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THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTY SYSTEMS AND THE DETERMINANTS OF PARTISAN VOTING IN ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 1973-1998

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTY SYSTEMS AND THE DETERMINANTS OF PARTISAN VOTING IN ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 1973-1998.

by

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ABSTRACT

The Development of Party Systems and the Determinants of Partisan Voting in English Local Government Elections 1973-1998

This thesis takes a quantitative approach to the study of the development of party systems in English local government following its reorganisation in the early 1970s. Aggregate data, including local election results and census information, are used to identify the determinants of partisan support and the subsequent effects upon variations in local party systems. The study develops the first major classification of local party systems between 1973 and 1998, focussing principally upon factors accounting for variations in the evolution of such systems.

This study provides the first clear evidence that the operation of local electoral systems contributes towards the production and maintenance of two-party dominance. However, in contrast to the national parliamentary situation, the two parties are not restricted to Conservative and Labour. The thesis highlights how third parties, particularly the Liberals, became a significant part of the local party system in a relatively large number of cases. Variations in electoral arrangements between local authorities, including differences in district magnitude and the nature of the electoral cycle, permit examination of their effects upon local party systems within a common national political culture. The effects of these variations are shown to either benefit or discriminate against the Liberals.

Using aggregate data and methods of linear regression, the thesis analyses patterns of partisan voting in local government. It shows that socioeconomic factors such as class, housing and employment, theoretically identified as important for parliamentary elections, are related also to local voting for the three main parties, although the relationships are weaker for the Liberals than for the traditional two main parties. Confirmation of these findings is provided by the application of methods designed to solve the problems of ecological inference.

Acknowledgements

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

A program of advanced study was undertaken which included ESRC summer school courses in advanced regression analysis and theory of regression. A postgraduate course on social research was undertaken also.

Relevant political science seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was presented

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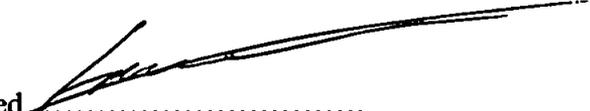
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The development of party systems has been the subject of many studies. This research tends, however, to be cross-national and as such concentrates upon the fortunes of parties in national systems[1]. Very few studies have been conducted that examine sub-national party systems and their development. Such systems however, could provide interesting findings. Unlike comparisons between national systems, sub-national party systems can be compared within a single country. We can therefore control for the national political culture and other factors, concentrating instead upon small differences in the electoral system and the effects these might subsequently have for the party system.

This thesis will explore, therefore, the evolution and subsequent development of local party systems in Britain from 1973, when a whole scale reorganisation took place, until 1998. Specifically, it will use aggregate data to examine changes in the fortunes of political parties and the relationship between the electoral system, demographic characteristics of the electorate, and party systems. In so doing the thesis develops a typology of local party systems, examines the effects of the electoral system on the distribution of council seats and also identifies the pattern of local voting and party support among different social groups.

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[1] Notable studies of national party systems include *Political Parties - Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State* (Duverger, 1964); *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967); *Parties and Party Systems – A Framework for Analysis* (Sartori, 1976); *Electoral Systems and Party Systems* (Lijphart, 1994).

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1.2 Why Study Party Systems?

In modern liberal democracies, parties are the central and intermediary structure between society and government. Furthermore, insofar as they are a system, parties interact and such interactions can be viewed as mechanical propensities, as structures of rewards and opportunities that go a long way toward explaining the different performances of different polities (Sartori, 1979). According to Webb a party system is, therefore, *"a particular pattern of competitive and cooperative interactions displayed by a given set of political parties"* (Webb, 2001: 1, italics in original). Given that political parties help determine the distribution of resources within a liberal democracy, an understanding of the party system can provide an explanation of the extent to which interests within society are represented. A study of party systems must, therefore, take account of not only political parties, but also the groups that they represent and the method by which those groups select their representatives.

Direct elections are the means by which groups in liberal democracies select their political representatives and formal studies of party systems have identified the electoral system as having significant influence upon the party system (see Duverger, 1964, Lijphart, 1994). The rules that govern elections - such as the number of seats or the method employed to convert the votes into seats - are instrumental in determining the outcome of an election (Rae, 1971). Duverger (1964) believed that such "mechanical" effects of the electoral system could encourage or inhibit the development of parties. The use of simple plurality elections - where the candidate with most votes wins - was viewed as encouraging the formation or maintenance of a two-party system in England. An understanding of these effects is important, therefore, when studying party system development.

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The mechanical effects of the electoral system upon the party system are only part of the story. Explanations of factors that influence voting behaviour are also important in understanding not only the nature of party systems, but also have wider implications for anyone conducting research into human decision making processes. In English local elections, certain assumptions can be made about an individual's voting decision, upon which can be based, a rigorous and scientific enquiry. Firstly, elections and the voting decision are often recurrent, which permits the use of a longitudinal approach that can observe changes in phenomena over a period of time. Secondly, the electorate is faced with a common set of options within each ward, which enables comparisons to be made both within and between individual wards. Thirdly, although there may be regional variations between wards, the voting decision is largely made on the same day, in the same national economic and political climate and is converted into seats using a common electoral formula – in Britain's case simple plurality. Finally, given the pervasive role of the mass media, it can be argued that each voter has access to a common pool of information about various issues, when making the decision (Himmelweit et al, 1985). These common characteristics allow the researcher to compare how different social groups may act when faced with similar situations.

The development of the party system however, can not be seen simply as the product of the electoral system or voters' decisions. While the electorate does of course play a part in the development of a party system, there is no simple sense in which the voters decide. The behaviour of the parties themselves in determining factors such as the range of candidates on offer force citizens to choose only within options that are pre-

defined for them (Dunleavy & Husbands, 1985). The interaction between parties, voters, and the simple plurality electoral system may create conditions that inhibit the survival of third parties. Plurality elections, according to Duverger (1964), will tend towards two party systems. This hypothesis - known as "Duverger's Law" - assumes that voters will endeavour to maximise the impact of their vote and be reluctant to "waste" it on supporting candidates with little or no chance of winning. The voter will calculate a party's ability to win and the resulting voting decision is based not only upon their preferred party, but also that party's ability to gain office. As there can be only one winner in a simple plurality election, the best option for the supporter of a party perceived as unlikely to win, might instead be a choice between the two strongest parties. This will result in the two main parties receiving "bonus" votes from supporters of parties perceived as unlikely winners. Third parties, therefore, receive even fewer votes, thereby confirming the voter's original perception of the party's inability to win. After successive election defeats this process may make it more difficult to attract not only voters but also potential candidates. According to Duverger, the "mechanical" effects of the plurality system act like a catalyst to this process, severely reducing a minority party's ability to survive. Quite simply, not only is the voter restricted by the number of parties contesting an election, the number of parties is also a function of the voter's opinion of a party's ability to represent them. As both of these phenomena are affected by the electoral system employed, an explanatory model must consider the extent of interactions between these different aspects (Benoit, 2002: 44).

1.3 Why Study Local Government Party Systems?

From 1931-70, British national elections were largely contests between the Labour and Conservative parties, both combined regularly poling close to 90% of the vote (Rallings & Thrasher, 1997). Third party support in the form of a Liberal revival in 1974, the appearance of nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales during the 1970s and the arrival of the Liberal-SDP Alliance in 1983 to some extent weakened the strength of the two parties (Scarbrough, 1997: 219). Despite this, Conservative and Labour candidates have won over 70% of the national vote and over 90% of parliamentary seats between 1974 and 1998. It is widely agreed that Britain's use of a simple plurality electoral system (first past the post) favours large parties and discriminates against minor parties, leading to the establishment or continuation of a two party system. While the dominance of the Conservatives and Labour in national government appears to support this hypothesis[2], it is at odds with the experience of many local authorities. Far from ensuring a two-party system, the experience of local government has been for the increasing proliferation of 'hung' councils where no single party has an overall majority of seats. In 1979, for example, 76 (14.7%) out of 517 local authorities in Great Britain were hung (Rallings & Thrasher, 1997). By 1995, although the total number of authorities had been reduced to 442, the number of councils with no overall control by a single party had risen to 176 (39.8%).

The increasing number of hung authorities reflected broader changes in the party systems of local authorities. The extent of these changes can be gauged from the case

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[2] Sartori (1979: 186) claims that a two-party system differs from a three-party system whenever third parties such as the Liberals do not affect the alternation of power between the two major parties at the national level.

of England. In 1979, the combined Labour and Conservative vote exceeded 90% of total votes cast in some 74 English local authorities: by 1995 the number of local authorities with such two party dominance had more than halved (Rallings & Thrasher, 1997: 107). As large sections of the local electorate deserted the established two main parties, the Liberals[3] rose to become the second party of local government with over 5,000 councillors by 1996 (Rallings & Thrasher, 1997: 132).

Sub-national party systems in England then, do not simply mirror those of national government. Local government instead contains a mixture of different systems. Some authorities such as the London borough of Newham, have remained quite stable, the council dominated by Labour councillors over the entire period. Other authorities such as Taunton Deane district council have changed dramatically. The council was hung in 1973, controlled by the Conservatives from 1976 to 1987, and then by the Liberals from 1991 to 1998. Instead of only two-party systems, there appears to be far greater variety in local government. The mixture of different party systems raises an important question. What is it about local government elections that allow so many different party systems to develop and be maintained?

1.4 Research Problems

There are several problems with attempting to address this question. The party system is affected by voting. There is however, very little data relating to this behaviour. Although the ballot paper contains a serial number that can be linked to

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[3] Because of the methodological problems associated with the classification of parties (see Chapter 4), we class as Liberals, Liberal Party candidates prior to 1982, Liberal and SDP alliance candidates between 1982 and 1987, and Liberal Democrat candidates after 1987.

the voter, this data is not available to social scientists. Another problem is the lack of data relating to the socioeconomic characteristics of the voters themselves. The largest collection of socioeconomic data relating to local voters is the national census. This unfortunately, is also not available at the level of the individual. Authors such as Miller, overcome these problems by using survey data[4]. His study of local voting, "one of the most elaborate survey of public attitudes ever carried out in Britain" (Miller, 1988), utilised data collected from interviews with over 1,100 respondents. Local surveys such as Miller's are rare, however, making it difficult to track electoral behaviour over a long period.

There are also methodological problems with using survey data to investigate local party systems in England. Different areas of the country have fundamentally different characteristics. Cornwall County Council differs considerably from the Greater London Council in terms, not only in terms of the socioeconomic characteristics of the electorate but also in terms of the policy considerations and structure of the council itself. Obtaining a sample of respondents that adequately reflected such national variation would be beyond the resources of this thesis. There are also issues of validity and reliability concerning data obtained using such an approach. Evidence suggests that voters can have difficulty accurately recalling their voting decision from recent elections. A survey attempting to ascertain voting behaviour from 1973 onwards would require the respondent to remember how they voted over 25 years

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[4] Other studies that draw heavily upon survey data include *Political Change in Britain* (Butler & Stokes, 1969); *How Britain Votes* (Heath et al, 1985) and *Voters Begin to Chose* (Rose and McAllister, 1986).

ago. For these and other reasons (outlined in Chapter 4), a large-scale survey would be impractical.

A more practical approach in this case is to estimate the required information from such data that are available. Although individual level data from the census are not obtainable, the Office of National Statistics does release aggregated socioeconomic data. The data cover the entire country and the methods used to collect the data are highly reliable, providing accurate measures of over 4,000 different variables (Marsh, 1993). In addition to the census data there also exists a large database of local election results. Compiled by Collin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, the British Local Elections Database was first deposited at the ESRC Data Archive at the University of Essex, covering local elections until 1996. The database contains information for over 100,000 local elections from 1973 and this is updated each year (Rallings & Thrasher: 1997). As well as recording the votes cast for each candidate, the database contains other important information, including the number of seats to be filled and electorate size. The national census and local election data are both available at the same level of aggregation: local authority wards of which there were over 10,000 in England. The information contained within both sets of data are interval/ratio and are, therefore, suitable for analysis using quantitative methods. This research utilises a combination of both data sets. It examines a large number of cases from which reliable inferences - framed within existing theories and methods - can be made. The following sections outline how this research is structured within the thesis.

