaged 0.19 (the average for

<sup>(8)</sup> Each block of three averages in table 6 was subject to a separate ANOVA—the first, for example, contrasts those who supported the Conservatives at both dates with those who shifted from Conservative to Labour and those who shifted from Conservative to Liberal Democrat.

**Table 6.** Mean values on the social and political components by interparty change in support.

Component group	Party supported								
	C	C	C	L	L	L	LD	LD	LD
First date	C	L	LD	C	L	LD	C	L	LD
Second date	C	L	LD	C	L	LD	C	L	LD
<i>Social issues (1991-92)</i>									
A 1991	0.64	0.04	0.30	-0.18	-0.23	-0.30	0.19	-0.20	0.08
B 1991	-0.46	0.16	-0.15	*	*	*	-0.05	0.44	0.21
<i>Political attitudes (1991-92)</i>									
A 1992	-0.49	0.29	0.01	-0.03	0.38	0.22	-0.04	0.42	0.29
B 1992	0.24	0.09	0.07	0.13	-0.34	-0.09	*	*	*
<i>Political attitudes (1992-93)</i>									
A 1992	-0.56	-0.08	-0.02	0.25	0.37	0.56	-0.23	0.29	0.24
B 1992	0.28	0.20	0.10	0.25	-0.32	-0.18	*	*	*
<i>Social issues (1992-93)</i>									
A 1993	0.70	-0.21	0.32	0.19	-0.65	-0.30	0.37	-0.42	-0.02
B 1993	-0.47	0.05	0.06	-0.10	0.36	-0.33	-0.40	0.22	0.18
<i>Social issues (1993-94)</i>									
A 1993	0.72	0.29	0.55	*	*	*	0.67	-0.19	0.04
S 1993	-0.56	-0.25	0.05	-0.25	0.35	-0.20	-0.27	0.25	0.14
<i>Political attitudes (1993-94)</i>									
A 1994	-0.55	0.04	0.17	-0.65	0.25	-0.14	-0.15	0.39	0.16
B 1994	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Social issues (1991-93)</i>									
A 1991	0.68	0.04	0.36	0.26	-0.68	-0.29	0.50	-0.08	-0.05
B 1991	-0.52	0.00	-0.16	0.00	0.37	0.40	*	*	*
A 1993	0.68	-0.13	0.29	0.45	-0.65	-0.27	0.67	-0.41	0.00
B 1993	-0.50	0.04	0.02	0.00	0.36	0.27	-0.20	0.11	0.22
<i>Political attitudes (1992-94)</i>									
A 1992	-0.50	-0.03	-0.08	*	*	*	-0.36	0.30	0.24
B 1992	0.28	0.20	0.09	*	*	*	0.56	0.06	0.04
A 1994	-0.50	0.16	0.08	-0.58	0.27	-0.02	-0.52	0.34	0.13
B 1994	0.33	0.05	0.08	0.12	-0.32	-0.10	*	*	*
<i>Social issues (1991-94)</i>									
A 1991	0.70	0.24	0.38	-0.20	-0.66	0.38	0.30	-0.02	0.08
B 1991	-0.57	-0.05	-0.16	0.00	0.38	0.23	-0.24	0.35	0.18
<i>Political attitudes (1991-94)</i>									
A 1994	-0.52	0.19	0.10	-0.85	0.24	-0.01	-0.68	0.34	0.21
B 1994	0.35	0.13	0.05	*	*	*	*	*	*

Notes: C, Conservative; L, Labour; LD, Liberal Democrat; \* insignificant difference (*F*-test).

all Conservative supporters in 1991 was 0.57 compared with the Liberal Democrat average of 0.06) and those shifting to Labour averaged  $-0.20$  (the average for all Labour supporters then was  $-0.63$ ). Thus 'defectors' from the Liberal Democrats had attitudes similar to those of the supporters of the party they moved to.

#### Intraparty shifts and attitudes

The fifth hypothesis suggests that those who identify with the same party over time, but whose strength of identification varies, should differ in their attitudes from those who are consistent in their strength of identification with the same party over the same period. Those whose attachment to the party diminishes should display significantly weaker attitudes than those whose attachment either remains consistent or increases. To test this we used the same attitude scales and comparisons as in the previous



section except that, because of the small numbers involved, we excluded those who identified with the Liberal Democrat party.

Two sets of tests were conducted. The first compared those who identified strongly with a party in each of a pair of surveys (VSB—very strong at both) with:

1. those who were associated with the party at both dates, but did not identify very strongly with it at either (W—weaker identifiers); and
2. those who identified very strongly with the party in the first survey, but less strongly at the second (VSW—very strong at the first, weaker at the second).