1.5 Structure of Thesis

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on party systems and after an initial discussion on the study of party systems, its structure reflects the broad trichotomy of theories relating to party system formation and development. The first of these sections addresses the behaviour of the electorate, its effect on the party system, and critically evaluates the extent to which such effects can be explained by socioecomonic characteristics. The second section outlines the importance of political explanations to party system development in England and considers the extent to which these theories can be applied within our thesis. The final section examines theories that relate to structural influences upon the party system. It identifies which structural characteristics are important determinants of party system development and those that may be of particular relevance to the study of English local party systems.

It would be difficult to assess the suitability of these theories to the study of English local party systems without a prior examination of the local government system. Chapter 3, therefore, discusses the nature and function of local government in terms of its historical development. It describes the various functions undertaken by local authorities, their distribution within the local government structure, and highlights their relevance to the thesis. The chapter also examines variations and change in some structural characteristics of the local government system including the number of vacancies (district magnitude) and frequency of elections. Focusing in more detail on the place of parties within local government, the chapter then discusses the growing importance of parties as a means of political representation and draws our attention to the development of parties since the local government reorganisation in 1973.

Chapter 4 outlines the main research questions. The chapter critically evaluates possible methodological approaches and provides a justification of the quantitative approach that is to be used. The operationalisation of key concepts (e.g. the elected number of parties) into suitable measures is discussed and a detailed explanation of the construction of resulting variables is provided. The chapter also examines the methods employed to test the hypotheses and considers the reliability of inferences that can be made using such methods.

The empirical analysis begins by highlighting, the variation and change of party systems in English local government. Chapter 5 demonstrates the large number of different party systems that have existed from 1973-98 and uses aggregate voting data to develop a classification of party systems, which attempts to reveal the extent of this variation. The resulting typology facilitates the examination of party systems using such concepts as the number of parties and overall stability (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989).

Chapter 6 examines the nature of the relationship between structural characteristics of the electoral system and the party system. Foremost among these characteristics is the number of seats that are available in local elections (district magnitude). While district magnitude is always equal to one in UK parliamentary elections, it varies somewhat both within and between local authorities. While larger district magnitudes theoretically increase the ability of smaller parties to gain representation in systems employing proportional representation (Taagepera & Shugart, 1989), its effect in simple plurality elections is not as clear (Niemi, et al, 1985). The chapter examines,

therefore, the effect of district magnitude upon the performance of third parties in terms of contestation of seats available and how votes are converted into seats.

Chapter 7 focuses on relationships between socioeconomic characteristics of the local electorate and patterns of voting in local elections. It shows that while analysis of ward socioeconomic characteristics can explain variances in Conservative and Labour voting, factors accounting for levels of Liberal voting are more difficult to identify. While this may be due partly to the socioeconomic diversity of Liberal voters (Butler & Stokes, 1974; Heath et al, 1985; Dorling et. al, 1998: 64), survey data also suggest that Liberal voters may be less committed to their party than Labour or Conservative supporters (Rallings et al, 1998: 126). Much of this evidence derives from studies of voting behaviour in parliamentary elections. Such research often combine aggregate voting data with evidence obtained from survey research to enhance explanations of Liberal voting. Survey research is not practical in a comprehensive study of local voting however, as local surveys are weakened by a limited number of authorities and respondents. The chapter therefore combines the election data used in the previous chapter with ward-level socioeconomic data taken from the 1981 and 1991 censuses.

Chapter 8 attempts to provide a greater understanding of party system development by constructing an explanatory model of partisan voting based upon the combined effect of the socioeconomic, structural and political characteristics of local authorities. While the model highlights consistent relationships between certain characteristics and voting for the three main parties, the total explanatory power of the model is limited, especially for the Liberals. Chapter 9 focuses in more detail upon findings from the previous chapter. It uses a recent method developed by Garry King that

provides greater reliability when inferring individual level behaviour from aggregate data (King, 1997). King's model is used to test the hypothesis that Liberal support differs between some authorities among certain social groups. It centres upon two different types of authority holding elections in the same year and attempts to measure the difference in voting behaviour between similar socioeconomic groups in these authorities.

1.6   Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is threefold. Firstly, it provides students and researchers of English local government with a classification of local party systems, which is both intuitive and empirical. Such a classification simplifies the identification of authorities where the party system is dominated by a single party or those where multiparty systems are more common. The classification also facilitates the identification of those authorities where the party system has remained stable or those that have experienced dramatic change. In so doing this provides a useful source of information for future research into local party systems. Secondly, the research provides valuable insights into the causal relationships between the structural and socioeconomic characteristics of local authorities and party system development. The thesis reveals an apparent weakness in these relationships that challenge deterministic views of party system development in local government. Thirdly, the apparent weakness of such causal relationships raises questions regarding the suitability of using aggregate data to investigate individual level relationships. The thesis attempts to address these questions using more recent statistical techniques. The product of this research constitutes a comprehensive source of information. It adds considerably,

therefore, to the existing body of knowledge about local government party systems in England.

Chapter 2   English Local Party Systems - Previous Research

2.1   Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to review previous research relevant to an explanation for the variety of English local party systems. The opening section highlights the immediate and main problem associated with conducting such a review, namely the absence of prior research about English local party system formation and development. The following section identifies relevant theories regarding the nature of the relationship between parties and voters. We then consider the importance of such theories to English local party system formation and development. Subsequent sections examine three important strands, socioeconomic, structural and political explanations of local party system development. The chapter concludes by summarising the findings and their importance to this research.

2.2   English Local Party System Evolution and Development - A Quest for Research

Although many studies have been carried out for national party systems, there is little research relating to party system formation and development in local government. That which does exist tends to focus upon political developments in local government - such as systems of political management, councillor-officer relations and party structure (Gyford et al, 1989, see also Wilson & Game, 1994; Leach et al, 1994; Stewart, 2000) rather than socioeconomic and structural explanations for the development of the party systems.

Such research that exists, however, is useful in that it allows us to underpin some of the broader theories of party system development within the context of English local government. This literature is reviewed in subsequent sections. For now we focus

upon the more generalised literature regarding the study of party systems and their relevance to the case of English local government.

2.3 The Study of Party Systems

One of the first and most influential studies of party systems is that contained within Duverger's *Political Parties* (1964). Originally published in French in 1951, Duverger's study was concerned that research into political parties at the time - which although based upon "considerable and serious observation" - was lacking a general theory. As such these studies could never be truly profound as, "Nature answers only when questioned and we do not know what questions this subject demands" (Duverger, 1964). Duverger's aim was to break out of the confines of non-theory driven research and produce a general theory of parties. He realised that any such preliminary theory would be, "vague, conjectural, and of necessity approximate" (Duverger, 1964). Nevertheless, Duverger's ideas and their implications have been of profound importance for research into parties and party systems and have underpinned and informed subsequent important studies.

The concept of the party system allows for comparative study and testing of theories between different competitive political systems. According to Duverger,

> "With the exception of the single-party states, several parties coexist in each country: the forms and modes of their coexistence define the party system of the particular country being considered" (Duverger, 1964: 203).

Duverger suggests that party systems are the product of many complex factors. Some are peculiar to individual countries, while others are more general. Among those factors peculiar to individual countries are tradition, history, social and economic

structure, religious beliefs, racial composition and national rivalries (Duverger, 1964: 203). He suggests, for example, that the personal rivalry between Jefferson and Hamilton in the early years of the Union led to the opposition between the Republicans and Democrats in the USA. In Great Britain, he posits that the Irish were the fundamental reason for the disturbance of the two-party system at the end of the nineteenth century. Such localised political factors are many and varied[1] and are difficult to include into any generalised theory of party systems (Duverger, 1964: 204). Part of the reason for the difficulty in explaining party system development in local government is because such localised political factors may operate.

There are, according to Duverger, however, three factors that are "common to all countries" - ideological, socioeconomic and technical (Duverger, 1964: 204). Ideological factors are concerned with the parties and voter's view of the role of government. While Duverger acknowledged that ideology and socioeconomic attitudes were related in rather complex ways, he viewed the influence of socioeconomic factors upon the party system as being of great importance. The appearance of Socialist parties at the beginning of the twentieth century, for example, coincided with the entry of the working classes into political life (Duverger, 1964: 204). While class was undoubtedly a strong contributor to the party system in some countries, they are not as Duverger first asserts, "common to all countries". The main parties in America do not correspond to definite classes and there is no party that is completely homogenous in terms of the social composition of its supporters.

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[1] Such factors may go some way to explain the differentiated nature of the historic growth of the Liberal party in areas such as Cornwall. The effects of such localised factors are discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters

Duverger's technical factors primarily concern the nature of electoral systems. He drew attention to the similarity between the electoral systems of Britain and America and suggested that one underlying cause for the existence of two-party systems in both countries was the operation of simple plurality elections (Duverger, 1964). According to Duverger, however, the electoral system itself is not a sufficient condition for the production of a two-party system. It instead acts as a "brake or accelerator" upon the main influences upon the party system - socioeconomic factors (Duverger, 1964: 205). Before addressing the nature of the electoral systems effect upon the party system, we need first establish the underlying effects of socioeconomic factors. Why and how are such factors important determinants of the party system? In order to achieve this aim we need to understand better a) the nature of political parties and b) the nature of voters.

2.4 The Nature of Parties and Voters

Before examining in more detail the important characteristics of party systems, it is essential to provide some definition of a political party in liberal democracies - although Duverger does not provide one. Sartori's abridged minimal definition of party is, "any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office" (1979, 64). This definition in English local government applies to a wide range of groups (see chapter 4.4.3). According to Downs (1957), however, the primary objective of politicians from all parties is to become elected.

2.4.1 An Economic Theory of Party Competition

Downs' (1957) *Economic Theory of Democracy* established the principle that parties compete for votes in much the same way that shops along a high street compete for customers. His "spatial analogy" is similar to that proposed by economists trying to understand why two competing shops end up positioning themselves next to each other. The conclusion reached was that shoppers try to minimise utility costs associated with shopping and would not support the stores at all if they were too distant. Rather than being situated at both ends of the street, the stores would converge towards the centre, eventually reaching a state of equilibrium when their closeness does not discourage consumers at the extreme ends (Downs, 1957: 117).

When the analogy is applied to democratic systems, the high street is replaced by a left-right scale along which parties can be placed according to their stance on particular policies. Voters are able also to position themselves along this space and more easily identify the party positioned closest to them. Parties, according to Downs, are "vote maximisers" and, therefore, position themselves along this uni-dimensional space where they will attract the most votes (Downs, 1957: 119). Assuming the electorate is distributed normally within the voting space, the maximum number of potential voters will be positioned in the centre. Therefore, in order to maximise votes parties are drawn to the centre, by reformulating policies in accordance with the median voter's position, in much the same way as the shops trying to maximise profit.

Figure 2-1 represents Downs' original model. The normal distribution curve represents the ideologies of voters. In this case, A represents the ideological position

of the Liberal Party and B that of the Conservative Party before the creation of the Labour party. The ideological positions of both parties move towards the large number of voters in the centre. These ideological shifts mean that the position of the parties become further away from voters at the extremes. These voters have little option but to continue voting for party nearest to them, however, as abstention may result in victory for the party even further from their views.

Figure 2-1 - Spatial Voting Pre-Labour
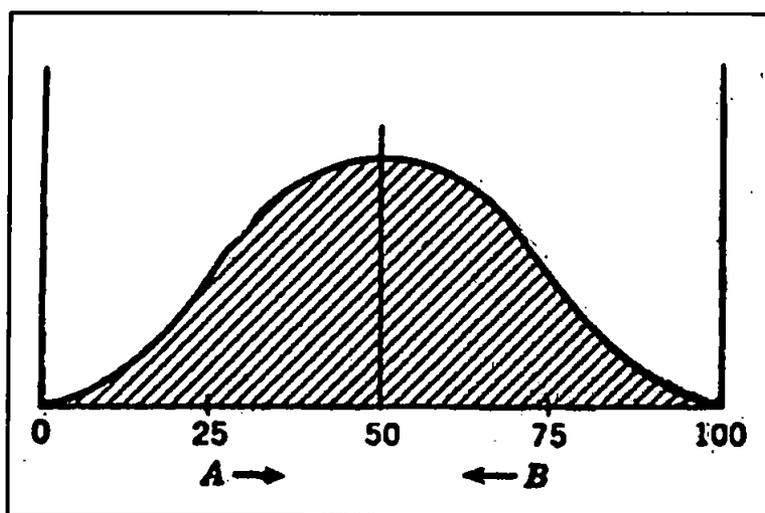
Adapted from Downs (1957), *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, p.118.

In the late nineteenth century, the mass enfranchisement of the working class shifted the ideological centre of the voting space leftwards. Although both parties shifted leftwards also, the Liberals were still to the right of the ideological centre (see Figure 2-2). According to Downs (1957: 128), the creators of the Labour Party correctly guessed that they could outflank the Liberal Party by positioning themselves ideologically to the left of the latter at position C. This effectively trapped the Liberals between the two modes of the electorate and their support rapidly diminished in size. After the creation of Labour, the Liberals found themselves in an untenable

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position. Should the party stay in the centre and be squeezed from both sides or move to one of the extremes where the number of voters is far fewer? They stayed in the centre.

Figure 2-2 - Spatial Voting Post-Labour Party
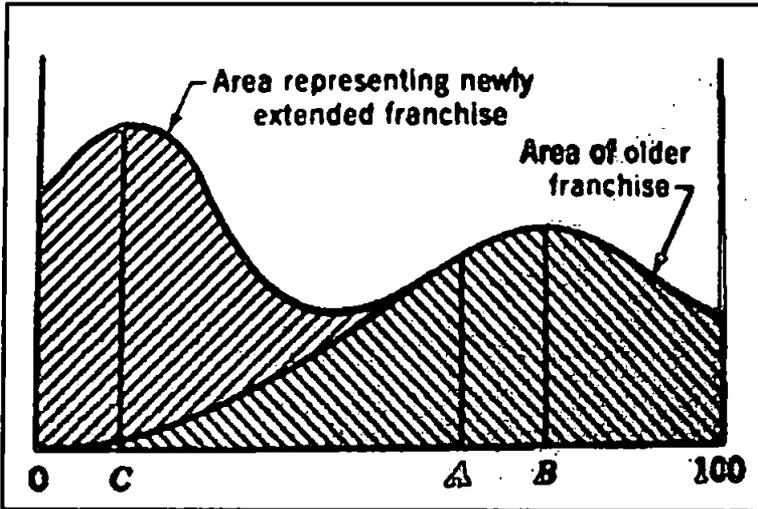
Adapted from Downs (1957), *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, p.129.

Downs' theory has come under attack from a number of sources. Sartori argues that Downs' conceptualisation of parties does not equate with the facts. Although, at elections, parties will inevitably try to maximise votes, parties may not necessarily reformulate policy in order to do so (Sartori, 1979: 327). Local elections frequently contain small parties that have specific policy stances, such as the Green Party. While the party no doubt attempts to win as many votes as possible, their strategy is to mobilise support for existing policies rather than alter their policy position. The concept of voting space being one-dimensional is also contentious. Lipset and Rokkan (1967), identified not one, but several social cleavages which influenced party system formation. Some social cleavages are aligned with and reinforce each other while others may be crosscutting. The space in which parties and voters operate is, therefore, multi-dimensional. Downs overcomes this problem by placing parties

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upon a scale in a position corresponding to their ideology. This, according to Sartori, means that Downs was actually placing the parties along the scale using a weighted average of all of the particular policies they support (Sartori, 1979: 326).

2.4.2 Issues, Identification and Image

Downs' model raises important questions regarding the nature of party competition and the means by which voters choose their party. According to Sartori, three concepts stand out as being crucial to an understanding of voting - issue voting, partisan identification and party image. Issue voting occurs when a visible and controversial topic is perceived by informed voters, who then make their voting decision based upon their perception of the parties' position on that issue. In contrast, partisan identification describes the process whereby voters support a party because they develop long-term feelings of attachment towards that party.

For both issue voting and partisan identification, party image is the cue from which individuals form their opinions of the parties. A party image for Sartori, "is a vague *policy package* condensed in, and rendered by, one word or slogan (1979:329, italics in original), such as *New Labour*.

The sources of this simplification of parties to a broad image have fascinated writers on political psychology. Wallas (1910) suggested that the parties became important in popular perceptions of politics because the electorate required something simple and permanent to identify. Part of the reason for this, according to Butler and Stokes (1974), lies in the remoteness of the citizen from the affairs of government. Their survey of political behaviour at the 1964 general election revealed that only one in ten

of the electorate went to a political meeting during the campaign (Butler & Stokes, 1974: 21). They suggest that the extent of the public's political activity is similar to the limits of their political knowledge. Despite this lack of information, however, voters were capable of behaving in a purposive way and of seeking goals they value (Butler & Stokes, 1974: 23).

The image of parties in Britain, therefore, allows voters - without incurring the utility cost of acquiring detailed political information - to identify the policy stances of parties necessary to place them within a policy space. Lack of detailed political knowledge means that policy voting, that is a voting choice determined by issues and reacting to policy stances of parties, is relatively rare. According to Sartori (1979),

> "Whenever politics develops, whenever electorates have a capacity for abstraction, and whenever the party system is structured by mass parties, the strong presumption is that *position-voting related to party images* represents the single, prevalent determinant of the voting choice. And to the extent that voters are *position-orientated*, to the same extent the spatial understanding of party competition is worth pursuing" (Sartori, 1979: 333, italics in original).

He argues that although voters must have issue preferences, the question hinges on the point at which a non-desired issue-policy of the preferred party is perceived and breaks the pre-existing image, loyalty or affiliation of the voter to a given party (Sartori, 1979). Once partisan identification has been established, voters will remain loyal until the party's policy stance is no longer in accord with their own. For Butler and Stokes, the direction of an individual's partisan identification is the legacy of the early years of political awareness. A young adult is very likely indeed to share the parents' party preference. Over the years, however, the similarities become somewhat blurred as the individual's preferences are influenced by wider experience (Butler & Stokes, 1974: 51).

The rather simplistic model of the relationship between voters and parties, view parties as having distinct images that can be appropriately interpreted by voters that form long-term attachments to a party - primarily during childhood. The process is both facilitated by and maintains the public's limited knowledge of the political system. The following sections discuss the nature of this relationship for English local party systems.

2.5 Parties and Voters in English Local Party Systems

Chapter 1.1 noted that research regarding the nature of the relationship between parties and voting in England tends to focus upon parliamentary elections. Most of the concepts discussed so far in this chapter have been formulated and developed within the same context. Local party systems are such a neglected area of research that much of the literature that examines these concepts in detail applies principally to the national party system. This section examines the extent to which these concepts may apply to the study of party systems in local elections.

Local party systems differ largely from the national party system in that they are so varied. In parliamentary elections, few candidates from parties other than the Conservatives, Labour and Liberals are elected in England (Webb, 2001). In local elections this is not the case. A variety of other candidates are able to win seats in local authorities. Even when focussing only on the main three parties, local party systems are substantially different from the national system in that the Liberals (and their various successor parties) were able, at one point, to become the second largest party within English government (Rallings & Thrasher, 1997).

2.5.1   Local Elections as Second Order Elections.

Some of the explanation for the variety of party systems in local government might lie with the intrinsic difference between the two types of political office being elected. The concept of first and second order elections, developed by Reif and Schmitt, attempts to explain the effect of such differences upon voting. In parliamentary systems, first order elections are the national parliamentary elections. "In addition to these, however, there is a plethora of 'second-order' elections: by-elections, municipal elections, various sorts of regional elections, those to a 'second-chamber' and the like" (Reif & Schmitt, 1980: 8).

According to these authors, perhaps the most important aspect of second order elections, such as those for local government, is that there is "less at stake". Because of this they argue that small or new political parties are more likely to be successful at gaining seats in such elections. "While a small party might represent the voter's opinion more precisely, he may opt for the opportunity - when more is at stake - of supporting a large, established party and thereby the general direction of his political views" (Reif & Schmitt, 1980: 9).

Heath and others' study of second-order elections provided considerable support for Reif and Schmitt's theories. They found that,

> "many of their [Reif and Schmitt's] propositions apply not only to the case of
> European elections for which they were first designed, but also apply, albeit
> with less force, to the British local elections as well" (Heath et al, 1999: 406).

Heath and others also revealed that the electorate behaved as if there was more at stake in local than European elections. More of their respondents turned out to vote in

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the local elections and felt that it made a difference who won, while fewer reported that they voted on the basis of national issues. Local elections have, consequently, less of a second-order character than European elections.

Electoral behaviour in local elections, therefore, may not differ largely from that of national elections. Indeed, for Butler and Stokes, the concept of partisan identification applied particularly well to local elections:

> "In 1963, for example, those who went to the polls in local elections that were fought on a party basis voted to an overwhelming degree in line with their expressed party self-image...the most central fact is that well over 90 per cent of our respondents stayed with their generalised tie to the national parties, though local elections might be thought to be fought on entirely special local issues" (Butler & Stokes, 1974: 40).

This view was also confirmed by Miller (1988), who found that 80% of voters had local choices that were exactly in accord with their party identification - and 83% in accord with their current parliamentary preference (Miller, 1988: 166). Partisan identification, therefore, appears relevant to both types of party system - local and national. Reiff and Schmitt did not, however, deny the influence of national parties: "Many voters cast their votes in these elections not only as a result of the second-order arena, but also on the basis of factors in the main political arena of the nation" (Reif & Schmitt, 1980: 9).

Despite the influence of national voting preferences, evidence suggests, around 20% of local voters do not act in accordance with their national party preference. For Heath and others, it seems plausible to suppose these votes are swayed by local factors and issues, rather than by national ones (Heath et al, 1999: 392). Section 2.8

discusses local factors and issues in more detail, and discusses the extent to which these characteristics can be applied to the study of party system development.

Although the fortunes of the parties in local elections may to some extent be influenced by local factors there is much evidence that a large majority of voters express identical voting preferences in both national and local elections[2]. We can assume, therefore, that the literature relating to party choice applies equally well to these voters in local elections. The following sections discuss this literature and its relevance to party system formation and development in English local government elections.

2.6 Socioeconomic Determinants of English Party Systems

The evolution and development of local party systems is the net result of voting and as such it is essential to understand why voters support particular parties. As a large proportion of voters in local elections vote in accordance with their national party preference (Miller, 1988; Heath et al, 1999), the literature that addresses national voting behaviour applies to a large extent to local government elections. This section reviews the literature in order to ascertain its applicability to the study of party systems in local government.

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[2] In addition to the evidence from Miller (1988) suggesting that 80% of respondent's local election preferences were in accordance with their national preferences, a cursory examination of ranked position by votes received reveals that the finishing positions of the three main parties in general elections between 1979-92 were identical to local elections held in the same year.

2.6.1 Social Conflict and Cleavages

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* focused specifically upon the sources of conflict between groups in society and the effects of such upon the structure of party systems. The first group of questions they ask concerns, "*the genesis of the system of contrasts and cleavages* within the national community", while the second focus on "*the conditions for the development of a stable system of cleavage and oppositions* in national political life. The final group of questions relates to "*the behavior of the mass of rank-and-file citizens* within the resultant party systems" (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967: 7). Drawing upon a series of national studies, they formulised a view of party systems within which, potential cleavage bases could be identified.

The first task for Lipset and Rokkan was to ask what cleavages manifested themselves in the national community in the early phases of consolidation, and what cleavages emerged in the subsequent phases of centralisation and economic growth? They found that in Britain, the initial conflicts were essentially local or regional oppositions to encroachments of the aspiring and dominant national elite. The heads of independent landed families in the counties opposed the powers and the decisions of the government and administration in London (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967: 11). In the Celtic areas of Wales, opposition to the territorial, cultural, and economic dominance of the English offered a basis for community wide support for the Liberals and retarded the development of conventional class politics, even in the coalfields (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967: 12). Even at this early stage of party system development it is possible to observe the effect of local factors which act against the development of party systems along national lines.

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2.6.2 Class Conflict

While territorial cleavages in Britain were a result of the national revolution, the industrial revolution triggered a variety of cultural counter-movements that, in the long run, "tended to cut across the value communities within the nation and to force the enfranchised citizenry to choose sides in terms of their *economic interests*" (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967: 19). The economic division in society in Britain manifested itself in the party system in the form of a class cleavage between the working class and those that owned or managed the means of production.