In each, we expected the VSB individuals who identified strongly with the party on both occasions to have stronger attitudes (higher scores) on the scales than either of the comparator groups.

The results of the *F*-tests of differences in means are shown in table 7 (see over), which gives the relevant means for each significant difference (at the 0.05 level or better); the first block for each party relates to the first contrast, and the second pair to the second contrast. For example, the first row of the first block of means for the Conservative party shows that there was a significant difference on the social issues A component in the 1991–92 comparisons between those who very strongly identified with the Conservative party at both dates (VSB—mean score 1.04) and those who associated with the party at both dates but did not identify very strongly with it at either (W—mean score 0.60); those whose strength of identification with the Conservatives was weaker over the two dates were less ‘extreme’ in their adherence to Conservative attitudes on the economic role of the state (that is, they had a smaller average score) than were those who remained very strong Tories at both dates. There was no significant difference between those who identified strongly with the party at both dates (VSB) and those who identified very strongly with it at the first date but less strongly at the second (VSW). However, those who were very strong identifiers at the first date but not at the second were not significantly different from those who were very strong identifiers at both dates on this attitudinal dimension. Similarly, on the same scale, there was a significant difference between those who identified very strongly with Labour at both dates (VSB) and between those who associated with the party at both dates but did not identify very strongly with it at either (W); there was no significant difference between the very strong identifiers at both dates and those who identified very strongly with Labour at the first date but more weakly at the second.

Of the 24 tests, there were significant differences between the very strong identifiers and all others (VSB and W) in 19 cases for the Conservative party and 21 for Labour, giving strong support to the hypothesis. In every case the difference was in the expected direction: the very strong identifiers had the higher scores on the attitude dimensions, indicating that the parties’ consistently strong identifiers also had the strongest views on current social and political issues.

The comparisons of the very strong identifiers at both dates with those who identified very strongly on the first occasion but not on the second (VSB and VSW) produced only six significant differences for each party, however. All of the significant differences were in the expected direction, with the respondents whose strength of identification weakened having lower scores than those whose identification remained very strong over the two surveys: people whose attachment to a party weakens over time tend to be those whose attitudes on current issues are less clear-cut than those whose attachment remains very strong, but this conclusion holds in a minority of the tests only.

The second set of tests compared those who did not identify with the relevant party at either survey but indicated that they would vote for it at both (WVB)—that is, the

**Table 7.** Mean values on the social and political components: consistently very strong identifiers contrasted with weaker.

Component group	Conservative				Labour			
	VSB	W	VSB	VSW	VSB	W	VSB	VSW
<i>Social issues (1991-92)</i>								
A 1991	1.04	0.60	*	*	1.11	-0.63	*	*
B 1991	-0.81	-0.44	*	*	0.35	0.38	0.73	0.38
<i>Political attitudes (1991-92)</i>								
A 1992	-1.04	-0.45	-1.04	-0.67	0.67	0.32	0.32	0.41
B 1992	0.58	0.26	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Political attitudes (1992-93)</i>								
A 1992	-1.03	-0.52	*	*	0.67	0.32	0.67	0.37
B 1992	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Social issues (1992-93)</i>								
A 1993	1.17	0.67	*	*	-1.11	-0.58	-1.11	-0.68
B 1993	-0.99	-0.46	*	*	0.72	0.32	*	*
<i>Social issues (1993-94)</i>								
A 1993	1.19	0.70	*	*	-1.09	-0.59	*	*
B 1993	-1.08	-0.54	*	*	0.71	0.33	*	*
<i>Political attitudes (1993-94)</i>								
A 1994	-1.31	-0.53	-1.31	-0.47	0.55	0.22	*	*
B 1994	*	*	*	*	-0.45	-0.26	*	*
<i>Social issues (1991-93)</i>								
A 1991	1.17	0.66	*	*	-1.14	-0.63	*	*
B 1991	-0.82	-0.51	*	*	0.66	0.35	*	*
A 1993	1.23	0.66	1.23	0.77	-1.01	-0.61	*	*
B 1993	-1.01	-0.47	*	*	0.71	0.33	*	*
<i>Political attitudes (1992-94)</i>								
A 1992	-1.08	-0.58	*	*	0.68	0.34	0.68	0.42
B 1992	*	*	*	*	0.44	-0.25	*	*
A 1994	-1.16	-0.50	-1.16	-0.63	0.52	0.24	*	*
B 1994	*	*	*	*	-0.52	-0.26	*	*
<i>Social issues (1991-94)</i>								
A 1991	1.31	0.68	1.31	0.86	-1.11	-0.62	*	*
B 1991	-1.12	-0.55	*	*	0.69	0.36	0.69	0.43
<i>Political attitudes (1991-94)</i>								
A 1994	-1.25	-0.50	-1.24	-0.56	0.51	0.21	*	*
B 1994	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Notes: VSB, respondent very strongly identified with party in both surveys; W, respondent identified with party at both surveys, though not very strongly at both; VSW, respondent identified very strongly with the party at the first survey but less strongly at the second; \*, insignificant differences (*F*-test) between either W and VSB or VSW and VSB.