The interests of the working classes in Britain were originally represented by the various trade union organisations. These organisations however had little or no political power and as society became increasingly polarised so the need for political representation of the working class increased. The Labour party was formed by the trade unions in order to secure such representation of their members within Parliament and support by political action the objectives sought by the trade unions in the interest of their members (Jennings, 1961).

According to Lipset and Rokkan the decisive lower class breakthrough in Britain came with the elections of 1918 and 1922. Before World War I the Labour party contested relatively few constituencies and won no more than 42 out of 670 seats but in 1922 the party contested 411 constituencies, winning 142 of them (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967: 31). Despite the fact that the party had positioned itself ideologically in accordance with the greatest number of voters, they were disadvantaged by an inability to contest elections. Of course, far more candidates are required to contest

seats in local elections, meaning that small and developing parties are at an immediate disadvantage.

2.6.3 Class Voting

By the time Robert Alford contributed his study of class voting in Anglo-American countries the relationship between class and voting in Britain and the USA had been amply documented. Studies such as Benney et al (1956), *How People Vote* and Milne and McKenzie (1958), *Marginal Seat 1955*, found that the middle-class tended to vote Conservative while the working-class generally supported Labour. A summary of voting studies that focused upon this aspect of voting behaviour was also presented in Lipset (1960), *Political Man*. According to Alford,

> "Studies of voting behaviour have routinely found a correlation between the social class position of voters and the party they typically vote for. Persons in professional and business occupations, persons at upper-income levels, persons with more than a high-school education are more likely to vote for a party that stands for protection of business interests and little welfare legislation than persons in low-prestige occupations, with low incomes, or with little education.... That class position and voting behaviour are correlated is by now commonplace" (Alford, 1967: 68).

Alford asked whether class voting was the same for countries in which an Anglo-American political system existed. He produced an index of class voting by subtracting the percentage of non-manual workers voting for left parties from the percentage of manual workers voting for such parties (Alford, 1967: 80). He found that the levels of class voting in Great Britain and Australia were higher than were those for the United States and Canada (Alford, 1967:88). He suggests some possible reasons for the differences in countries where class voting is higher. The parties in these countries may more consistently represent or appeal to class interests, or command greater historical loyalties of certain classes. The social classes in such

countries might also be exposed to situations in which the political relevance of class interests becomes apparent (Alford, 1967:89).

For Lipset and Rokkan and Duverger, alike, social class was the main influence behind the national party system development in Britain (Duverger, 1964). A large body of research has since focused upon the effect of social class and other socio-economic characteristics upon voting behaviour in Britain. Butler and Stokes' (1969) *Political Change in Britain*, sought to explain changes in support of parties using socio-economic data obtained from detailed and repeated interviews with British electors over a seven year period (Butler & Stokes, 1974: 3).

Butler and Stokes identified a high level of voting along class lines. This closed-class explanation of electoral choice is based upon the assumption that an individual's voting behaviour is influenced essentially by key social characteristics. The voter's class attachment to a particular party is developed in both childhood and early adulthood when the voter first participates in politics. The resulting party identification is deeply rooted in an individual's psyche, which both reinforces the voter's propensity to vote for a particular party and is in turn reinforced by the act of voting (Heath et al, 1985: 8). Voting is thus seen largely as a symbolic act whereby people express their allegiance to their social group. The manual worker, for example, votes Labour out of class solidarity because it is "the party of the working-class" (Heath et al, 1985: 9).

The class equals vote theory was a persuasive argument for Conservative and Labour voting in parliamentary elections and what research exists has also suggested a similar

relationship for local elections. Miller (1988: 159) found that more working-class respondents chose Labour than any other party and more middle-class chose the Conservatives than any other one party. But how can theories of class voting accommodate the Liberals? Sartori (1979) suggests that the Liberals' position in the centre of Downs' left-right ideological scale resulted in the party having no clear image in the minds of voters. Indeed, class explanations of Liberal voter support have proved much harder to develop than those for the other two parties. Miller found no strong connections between Liberal support and any of his predictors - including class, although there was some evidence of support among the middle class.

Heath and others too found evidence in the early 1980s of some class voting for the Liberals. This, they suggested, was located particularly among the educated and those employed in professional and technical occupations.

> "The Alliance vote is not, as previous interpretations have suggested, an amorphous vote drawn evenly from different social classes. Its base, though small, is an expanding one and thus its share of the vote might be expected to have an underlying upward trend" (Heath et al 1985: 171).

The Alliance vote in local elections did not, however, display such signs of an upward trend, decreasing from 25.4% in 1983 to 22.6% in 1987. The reformation of the Alliance into the Liberal Democrats did not prevent this decline with the share of the vote for the newly named party falling to 17.8% in 1992 and further still to 16.8% in 1997 (Rallings & Thrasher, 1997).

2.6.4 Class-Dealignment

In recent years there has been research that suggests that class voting is no longer as important it once was (Sarlvik & Crewe, 1983; Franklin, 1985; Rose & MacAllister,

1986). Butler and Stokes first identified the phenomenon of class-dealignment using an index based upon the respondent's occupational grade, class self-image and their own view of partisanship. The index is similar to Alford's class index and is calculated by subtracting the percentage of working class Conservative identifiers from the percentage of middle class Conservative identifiers. When the index for 1963 is compared with 1970, there are reductions in partisan self image of almost 17 percentage points for class based on occupational grade, and 20 percentage points for class based on self-image (Butler & Stokes, 1974: 203). There are, according to Butler and Stokes, very good reasons for believing that the electorate had become less inclined to respond to politics in terms of class. In terms of social trends, the most important of these is identified as the increase of economic well being among the electorate (Butler & Stokes, 1974: 203).

The impression of a class based and frozen party system, that successfully expressed and channelled all significant political demands, was undermined after 1970, as a series of new social and political challenges beset the major parties.

> "These challenges were either based on issues and lines of political conflict which potentially cut across existing patterns of electoral alignment, or had the effect of generally undermining the electorate's trust in both major parties" (Webb & Fisher, 1999: 16).

Webb and Fisher believe that since the 1970s, the political system in Britain has been under various pressures that have had a profound effect upon the party system. The notion of a 'two-party, two-class' system, which summarised the way that the two major parties absorbed approximately 90% of the vote in general elections until 1970, was overwhelmingly structured by the class cleavage (Webb & Fisher, 1999: 8).

Much of this orthodox account has recently been challenged by a number of interconnected developments including partisan and class dealignment; and the erosion of two-party domination (Webb & Fisher, 1999: 10). Sarlvik and Crewe suggested that class voting fell in 1979 because the popularity of the Conservatives rose while that of Labour dropped among manual workers. They assert that 1979 was only the latest instalment in a series of elections in which "class voting has fitfully but gradually declined" (Sarlvik & Crewe, 1983: 86). Sarlvik and Crewe argued that while the relationships between the social status of individuals and party choice have not disappeared completely, their importance as determinants of voting behaviour have decreased. They suggest that immediate economic interest rather than class membership may increase in importance and that white collar employees may come to differ less from manual workers in their political views, as the precise meaning of such determinants is gradually redefined (Sarlvik & Crewe, 1983: 332).

The declining influence of socioeconomic explanations led Rose and MacAllister to suggest that the traditional closed-class model of political socialisation is an anachronism in that it assumes that people do not think for themselves, or that learning stops as soon as a person is old enough to be independent of parents (Rose & MacAllister, 1986: 114). They employed Butler and Stokes' index of determination, (the percentage sum of the electorate voting for their natural class party) to demonstrate a decline in class-voting from 59% in 1964 to just 48% in 1983 (Rose & MacAllister, 1986: 53). After showing that the relationship between class and vote has been declining, they criticise the original closed-class model of electoral competition as being "too simple by half". They argue that reducing social structure

to a single dimension ignores other possible social sources of economic influence, such as housing (Rose & MacAllister, 1986: 55).

2.6.5 Instrumental Voting

The apparent process of class dealignment in Britain fuelled the debate about the importance of 'expressive' voting over that of 'instrumental' voting. The orthodox expressive theory held that voters possessed little detailed knowledge of the policies or programmes of the parties but rather formed attachments on the basis of generalised conceptions and transmitted family and group attachments. The instrumental theory suggests the opposite. It holds that voting is primarily an individual action, based not on group identity but on rational calculation. Emotional ties, habit and group loyalty do not signify. Voting is a means by which the individual attempts to maximise his or her interests. The act of voting is therefore analogous to other consumer choices and involves deliberate comparisons between the competing qualities of the various packages on offer (Heath et al, 1985: 9).

Dunleavy and Husbands in their analysis of voting behaviour found little support for the party identification model while personal contacts were mentioned by only a negligible number of respondents. While party loyalty was an important influence on Labour voters, the Conservative and Alliance supporters evaluated it below issues and positive attractions as an influence on their decisions (Dunleavy & Husbands, 1985: 212). National issues and the positive attractions of the parties were mentioned as key influences on their voting behaviour by most of their respondents. There was also, however, extensive evidence of negative voting to prevent a least preferred party from winning (Dunleavy & Husbands, 1985: 212).

Not all political scientists readily accepted the relegation of class voting, however. Heath et al compared survey data from the 1983 general election with that of previous elections in order to uncover the social and political origins of electoral change According to Heath et al, the 1983 general election was remarkable as it challenged the long standing and overwhelming dominance of the Conservative and Labour parties within British electoral politics. The study raised serious doubts about the class-dealignment thesis. Instead, Heath et al believed that the decline in Labour's performance was part of a pattern of long-term fluctuations - around an underlying trend in class voting - in partisan support. They attributed these fluctuations to political, not social influences, and suggested that they reflected people's changing confidence in the parties, concluding that, "there is no need to introduce concepts like class dealignment to explain them" (Heath et al, 1985: 171).

Given that many voters express the same preferences at local elections as they do at parliamentary elections, we should be able similarly to observe the effect of class voting at local elections. Moreover, since these elections are held more frequently than parliamentary elections, we might also be able to identify and track fluctuations in class voting. Given a long enough period we should be able to ascertain whether class voting is declining or just fluctuating or both.

2.6.6 Non-Class Socioeconomic Determinants

Research has shown that class is the primary social cleavage around which party systems in England are structured, although its influence may be waning. However, what other social cleavages exist and have these increased in importance if class

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voting has declined? Miller (1988) identified other socioeconomic characteristics that also appeared as determinants of voter choice in local elections, including housing tenure and education. The following sections discuss how these and other characteristics, might be related to partisan choice.

Housing

There is evidence to suggest that public-private housing distinctions have been increasingly significant in structuring patterns of party support since the 1960s (Rose and McAllister, 1985: 61; Heath *et al.*, 1991: 106; Webb & Fisher, 1999: 18). Butler and Stokes also identified housing tenure as being an important factor in both class and political identification. While they distance themselves from the discredited embourgeoisement theories that had been prominent until the collapse of Conservative support in the early 1960s, they suggest that housing may be far more important than other forms of consumerism. The link between housing and the social grade of families was identified, with far more middle class families living in privately rented or owner-occupier housing than council housing. Conservative support among both manual and non-manual workers was higher in privately rented housing than council housing, and higher still among owner occupiers (Butler & Stokes, 1974: 109).

Two quite different types of explanations for the relationship between housing and the vote have been suggested. One explanation is that housing tenure will structure individual interests in the same way that position in the labour market structures class interests. Homeowners have valuable marketable assets that give them a measure of security and economic advantage. They have an interest in the maintenance of

property rights and of a market for housing which preserves the value of those assets (Heath et al, 1985: 46). Another argument sees housing as an extension of the influence of the workplace. Housing estates are thus assumed to constitute social communities, which foster and reinforce class cleavages at the local level (Heath et al, 1985: 46).

If housing does influence local voting then its effect is likely to have changed over the period. With the Conservative victory of 1979, the gradual rise in council house building was not only halted but also reversed. Assisted by the government's policy of requiring local authorities to sell council houses on favourable terms to existing tenants, the proportion of council tenants fell from 32% in 1979 to 28.5 per cent by 1985. Owner-occupation, meanwhile, continued to grow, and in 1983 accounted for 60% of households (Heath et al, 1985: 44). Such transformations in patterns of housing consumption may have contributed to changes to local party systems over the period.

Occupation

Research has shown that occupational status is related to electoral behaviour in local elections. When unemployed respondents were questioned about their intention to vote, Miller found that they showed a very low level of intention (Miller, 1988: 95). Among those unemployed that do vote, there is much evidence to suggest that they are much more likely to support Labour and much less likely to vote Conservative (Heath et al, 1991, 165). Marshall et al. (1988: 218) argue, however, that this political allegiance is determined prior to the event of unemployment and that unemployment itself would have no direct impact on voting choice. The surveys used in both studies

were, however, subject to very small numbers (see also Heath et al, 1991: 163). Unfortunately, there is little research regarding the voting behaviour of unemployed in local elections, let alone the effect of unemployment when controlling for class.

Self-employment also appears to be related to voting choice. In 1979, for example, the self-employed were overwhelmingly Conservative with three out of four voting Conservative giving the party a 60% lead over Labour. Moreover, the self-employed status they share overrode differences of social class. Self-employed manual workers, such as plumbers and decorators, were as likely to vote Conservative. Independent professionals were also more likely to vote for the party than were professional employees. A division of the electorate between employees and self-employed rather than manual and non-manual therefore has one benefit. The vote of the self-employed can be predicted with greater certainty than the vote of non-manual workers (Sarlvik & Crewe, 1983: 93).

Education

Butler and Stokes believe that educational experience is also strongly related to the individual's social status. They found that children both from middle and working class homes who went to a grammar school or fee-paying school were more likely to have achieved non-manual social status than were those who went to a secondary modern school (Butler & Stokes, 1974: 106). However, while it may be true that class influences educational attainment, which in turn influences class, it would be quite misleading to treat education as if it were related to class in the same way as housing. This is because higher education does not produce 'free enterprise' values in the way that home ownership does (Heath et al, 1985: 64).

Ethnicity

The one thing that is abundantly clear from all of the major surveys of ethnic voting is that the Labour party has been the major beneficiary of the black vote. Moreover, the influence of social class upon black voting among black voting patterns appears to be remarkably limited and even the younger cohorts of upwardly mobile black voters seem cautious about backing the Conservatives (Saggar, 1992: 152). Heath et al. (1991: 99) also observe that ethnicity has such an effect, "black and Asian respondents are much more likely to vote Labour than are white respondents, but only a small proportion of the electorate is black". According to Saggar (1992), therefore, any effect of blacks on the party system is likely to be limited. Such effects would be more limited if, as is likely, turnout among blacks were disproportionately low. The proportion of blacks in some local authorities is somewhat greater than the national average, particularly in London and other cities, and this may provide some scope for investigation.

2.7 Structural Determinants of Party Systems

In addition to socioeconomic factors discussed in the previous sections, Duverger suggested that technical factors were also important determinants of the party system. His conclusion was based partly upon the assumption that the natural state of the party system is one of two-partyism. The reason for this assumption was foremost the fact that "throughout history all the great factional conflicts have been dualist" and that "whenever public opinion is squarely faced with great fundamental problems it tends to crystallise round two opposed poles" (Duverger, 1964: 216). In this way the two party system appears for Duverger, to correspond to the nature of things. Political

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choice usually takes the form of a choice between two alternatives. Whereby a

duality of parties might not always exist, there is always a duality of tendencies.

> "Every policy implies a choice between two kinds of solution: the so-called compromise solutions lean one way or the other. This is equivalent to saying that the centre does not exist in politics: there may well be a Centre party but there is no centre tendency, no centre doctrine. The term 'centre' is applied to the geometrical spot at which the moderates of opposed tendencies meet: moderates of the Right and moderates of the Left. Every centre is divided against itself and remains separated in two halves, Left-Centre and Right-Centre. For the centre is nothing more than the artificial grouping of the right wing of the Left and the left wing of the Right. The fate of the Centre is to be torn asunder, buffeted and annihilated (Duverger, 1964: 215).

Given the "natural" order of things, therefore, the party systems in those countries that

hold democratic elections should be comprised only of two main parties. While this

theory fitted well the two-party systems in the USA and Britain, the existence of

multi-party systems throughout Europe presented Duverger with a dilemma:

> "If we accept the idea that the two-party system is natural we still have to explain why nature should have flourished so freely in the Anglo-Saxon countries and their few imitators and why nature should have been thwarted in the countries on the continent of Europe" (Duverger, 1964: 216).

Although an explanation for the existence of two-party systems in England and

America might lie to some extent in the history of dualism of the two nations,

Duverger believed that technical factors associated with the ballot system offered an

important explanation for the different types of party systems.

> "The influence of such national factors is certainly very considerable; but we must not in their favour underestimate the importance of one general factor of a technical kind, the electoral system. Its effect can be expressed in the following formula: *the simple majority single ballot system favours the two-party system.* Of all the hypotheses that have been defined in this book, this approaches the most nearly perhaps to a true sociological law" (Duverger, 1964: 217 italics in original).

Duverger maintained that an almost perfect correlation is observable between the

simple-majority single ballot system and countries in which a two-party system exists.

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He found that exceptions to this rule were rare and could be explained as the result of the special conditions within each country. This influence of the ballot system upon the party system (i.e. that simple majority systems favour two-party systems) has subsequently become known as "Duverger's Law" and has raised fundamental questions regarding the relationship between ballot systems and party systems.

In discussing the importance of Duverger's work, Riker (1994) pointed to the ambiguity in his statement of the relationship between electoral systems and the number of parties,

> Does Duverger mean that plurality voting [Duverger calls it simple-majority, single ballot] is a necessary condition of the two-party system or a sufficient condition or both or neither? The claim that the relationship is "a sociological law" suggest causality or a necessary and sufficient condition, while the use of "favors" suggests that the relationship is at best probabilistic, not deterministic (Riker, 1994: 20).

Riker suspected that the formulation was deliberately ambiguous because the author himself was not entirely sure of what he wanted to claim. Duverger, however, had already acknowledged that his theory, would by necessity, be vague and conjectural due to the "paradoxical" nature of political research at the time. That the statement is ambiguous does not preclude it from being useful. Indeed, depending upon the definition, two-party national party systems did and still do exist in the simple-plurality systems that Duverger studied.

If Duverger's theory still holds then this would raise important implications for the local party system. If only two-parties can be maintained then how did the Liberals manage to survive and prosper in a system that should prevent them from doing just that? In order to answer this question a better understanding of the logic behind

Duverger's original formulation is required, specifically his views about the twin operation of so-called psychological and mechanical effects. The following sections examine more closely these effects and their implications for party system development in English local government.

2.7.1 Mechanical Effects of Electoral Systems

One of the concepts underpinning Duverger's Law is the "mechanical effect" of the electoral system upon the distribution of seats, the discussion of which had begun before Duverger formed his theory. These discussions were instigated by both increases in the size of the electorate and the operation of the simple-plurality system in the distribution of seats.

In order to ensure a proper representative government (i.e. proportionality), some writers proposed alternative methods of voting. The concept of the single-transferable vote was introduced by Hare (1859) in *The Election of Representatives* and was subsequently popularised by the English philosopher, J.S. Mill (1910) in *Considerations on Representative Government.*[3] Mill believed that parliament should contain "not just the two great parties alone," but representatives of every minority "consisting of a sufficiently large number" (Mill, 1910: 263).

For these authors, the mechanical effects of the simple-plurality single ballot system were clear. In order for a candidate to win, she must receive the greatest number of votes of all the candidates. Unless a candidate comes top in the poll, then they have lost, and will receive no seat in the legislature. This differs significantly from a

Proportional Representation (PR) system in which a candidate or party might need only to achieve a certain share of the votes to guarantee seats in the legislature (effective threshold). While the minimum effective threshold in a plurality system is 50% plus one vote (or toss of the coin)[4], the effective threshold for PR systems is normally substantially lower (Lijphart, 1995: 28, Riker, 1994: 22). This large obstacle to election makes it difficult for smaller parties to win a share of seats that is proportional to their share of the vote - especially if support for the party is evenly distributed.

2.7.2 Psychological Effects of Electoral Systems

Another of Duverger's concepts was "psychological effects". Psychological effects are likely to affect both parties and voters. In a simple-plurality system, the fact that a candidate might need to secure half of the votes in order to win, results in candidates for political office adopting specific strategies to produce a winning result. The competitive nature of all democratic political systems will, therefore, generally induce groups of potential candidates to form into political parties. According to Riker (1994),

> "Political parties whatever their other functions of an ideological or programmatic nature, serve to organise elections. Politicians and candidates with some common interests – perhaps only a common desire to win or perhaps also a common ideology or a common identification with a group – appeal to voters under a common banner and thereby generate political parties" (Riker, 1994: 21).

In a proportional system, a large number of competing interests might well produce a corresponding number of parties. The mechanical effects of the simple plurality

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[3] Originally published in 1861.

[4] In an election with the minimum number of two candidates.

system, however, will tend towards a more disproportional result. Since the best way to win is to get more than half of the votes, smaller parties might be expected to structure a coalition before the election, in the hope of getting a majority (Riker, 1994).

Riker states that,

> "If winning is defined as receiving the most votes; that is, as a plurality, then one might reasonably expect a two-party system owing to the necessity under this definition of maximising votes" (Riker, 1994: 21).

In a simple plurality single-ballot system, therefore, the natural tendency of political parties is to merge into two polarised groups, each representing their own broad range of similar ideological positions.

In addition to the effects upon the parties, simple-plurality has a profound psychological effect upon the voter also. These effects were recognised by Henry Droop (1869) who wrote that,

> "Each elector has practically only a choice between two candidates or set of candidates. As success depends upon obtaining a majority of the aggregate votes of all the electors, an election is usually reduced to a contest between the two most popular candidates or sets of candidates. Even if the other candidates go to the polls, the electors usually find out that their votes will be thrown away, unless given in favour of one or other of the parties between whom the election really lies" (Droop, 1869 cited in Riker, 1994: 22).

According to Duverger, "Voters grow tired of seeing their votes lost if they give them to a party which is handicapped by the operation of the ballot procedure" (Duverger, 1964: 282). This, he maintains, is clearly demonstrated by the polarisation of parties that occurred in countries using the simple plurality system. According to this view, the voter perceives her vote as a valuable commodity. This may be because she

believes her vote is important as it helps to maintain or endorse the democratic system. She may also wish to express her opinions about a particular party or issue and may have incurred substantial cost in acquiring the political information necessary to make an informed decision (Cox, 1997). If at the time of the election, it is apparent that the voter's most preferred candidate will win then her choice is clear. If however her most preferred candidate has little chance of winning, then her best option - in order to maximise her vote by choosing a winning candidate - might be to vote for the candidate that most closely represents her views *and* has the best chance of winning (Fishburn, 1994: 198).

2.7.3 Effects of the Electoral System on Small Parties

The combined effects of the simple-plurality ballot system can have profound effects upon smaller parties. The mechanical effects physically discriminate against smaller parties in terms of proportionality, while psychological effects lessen incentives both for candidates to stand for, and voters to choose, a party with no real chance of winning.

Rather than helping to explain the success of the Liberals, Duverger's Law only serves to confound the problem. We ask, therefore, if there are other characteristics of local government elections that may help to explain the ability of the Liberals to survive and prosper. The following sections discuss further electoral system characteristics that have been known to vary over time or between local authorities and may, in turn, have contributed to the pattern of party system development.

2.7.4 District Magnitude

One of the main structural differences between national and local elections is district magnitude – the number of seats at stake for each electoral area. Although both systems employ simple plurality, the district magnitudes of parliamentary constituencies are now restricted to one. This is not the case, however, for some local authority elections where district magnitude has been as large as twelve. In local elections the voter receives as many votes as vacancies. In a five-vacancy election, therefore, an elector may have up to five votes.[5]

In PR systems district magnitude will significantly affect the proportionality of the outcome. Generally in such systems, increases in district magnitude will lead to increases in proportionality. For plurality elections, however, the effect of district magnitude is unclear. Some authors have suggested that district magnitude may have little effect on the party system (Niemi et al, 1991) while others have suggested that increased district magnitude may lead to a more disproportional outcome (Taagepera & Shugart, 1989; Lijphart, 1994).

As disproportionality in plurality elections tends to affect smaller parties, any increase due to district magnitude is likely to most affect the Liberals. A comprehensive study of the effect of district magnitude upon English local party systems has never been undertaken. Any explanation of party systems in English local government must, therefore, also incorporate a study of the possible effects of variations in district magnitude.