weakest identifiers—with:

1. those who were associated with the party at both dates, and identified with it (that is, VS, FS, or NS) for at least one of the surveys (IB—identified with at both); and
2. those who said only that they would vote for the party in the first survey but identified with it (that is, VS, FS, or NS) for the second (WI—would vote for at first; identified with at both)—their attachment strengthened between the two surveys.

In each, we expected the individuals who indicated only that they would vote for the party on both occasions to have weaker attitudes (lower scores) on the scales than either of the comparator groups.

**Table 8.** Mean values on the social and political components: consistently weak supporters contrasted with stronger.

Component group	Conservative				Labour			
	WVB	IB	WVB	WI	WVB	IB	WVB	WI
<i>Social issues (1991-92)</i>								
A 1991	0.16	0.64	*	*	*	*	-0.39	-0.59
B 1991	-0.06	-0.46	-0.06	-0.32	0.11	0.39	0.11	0.34
<i>Political attitudes (1991-92)</i>								
A 1992	0.15	-0.49	0.15	-0.35	*	*	*	*
B 1992	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Political attitudes (1992-93)</i>								
A 1992	0.04	-0.55	*	*	*	*	*	*
B 1992	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Social issues (1992-93)</i>								
A 1993	0.12	0.69	0.12	0.51	-0.41	-0.63	*	*
B 1993	-0.18	-0.48	*	*	0.16	0.36	*	*
<i>Social issues (1993-94)</i>								
A 1993	-0.10	0.74	-0.10	0.43	-0.36	-0.60	*	*
B 1993	*	*	0.57	0.16	-0.10	0.38	*	*
<i>Political attitudes (1993-94)</i>								
A 1994	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
B 1994	-0.31	0.36	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Social issues (1991-93)</i>								
A 1991	-0.17	0.69	*	*	-0.46	-0.67	*	*
B 1991	*	*	*	*	0.20	0.38	*	*
A 1993	-0.02	0.69	-0.02	0.38	-0.49	-0.64	*	*
B 1993	*	*	*	*	-0.06	0.38	*	*
<i>Political attitudes (1992-94)</i>								
A 1992	-0.06	-0.61	*	*	0.19	0.37	0.19	0.42
B 1992	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
A 1994	-0.07	-0.53	*	*	*	*	0.13	0.35
B 1994	-0.09	0.34	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Social issues (1991-94)</i>								
A 1991	0.03	0.70	0.03	0.41	-0.49	-0.66	*	*
B 1991	*	*	*	*	0.17	0.39	*	*
<i>Political attitudes (1991-94)</i>								
A 1994	*	*	*	*	-0.10	0.25	-0.10	0.12
B 1994	-0.10	0.36	*	*	*	*	*	*

Notes: WVB, respondent did not identify with the party in either survey but indicated would vote for it in both; IB, respondent indicated a stronger attachment to the party at both surveys (that is, VS, FS, NVS, or C); WI, respondent did not identify with the party at the first survey but indicated would vote for it then, and identified with the party at the second survey; \*, insignificant difference (*F*-test) between either WVB and S or WVB and WS.

Table 8 sustains slightly less clear-cut conclusions than table 7, with only 15 of the 24 tests in the first block (WVB with IB) producing significant differences for Conservative supporters and 13 for Labour, and just 7 in the second block (WVB with WI) for Conservative supporters and 5 for Labour. In all of the significant outcomes, the direction of the differences was as expected: the respondents who had the weakest association with a party (that is, they only said they would vote for it on both occasions—WVB) were closer to the median voter on the attitude dimensions than either those who had a stronger association on both occasions (IB) or those whose identification strengthened between the first and the second survey in the pair (WI).

On the social issues B scale between 1991 and 1992, for example, the consistently weak supporters of the Conservative party had an average score of 0.06, almost at the mean for attitudes to the distribution of wealth and power in the United Kingdom: those who identified more strongly with the party in 1991 and 1992 had a mean score of  $-0.46$ , indicating greater agreement with statements such as "Ordinary people get their fair share of the nation's wealth" and those whose identification with the Conservatives strengthened between the two dates had a mean of  $-0.32$ , indicating that they too were 'more Tory' in their views than those who remained only weakly associated with the party.