2.7.5 Frequency of Elections

The frequency which elections are held can also be important. Given that the key tasks of the local party are to draw up an election manifesto, select candidates and organise the campaign, it follows that in authorities where there are elections three years out of four - metropolitan districts and about a third of English shire districts - there is a greater propensity for sustained action than in those authorities where elections are less frequent (Game & Leach, 1996: 142). It could be argued, however, that the almost contiguous cycle of elections might exhaust the limited resources of smaller parties such as the Liberals or that a defeat for the party every year might accelerate the operation of Duverger's psychological effects. Both scenarios would be likely to impede the Liberals ability to succeed.

2.7.6 Ward Size and Boundary Changes

The size of local authority wards, in terms of area and population, can affect the evolution of party systems in local authorities. In small wards with few residents it is relatively easy for voters to develop personal attachments to candidates. The larger the population within an area, the harder it becomes for voters to identify with the individual characteristics of the candidates. In order to reduce the utility costs associated with making an informed voting decision in large wards, voters have an increased incentive to identify with party image. Stanyer (1975) believes,

> "It is fairly easy to establish that local politics becomes 'nationalised' as the size of the population of the area increases: the larger the local authority, the greater the probability that its political system will be dominated by the two national parties" (Stanyer, 1975: 40).

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[5] See Rallings & Thrasher (1997) for a complete description.

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The period immediately following local government reorganisation in 1974 saw, particularly in more rural areas, a marked acceleration of the party politicisation of local government. One major cause of this development was the structural reorganisation itself: the boundary changes and the amalgamation of small and independent dominated authorities into larger and more overtly partisan ones (Game & Leach, 1996: 127).

2.8 Political Explanations of Local Party Systems

The previous sections have highlighted socioeconomic and structural determinants of party system evolution and development with relevance to English local government. Research suggests that such characteristics may explain the electoral behaviour of up to 80% of local voters (Miller, 1998). This section examines political explanations of local party system evolution and development, which might account for the different patterns of local voting among the remaining voters.

One of the main aims of this thesis is to provide an explanation for the variety of local party systems that exist in England. According to Rallings and Thrasher,

> To a significant degree we should talk of the local political system in the plural rather than the singular. Each local authority's elections are affected by local issues and the peculiar local application of national issues. While national trends do operate, and the growing party politicisation of local government indirectly contributes to that picture of uniformity, important differences continue. It is still possible, for example, to observe local elections in what are effectively one-party dominated authorities taking place alongside other authorities where party competition is fierce and the result always in doubt. Over time the impact of increased party competition combined with a more volatile local electorate, has meant that more local authorities than ever before are 'hung' with no single party enjoying an overall council majority (Rallings & Thrasher: 1997: 9).

These observations are key to understanding the nature of party systems in local government. Rallings and Thrasher maintained that local politics in the three decades after 1945 conveyed an air of considerable stability. Although party politicisation increased, it did so slowly. Even as late as the early 1970s barely half of all councils could be described as partisan (Gyford at al, 1989: 15). The increasing party politicisation since the reorganisation of local government in the early 1970s may have had profound effects upon the development of local party systems.

2.8.1 The Politicisation of Local Government.

Both the Conservative and Labour parties saw the reorganisation of local government as an opportunity to strengthen and extend their roles in local politics. On the Conservative side, Central Office positively encouraged the replacement of Independents of Conservative sympathy with official Conservative Party councillors, even if that meant confronting recalcitrant Independents with official party candidates. For its part the Labour Party introduced a new structure of district, county and Scottish regional party organisation to parallel that of the new local authorities (Gyford et al, 1989: 16).

Increased contestation by all parties has led to an increase in hung authorities that reflected a further change in local politics, namely the move away from the two-party contest of the post war era to a multiparty contest in the wake of the Liberal revival and the creation of the SDP (Gyford et al, 1989: 18). The pattern of contestation has important consequences for local party systems as voters can not choose a party if they do not stand for election. This might have particular consequences in elections

with higher district magnitudes (see Chapter 2.7.4) as smaller parties may not have sufficient resources to contest all available seats.

2.8.2 Party Organisation

One of the implications of increased politicisation has been the increased involvement of the national party in local party business. As consensus politics of the post-war era evaporated so the parties felt the need to protect their ideological positions in local government. Labour, in particular, operated a strong whipping system in local authorities, with group decisions binding on members. This is automatic for most groups and most whips spend their time making sure that members are actually present to vote and that they know which way they are supposed to vote (Game & Leach, 1996: 130). Whipping systems in Liberal groups are usually nothing like as formal as Labour's. Group standing orders expect members to stand by group decisions, but even then leaders often have to persuade, rather than automatically expect their group members to stand by majority decisions. Some Conservative groups, particularly in smaller and more rural authorities, are also relatively 'flexible' about discipline (Game & Leach, 1996: 130).

The idea of a strong party is anathema to many Liberal activists. There is no central organisation with responsibility for local government. The Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors (ALDC) exists as a separate organisation from the Liberal Democrat Party and is affiliated to the party rather than a sub-section of it. Yet local government and participatory democracy occupy very important positions in the Liberals' thinking. This is partly because local politics has sustained liberalism for

such a long period and partly because of the party's emphasis on 'community politics' (Game & Leach, 1996: 138).

2.8.3   Local Diversity

Although the Widdicombe committee found the survival of some of the old bi-partisan consensus in a number of authorities the research concluded that the overall picture was one of an underlying diversity (Widdicombe, 1986: 205). They identified some sources of diversity: different sets of functions, social, economic and demographic structure, the state of the local economy and, local topography especially in rural areas, and recent political history.

Local elections mean that the political composition of the local authorities varies. There are authorities that are normally controlled by Labour or by Conservatives, although exceptional political conditions, locally or nationally, can overturn the status quo. There are some authorities in which one party can gain virtually every seat and regards itself as permanently in control. Equally, there are other authorities in which there is a greater likelihood of the electoral outcome being inconclusive. The social geography of an area is an important determinant of its composition, but each area has its own political history. The variation in the results of local elections is an important source of diversity in local government (Stewart, 2000:131).

2.8.4   Local Issues

Local issues have been known to disrupt traditional patterns of voting in local elections. The proposal of a new by-pass or closure of a local hospital, for example, can produce winning candidates that stand only on such an issue. In interviews

conducted with officers and councillors, the Widdicombe inquiry (1986) found that

recent electoral history in these areas had been affected by local factors:

> Rather than local events and considerations having very little impact on local election results, the emphasis of the impressions we received was that, in a small but not insignificant number of cases, they can have a decisive impact on individual ward-level elections, and occasionally, as a consequence on the overall election outcome within an authority (Widdicombe, 1986: 44, cited in Stoker, 1991: 53).

The effect of local issues can often explain why the result of an election is different

than what we might have expected. Information relating to local political issues is,

however, not only difficult to collect but likely to be subjective in nature.

2.8.5 Local Parties

Local elections feature parties that may be considered as purely local parties.

Examples of such are those various Residents' associations that present candidates for

election. Strength of support for such candidates can sometimes contradict the

assumption of national/local party identification as critical to partisan choice. The

shire district authority of Epsom and Ewell, for example, has been controlled by

representatives of Residents'. Associations since 1973. The Residents' Association in

Epsom and Ewell have more than half the population in membership with street

representatives in many areas (Stewart, 2000). According to Stewart, the objectives of

the Residents' Association in this local authority are fairly typical:

> To safeguard and promote the interests of residents and to encourage them to take an active part in local affairs. To assist in just, efficient and economical local government and to nominate candidates for Borough and County Council elections and keep local government free from party politics (Stewart, 2000: 143).

Councillors represent their own residents' association. Although they meet together

before the council, there is no group discipline and it is not uncommon for views to be

divided and for decisions to be determined by these discussions (Stewart, 2000: 143). However, although local parties can affect the party system, they do not normally control local authorities.

2.8.6 Local Campaigning

One possible explanation for the Liberals' local electoral success is the variation in campaigns between authorities. Unlike the Conservatives and Labour, national policy does not feature very highly in the Liberals' local election and by-election campaigns. Instead, these tend to concentrate on local issues such as hospital closures or road developments, the local candidate's hard work and commitment to the area and the record of local Liberal councillors and councils (Brack, 1996: 94). As such local issues can be election winners (see Chapter 2.8.4), and the ability of the Liberals to contest on these issues is no doubt advantageous to these candidates.

2.8.7 Local Geography

In addition to regional location, social milieu also appears to be important for voters. The minority of working class who live in neighbourhoods dominated by professional and managerial workers behave much more like salaried than working class individuals when voting (Heath et al, 1985: 64). Butler and Stokes reason that,

> "The residential milieu helps form and conserve party preference partly because it helps define the social networks through which there is a continued flow of informal information about politics. The content and partisan angling of what the voter hears about politics are quite different on the council housing estate and the suburban housing estate. Because these differences tend to follow class lines and because residential environments are notably stable in class terms, the residential milieu tends to reinforce the class alignment" (Butler & Stokes, 1974: 114).

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Analysis of these effects has been hampered by a lack of appropriate data. In order to demonstrate properly a neighbourhood effect, two kinds of data are required. Data on the social background and electoral behaviour of the individual; and data on the social character of the neighbourhood. The census of population is able to provide this information for each and every neighbourhood in Britain (Heath et al, 1985: 76) but individual level data are largely absent.

Miller examined the effects of neighbourhood using such data. He calculates the regression coefficients for a number of models using social variables at different levels of aggregation. When the resulting coefficients are compared, he finds a similarity between the slopes at different levels of aggregation. This similarity, and also the fact that there appears to be no consistent trend upwards or downwards with more aggregation, can be explained by the contact-makes-consensus model (Miller, 1977: 104).

Dorling and others studied neighbourhood effects by examining ward-level socio-economic census characteristics in order to identify areas that might be territory for the Liberal's success. Although constituency level analysis had persistently found patterns for Conservative and Labour but not the Liberals, smaller scale analysis might have provided more information. The Liberal vote was less easily explained using this approach than electoral support for the Conservative and Labour parties (Dorling et al, 1998: 64). Arranging wards into different clusters, however, revealed that Liberal wards exhibited a pattern. Once a ward was won by the Liberals, it became more likely that neighbouring wards would be captured by the party. The

reasons for this, however, seemed to be less a case of tactical voting and more a case of tactical campaigning (Dorling et al, 1998: 64).

2.8.8 National Issues - Local Effects

Prominent national issues may also affect the development of local party systems. The almost universally unpopular 'poll tax', introduced in the early 1990s, damaged the Conservative party in local elections across the country. National issues relating to economic performance and sleaze resulted in one of the most unpopular Conservative governments of the twentieth century and the effect of this was evident at the 1994 local elections. The Conservatives were defending an already woefully weak position resulting from the 1990 'poll tax elections', which they were hoping significantly to improve upon. Instead, they suffered net losses of a further 429 seats and 20 councils, leaving them in control of just 15 of the 198 borough, district and regional councils being contested. With a projected national share of the vote of 27 per cent, their lowest in any post war set of nationwide elections, the Conservatives were at least 13 points adrift of Labour and possibly even more embarrassingly, fractionally behind the Liberals. Statistically then there can be very little doubt that the Conservatives' 1994 results were the worst in recent comparable history (Game & Leach, 1996: 132).

2.9 Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed the research literature relating, in some way or another, to the evolution and development of party systems in English local government. It began by highlighting the main problem with conducting such a review - the lack of specific research relating to local party system development in England.

Party systems in liberal democracies are subject to a common set of interactions between parties and voters. We discussed the nature of these interactions. Successful parties can be viewed as "vote maximisers" and in order to succeed they must, therefore, appeal to the greatest number of voters. We discussed the concept of ideological positioning whereby the parties align themselves in accordance with the values of a large number voters. In order for parties and voters to become aligned voters need to be able to identify particular parties as being compatible with their own ideological beliefs. This raises important questions regarding how voters perceive the parties. It appears that the public, generally, does not examine the nature of the parties' policies in great detail before making their voting decision. Rather, voters assess the parties according to cues provided by the parties' image - a broad and sometimes vague characterisation of the sum of the parties policies.

As much of the research literature relates to national party systems, the next issue that we addressed was the extent to which local party systems were subject to the same influences as national party systems. There is evidence that elections for local government differ from those for the national parliament. Voters may feel that there is less at stake in "second-order" local elections and, therefore, are more likely to vote according to their actual party preference rather than on the basis of the party most able to govern. A large body of research suggests, however, that although there is some difference in voting, a large proportion of local voters, behave in accordance with their national party preference. Studies of national party system development can, therefore, be appropriately applied the local case.

Following sections discussed prior research discussing socioeconomic and structural effects upon the party systems. It began by discussing the primary social cleavage determining voting behaviour - social class. While the relationship between social class and voting, was undoubtedly strong during the period, there is evidence that this relationship has now weakened. This leaves us towards identifying other socioeconomic factors that might be considered important determinants of local party system development. This led us to discuss the theoretical relationship between voting and factors such as housing, occupational status, education and ethnicity. We found that not only were these factors important for parliamentary elections but there may be grounds for thinking that these affect the local party system also.

Although socioeconomic factors are important determinants of vote choice, there are structural characteristics that affect not only the conversion of votes to seats, but may also shape voting behaviour. These so-called mechanical and psychological effects and their relevance to local party system development were discussed. For third parties, such as the Liberals, the outlook is, *a priori*, not good. Theoretically, the use of simple-plurality elections in local government will discriminate against smaller parties in the conversion of votes into seats. The psychological effects of this discrimination both discourage voters from choosing the party in subsequent elections and may also prevent prospective candidates from standing.

Structurally, local elections differ from national elections in that for each electoral unit more than one candidate can be elected at a time. The effect of using higher district magnitudes in simple plurality elections is, however, considerably under-researched, particularly upon the success of third parties. The effects of ward size and

boundary changes upon were also considered. Research suggests that larger wards will lead to remoteness between candidates and voters, thereby increasing the possibility of voters expressing preferences according to party image. The amalgamation of smaller wards in the late 1970s may well have assisted the process of party politicisation of local government and, by definition, helped shape subsequent party system development.

Despite the influence of socioeconomic characteristics and structural factors, local elections remain exactly that - local - and as such may be influenced by local issues and politics. We reviewed these processes in some detail, beginning with the party politicisation of local government. As political parties have become increasingly important actors in local government, we discussed the nature of party organisation and its affect on the party system. We found that while Conservatives and Labour councillors were largely subservient to national party policy, Liberal councillors might be more able to represent specifically local community interests.

The diverse nature of local party systems may reflect the diversity in local politics. A wide range of local issues can dramatically affect the outcome of an election and local parties representing a specific issue or social group may be better placed to win seats than would be the case at parliamentary elections. The lack of party whipping and emphasis on community politics allows Liberal candidates more freedom to appeal to voters on such issues.

This chapter has highlighted influences upon party system development in general and highlighted factors specific to party systems in English local government. The

following chapter, therefore, examines the party system in more detail in order to

identify factors that might provide insights to account for this variety.

Chapter 3   The English Local Government System

3.1   Introduction

This chapter identifies the different types of local authority that existed from 1973-98 and highlights the variation between them.   It outlines the structural differences between each type of authority and their relevance to the thesis.   In order to understand the nature of this complex structure, the chapter begins by charting some of the historical developments that led to the modern day system.   This is followed by a description of the geographic differences that to some extent the structures of local authorities reflect.   The chapter then examines the nature of local government elections.   It identifies structural differences between electoral systems employed in each type of authority and highlights patterns of contestation over the period.   The final section focuses in more detail upon the place of political parties in local government.   It maps the political landscape from 1973 to 1998 and highlights broad changes in the political control of local authorities during the period.

3.2   The Evolution of the Modern Local Government Structure

Local government in England arose from the natural impulse of small communities to meet their collective needs, such as the upkeep of roads and bridges, care of the poor and the maintenance of order (Kingdom, 1991: 21).   Until the industrial revolution, the provision of services to address these problems fell mainly upon local parishes. During the nineteenth century, however, the number of urban residents increased from one fifth of the population to around four fifths, as large cities formed around the new factories, which lured workers from the rural towns and villages.   This in turn led to a number of social problems including, slums, disease, inadequate transportation, vice and corruption, pollution, and poverty.

The Local Government Act of 1888 addressed these problems by establishing a two-tier system of administrative counties divided into districts. Large towns - with populations of over 50,000 - were reformed into independent county boroughs combining the powers of county and borough into individual local authorities (Redcliffe-Maude & Wood, 1975: 30). The structure of local government evolved from a desire to provide a provision of services at an appropriate geographical level. The shire counties had responsibility for area-wide functions such as planning, roads, public transport, social services and education. The shire districts had responsibility for more localised services such as public health, licensing, trading standards and waste disposal (Wilson & Game, 1994: 64). The metropolitan boroughs however had far greater operational importance than the shire districts with responsibility for education and social services provided by this tier of local government rather than the metropolitan counties (Webb, 2000).

3.3 The Modern Structure of Local Government

The post-war period brought a wide range of social problems associated with large industrial based societies and it became increasingly apparent that the structure of local government was unable to meet the demands being placed upon it. This was particularly the case for the capital city where the acute transport and housing difficulties prompted for the creation of the Greater London Council (GLC) in 1963. The GLC reforms showed the way for the Local Government 1972 Act, which provided the most dramatic changes to the local government system since the 1888 act. The resulting two-tier structure is shown in Figure 3-1. The reforms recast the 45 counties into 39 shire counties divided into 296 districts, and six metropolitan

counties divided into 36 boroughs. The metropolitan authorities covered the major conurbations of Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Tyne and Wear, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and the West Midlands (Wilson & Game, 1994: 77-83).

Figure 3-1 – The Structure of English Local Government 1973.
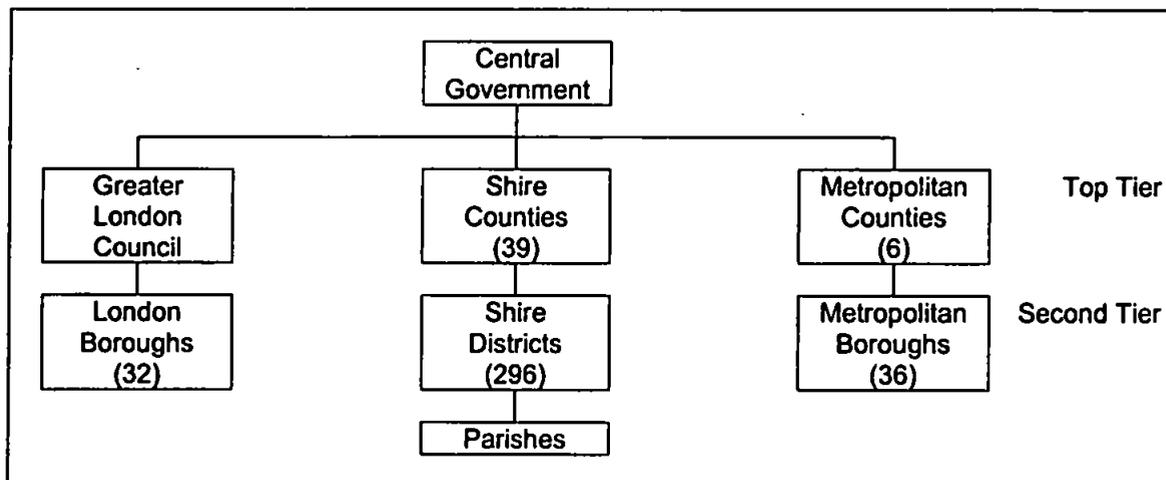
Source: Adapted from Wilson & Game (1994: 52).

The structure of the local government system reflected the large geographical differences that exist between authorities. The 1981 census reveals that the shire counties constituted the largest type of authority (see Table 3-1). They covered over 120,000 square kilometres and provided services for over 28 million residents. Although the metropolitan authorities provided services for 11.2 million residents the total combined area of these authorities was only 7,000 square kilometres. The London authorities were still further densely populated with 6.6 million residents living in a total area of only 1,600 square kilometres. Such differences were also reflected in the average size of wards for each type of authority. The average area of each ward being 17.7 square kilometres for the shire councils, 8.4 for metropolitan councils and 2.1 for London. The average population density was 1352 residents per square kilometre for shire wards, 3,111 for the metropolitan wards and 6,514 for wards in London.

Table 3-1 - Size and Population of Local Authorities and Wards

Authority Type	Number of Wards	Number of Residents	Total Area (1000 Km²)	Mean Ward Area (1000 KM²)
London Boroughs	754	6603910	1.5	2.1
Metropolitan Boroughs	830	11156222	6.9	8.4
Shire Districts	6875	28001400	121.8	17.7

Source: 1981 English Census.

Such aggregate values hide the variation within each type of authority. The number of residents in the metropolitan counties ranged from 1.1 million in Tyne and Wear to 2.6 million in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. In the shire counties this figure ranged from just 115,000 in the Isle of Wight to 1.5 million in Essex. The least populated metropolitan borough was South Tyneside in Tyne and Wear with 160,000 residents and an average ward density of 3,855 residents per square kilometre. The most populated was Birmingham with 996,000 residents and an average ward density of 4,489. In contrast, the smallest shire district in terms of population size was Teesdale in Durham with a total population of 24,000 and an average ward population density of just 185 residents per square kilometre. The largest shire district was Bristol in Avon. Its total population of 385,000 and average population density of 4,498 residents was comparable with some metropolitan boroughs. Although the London boroughs are by far the most densely populated local authorities, the largest authority in terms of population size (Croydon with 316,000 residents) contained only a third of the number of residents as Birmingham.

Despite the metropolitan and London boroughs being both densely populated, they differed considerably in the socioeconomic characteristics of their residents. The industrial areas of the metropolitan boroughs were populated by much higher

proportions of working class than were those of the London boroughs. While there was a similar proportion of manual (37.4%) to non-manual workers (37.1%) in London, there were almost twice as many manual workers (47.8%) than non-manual (26.2%) in the metropolitan boroughs. In terms of this social cleavage the London boroughs bear more of a resemblance to the shire districts which have 38.8% manual and 36.8% non-manual workers. We might expect, therefore, that Labour would do better in the more working class metropolitan boroughs than in London or the shire districts. There are however other characteristics which may cut across the class cleavage. The Conservatives favoured homeowners in the 1980s, by giving substantial tax incentives to this group (Smith, 1990: 136). If we assume that this encouraged homeowners to vote for the party then we might expect the Conservatives to do better in areas with a higher proportion of residents in this group. London however, had on average 4.5% fewer owner-occupiers in 1981 than the metropolitan boroughs and 13.3% less than the shire districts.

The structure of the local government system altered during the period from 1973 to 1998. A full list of local authorities that existed between 1973 and 1998 is provided in Appendix One. The Greater London Council and the Metropolitan Counties were abolished by the Local Government Act 1985. The Conservative government's reason for the policy – included in their 1983 General Election manifesto – was that the unitary nature of the boroughs had resulted in the authorities becoming redundant (Elcock, 1991:31). According to Leach & Stoker (1997: 56), however, there was a great deal of tension between these authorities and central government. All seven authorities were dominated by Labour and as such had very different policy priorities than that of the Conservatives. The Thatcher government regarded as excessive, local

authority spending on subsidies in areas such as public transport, employment provision and economic development in the GLC and metropolitan counties. Such tensions led Flynn et al. (1985) to claim that the "proposals should be seen as an attempt by central government to gain further control of local government, rather than a series of small adjustments within local government in London and the metropolitan county areas".

The trend towards unitary style authorities continued with the creation of 46 new unitary authorities between 1995 and 1998, resulting in a reduction of shire districts from 296 to 238. The county elections in 1997 saw therefore a reduction of shires from 39 to 34 as the counties of Avon, Berkshire, Cleveland, Humberside and the Isle of Wight were abolished.