Despite these findings which are consistent with the hypotheses, table 7 and, especially, table 8 show no significant differences on a number of the scales. This suggests that whereas there are very strong interparty differences in supporters' attitudes, the intraparty differences based on the strength of respondents' identification with the party are weaker. This leads to a further hypothesis, to be tested in a later paper, that we can predict which party people support from their attitudes much better than we can predict how strongly they support that party and, even more so, how the strength of that support varies over time.

Overall, therefore, these comparisons of the attitudes of people whose strength of party identification changed compared with those who remained constant in their level of attachment to a party are consistent with our hypotheses, but some of the tests were inconclusive. As a broad generalisation, within each party the consistently strong supporters had the strongest opinions and the consistently weak supporters had the weakest opinions; those whose attachment to the party became firmer had stronger opinions than those whose attachment remained weak; and those whose attachment weakened had weaker opinions than those whose attachment remained strong.

### Discussion and conclusions

Himmelweit et al's (1984) pioneering study of voting in Great Britain is now well over a decade old (the first edition was published in 1981) but it has stimulated very little comparable work since. Most studies of the British electorate continue to employ only small numbers of attitudinal variables collected in cross-sectional studies to explore attitude-behaviour relationships, and social psychologists have paid virtually no attention to this subject. In this paper we have sought to rectify that omission, analysing the relationships between party identification and attitudes among a sample of the British adult population in a series of four surveys, conducted at one-year intervals. The results provide strong evidence for our five hypotheses, showing that:

There are very consistent attitude dimensions over time at the aggregate level, across a wide range of issues.

There are significant differences in the average location of the supporters of the country's various political parties on all of these attitude dimensions.

Within the Conservative, Labour, and, to a lesser extent, Liberal Democrat parties, the stronger the identification with a party, the stronger the attitudes held.

People who shifted their party allegiance had weaker opinions on the various attitude scales than either those who remained attached to the party they were 'defecting' from or those who remained consistent in their support for the party they were 'defecting' to.

People whose strength of partisan identification changed over time, but who remained consistent in which party they supported, differed in their attitudes from others: those whose attachment remained very strong had stronger attitudes than those whose degree of attachment weakened; those whose attachment remained weak had weaker attitudes than those whose support strengthened.

Such findings are entirely consistent with those which place attitudes and party identification as intermediate variables between the voter's environment and actual voting choice. But these findings apply at the aggregate scale only, and later papers in the series will look at the individual scale too.

In a summary chapter entitled "Implications for social psychology", Himmelweit et al (1984, page 183) identified four main views regarding the link between attitudes and behaviour:

1. Attitudes can be used to predict behaviour, as predisposing factors.
2. Behaviour influences attitudes, because we think and feel on the basis of our observations, rather than act on the basis of our thoughts and feelings.
3. There is no link between attitudes and behaviour, so that the latter cannot be predicted by the former.
4. Attitudes and behaviour are mutually interdependent.

They argued that attitudes motivate behaviour, rather than the other way round, because attitudes were better predictors of vote choice than either party identification or past vote:

"more of the voters who were not in tune with the views of the majority of voters for their party made a different choice next time round. Also, where an individual changed his views, he was more likely to change his vote, moving to a party more in tune with his changed outlook" (Himmelweit et al, 1984, page 185).

Our findings have generally supported these conclusions, showing the interdependence of attitudes and behaviour in the context of both party support and strength of party identification. We have not formally explored with what success attitudes can be used to predict behaviour, however, and this is the topic of the next paper in the series.

However, all of the findings reported here relate to the aggregate scale only. Our analyses here have shown that individual attitudes change over time too, posing new questions for research in this area by using longitudinal data, to which we return in our later papers. So far, we have confirmed the general finding regarding aggregate-level stability of attitudes and the links to behaviour, but have as yet not fully explored the related issue of individual-level stability.

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**APPENDIX 1****The voting questions asked in the British Household Panel Survey**

The following questions were asked in 1991, 1993, and 1994:

V5. Generally speaking do you think of yourself as a supporter of any one political party?

Yes No

If Yes, go to V8

If No

V6. Do you think of yourself as a little closer to one political party than to the others?

Yes No

If Yes, go to V8

If No

V7. If there were to be a General Election tomorrow, which political party do you think you would be most likely to support?

Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat
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Scottish Nationalist	Plaid Cymru	Green Party
----------------------	-------------	-------------

Other		
-------	--	--

None	Can't Vote	Don't Know
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Refused		
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Go to V10.

V8. Which one?

Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat
--------------	--------	------------------

Scottish Nationalist	Plaid Cymru	Green Party
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Other		
-------	--	--

None	Don't Know	Refused
------	------------	---------

V9. Would you call yourself a

Very strong	Fairly strong	Not very strong	Don't know
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supporter of (named party in V8)

The responses to these questions were combined to identify all those who would have voted for a given party (that is, their vote intention).

In 1992 a general election was held in April. In the survey that year, questions V5, V6, V8, and V9 above were asked as V2, V3, V4, and V5 respectively. The following questions were then asked of all respondents.

V6. Did you vote in this (past) year's general election?

Yes No Can't vote Don't know Refused

V7. Which political party did you vote for?

Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat
--------------	--------	------------------

Scottish Nationalist	Plaid Cymru	Green Party
----------------------	-------------	-------------

Other		
-------	--	--

Don't Know	Refused	
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**APPENDIX 2**

**The British Household Panel Survey attitude items, indicating the years when the questions were asked and whether they were on the self-completion or the face-to-face interview questionnaire**

*Family values 1 1991–1993 (self-completion)*

Here are some questions about the family and women's role and work outside the household. Do you personally

Strongly agree	1
Agree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	5

- FAM1 A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.  
 FAM2 All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job.  
 FAM3 A woman and her family would all be happier if she goes out to work.  
 FAM4 Both the husband and wife should contribute to the household income.  
 FAM5 Having a full-time job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person.  
 FAM6 A husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family.  
 FAM7 Children need a father to be as closely involved in their upbringing as the mother.  
 FAM8 Employers should make special arrangements to help mothers combine jobs and childcare.  
 FAM9 A single parent can bring up children as well as a couple.

*Family values 2 1992–1994 (self-completion)*

Here are some questions about family life. Do you personally

Strongly agree	1
Agree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	5

- FAM10 Living together outside of marriage is always wrong.  
 FAM11 Adult children have an obligation to look after their elderly parents.  
 FAM12 It is better to divorce than to continue an unhappy marriage.  
 FAM13 The man should be the head of the household.  
 FAM14 The Bible is God's word and every word in it is true.

*Health care provision 1991–1994 (face-to-face interview)*

Would you tell me which answer off the card comes closest to how you feel about each of the following statements:

Strongly agree	1
Agree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	5

- HC1 All health care should be available free of charge to everyone regardless of their ability to pay.  
 HC2 People who can afford it *should have to* take out private health insurance rather than use the National Health Service.  
 HC3 It is *not* fair that some people can get medical treatment before others, just because they can afford to pay for it.



*Social issues 1991–1993 (face-to-face interview)*

People have different views about society. I'm going to read out some things people have said about Britain today and I'd like you to tell me which answer off the card comes closest to how you feel about each statement:

	Strongly agree	1
	Agree	2
	Neither agree nor disagree	3
	Disagree	4
	Strongly disagree	5
SOC1	Ordinary people get their fair share of the nation's wealth.	
SOC2	There is one law for the rich and one for the poor.	
SOC3	Private enterprise is the best way to solve Britain's economic problems.	
SOC4	Major public services and industries ought to be in <i>state</i> ownership.	
SOC5	It is the government's responsibility to provide a job for everyone who wants one.	
SOC6	Strong trade unions are needed to protect the working conditions and wages of employees.	

*Political issues 1992–1994 (face-to-face interview)*

I'm going to read out some things that may concern you. I'd like you to give me the answer off this card that comes closest to how concerned you are about each of the following:

	A great deal	1
	A fair amount	2
	Not very much	3
	Not at all	4
ISS1	The rising price of food and other consumer goods.	
ISS2	The destruction of the ozone layer.	
ISS3	The high rate of unemployment.	
ISS4	The extinction of many animal and plant species.	
ISS5	Declining moral standards.	

*Political attitudes 1992–1994 (face-to-face interview)*

People have different views about the ways governments work. I'm going to read out some things people have said about governments in Britain and I'd like you to tell me which answer off the card comes closest to how you feel about the statement:

	Strongly agree	1
	Agree	2
	Neither agree nor disagree	3
	Disagree	4
	Strongly disagree	5
POL1	On the whole, what governments do in Britain reflects the wishes of the people.	
POL2	Ordinary people don't really have a chance to influence what governments do.	
POL3	The government should place an upper limit on the amount of money that any one person can make.	
POL4	Governments can be trusted to place the needs of the nation above the interests of their own party.	