Figure 3-2 - The Structure of English Local Government 1998.
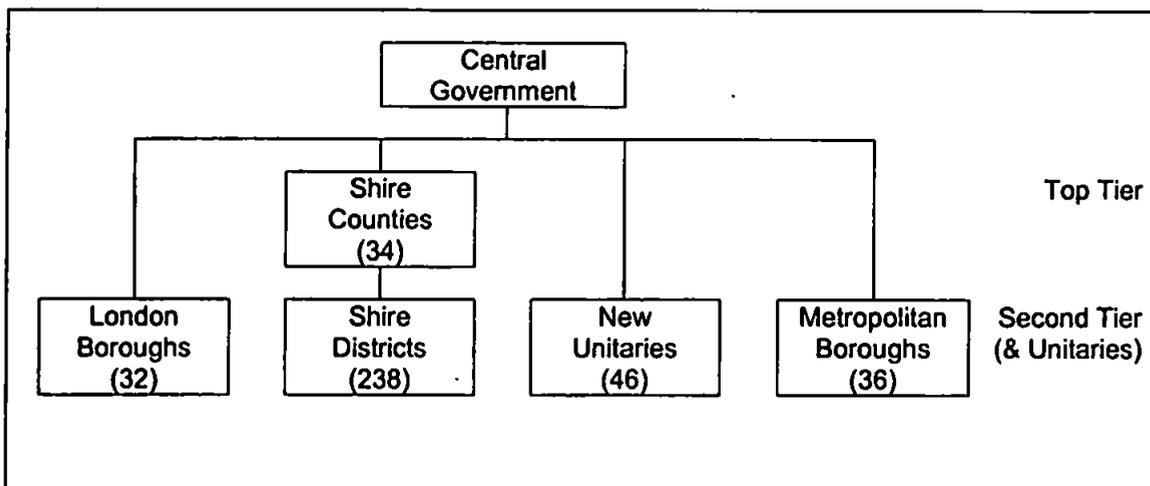
Source: British Local Elections Database.

3.4 Local Government Elections

English local government elections are fought using a common set of rules. Councillors are elected using the plurality system. Electors choose their councillors by clearly marking their preferred choice, on a ballot paper upon which the candidates' names are listed in alphabetical order. Rules governing the eligibility of

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people able to vote and stand as candidates apply equally to all authorities. There did exist, however, several differences between the electoral systems employed by local authorities after 1972.

3.4.1 Number of Councillors

The top tier of local government consisted of 4,414 councillors while the second tier consisted of 19,751. Because of this difference councillors in the top tier represented far more residents than those in the second tier. According to Stewart (2000: 69), councillors in the larger county authorities have to spend a greater proportion of their time conducting council affairs while those in smaller authorities find it easier to make contact with a larger proportion of their electors. The effect of these economies of scale may result in councillors forming more personal contacts with electors, benefiting those not standing for the main parties.

The county level consisted of a total of 3,465 wards, which held elections at the same time once every four years. The GLC and metropolitan counties had on average around 90 wards per authority while the shire counties had almost 20 wards fewer. While only one councillor was elected to GLC wards using the Single-Member Plurality (SMP) system, some metropolitan and shire county wards elected more than one councillor at each election. For these elections a Multi-Member Plurality (MMP) electoral system was used, with the electorate casting as many votes as councillors elected (Webb, 2000).

The second tier of local authorities was divided into 7,710 wards, which were therefore much smaller than the top tier. The London boroughs held whole council

elections every four years with the majority of wards electing two or three councillors using MMP. All of the shire districts held whole council elections for the 15,062 councillors in 1973 and 1976. Although most wards elected only a single councillor, the total of only 6,229 wards resulted in some electing as many as 12 councillors. Three councillors represented most metropolitan borough wards. After the whole council elections of 1973, however, these authorities elected a third of their councillors three years out of four using SMP. Since 1976, 144 shire districts adopted this system of partial council elections. With elections for top tier authorities being held in the year when second tier elections are not held, voters in these wards have the opportunity to express their electoral choice every year. Similarly, party machines in such areas hardly finish work for one election when another is just around the corner. Such systems may over-extend the resources of non-party candidates and inhibit their ability to contest repeatedly these elections.

3.4.2 District Magnitude

The number of seats contested in a ward constitutes the district magnitude of that particular election. The full extent of the variations in district magnitude is shown in Appendix Three. Large district magnitudes were not uncommon in local elections at the beginning of the period. This was particularly the case for some shire district authorities where elections were held in which candidates fought for over eight seats. In such elections ballot papers with over 20 names listed upon them were not uncommon. Although not as large, variation in district magnitudes also existed for other types of authority. The shire counties held elections with two or three vacancies before 1985 and the metropolitan boroughs held elections where district magnitude was as high as six in 1973. Although the GLC held only single seat elections, the

1974 London borough elections saw candidates contesting four and five seats. Since 1978 however, elections with district magnitudes of two or three have been the norm in London boroughs.

3.4.3   Contestation of Elections

Local elections in England have become more closely contested since 1973. Appendix Four lists patterns of contestation and non-contestation by district magnitude for each type of authority. In the Shire counties in 1973 there were 6,783 candidates contesting a total of 2,826 seats, the proportion of candidates to seats was therefore 2.2. The proportion of candidates to seats in shire counties has risen steadily since 1973. In the 1997 elections there were over three times as many candidates (6,809) as seats being contested (2,202). Of the 2,826 elections held in 1973, there were 390 (13.8%) that were uncontested. By 1997 only 33 (1.5%) of the 2,202 elections returned councillors that were unopposed. A similar picture can be observed for the shire districts. A total of 26,902 candidates stood for election and 13,538 seats were available in 1973, the proportion of candidates to seats being just under two. Since 1982, however, the proportion of candidates to seats has not been less than 2.8 for partial council elections. In those years where whole council election were held the increase was not as great. The proportion of candidates reached 2.4 in 1987 but did not increase since then. Non-contestation has also decreased dramatically. Over a quarter of all elections and almost half of single vacancy elections were uncontested in the whole council elections of 1976 and 1979. By 1995, less than 9% of elections were unopposed. For years when partial council elections were held the percentage of uncontested elections decreased from 6.9% in 1980, to 2.2% in 1996 and 1% in 1998. Levels of contestation in shire district elections were far lower in those years when

whole council elections were held. As district magnitude in these years tends to be higher than in those when partial council elections are held, this suggests that contestation may decrease as district magnitude increases.

Contestation in the metropolitan authorities was generally higher than in the shires. If we compare the top tier authorities, we find that the proportion of candidates to seats in the metropolitan counties was 0.5 higher than the shire counties from 1973 to 1981. The proportion of uncontested elections was substantially lower in the metropolitan counties. Of the 547 elections held in 1973, only 20 (3.7%) returned unopposed councillors. For the same number of elections in 1981 there were only 2 (0.4%) where no opposition candidates stood. Patterns of contestation in the second tier of metropolitan councils resemble those for shire districts holding partial council elections. This might be expected, as elections for these types of authority are mainly single plurality elections. The proportion of candidates to vacancies in the metropolitan boroughs, however, is generally slightly higher than in the shire districts. The small number of elections in the metropolitan boroughs allows us to observe extremely small changes in the patterns of non-contestation. Only 21 (2.6%) elections were uncontested in 1973 and this number fell to 7 (0.9%) in 1978 and 1979. As will be seen in the next section, this rise in contestation within the metropolitan boroughs corresponds to a sharp increase in Conservative control of these traditionally Labour authorities. After the abolition of the metropolitan counties, the percentage of uncontested elections increased, its highest point being 6.4% in 1990. There appears to be a cyclical pattern to the levels of contestation with greater contestation around the time of general elections.

The Greater London Council was the most contested authority in England. There were on average over three candidates contesting each seat in 1973 and over 5 candidates for each vacancy in 1977 and 1981. The GLC was also the only authority, which never had an uncontested election. This pattern of contestation is hardly surprising. As the GLC was the most densely populated authority, we might expect its elections to be likewise. The council also had the largest spending budget and attracted a great deal of media attention. Contestation in the London boroughs was not as great as for the GLC. With no less than three candidates for every seat, the levels of contestation were slightly higher than metropolitan districts holding elections in the same year. Since 1974 when nine (1.4%) of elections were uncontested, all London borough electors have had a choice of candidates with only one election being uncontested in 1982-90 and 1998.

3.5 The Party Politicisation of Local Government

The reorganisation in 1973 had a major impact on the politics of local government that led to increased party politicisation. According to Stewart (2000), a number of factors combined to have this impact. The abolition of aldermen removed an influential group, less involved in party activity, while the introduction of attendance allowances opened the way to full time councillors. This facilitated a reorganisation of local authorities into groups of councillors, with the majority group holding the chairs and vice chairs of important committees. There was recognition of leadership positions, and offices in the council building were provided for groups, leaders and, in some cases, chairs. The end of consensus politics also led to a greater emphasis on party discipline and such national party influence encouraged the organisation of council groups along political lines (Stewart, 2000: 128).

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Figure 3-3 shows the impact of party politicisation for the second tier of local government in 1973 and 1979. Of the 364 second tier local authorities, 66 (18.1%) were controlled by councillors other than those of the three main parties in 1973. By 1979 however the number of authorities controlled by other councillors had fallen to only 42 (11.5%). The Conservatives appear to have been the only beneficiaries of the reduction in Independent authorities. In 1979, the party controlled all of the 17 councils where Independents no longer held a majority. One explanation for the success of the Conservatives was the incorporation of formerly Independent councillors into the party. Many of these were already associated with, or even members of, the Conservative party and explicit pressure was placed upon them to stand in future as official Conservative candidates, or risk facing the opposition of such candidates (Game & Leach, 1996: 127).

Figure 3-3 also shows a reduction in the number of authorities where no single party had an overall majority of seats. These more than halved, from 103 in 1973 to only 51 in 1979. Again, the Conservatives appear to be quite successful in gaining control of these councils. Of the 103 councils where no party held a majority in 1973, the Conservatives controlled 72 in 1979. It is also worth bearing in mind, that 25 authorities where a party held a majority of seats in 1973 no longer had a majority party in 1979. Of these authorities, the Conservatives originally controlled only two. It was however, not only in Independent or hung councils, where the Conservatives were successful. During the period, the number of authorities controlled by Labour fell from 118 to 80, with 26 of those authorities controlled by Conservatives in 1979.

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Figure 3-3 - Party Control of Local Government 1973 and 1979 - Second Tier
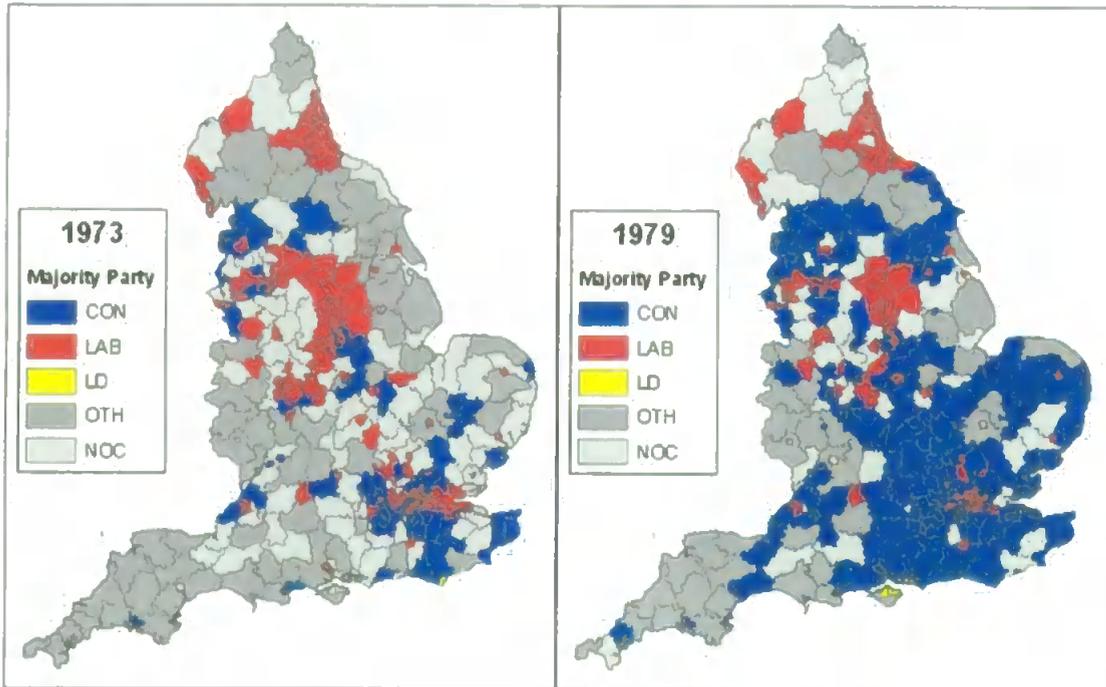
Source: British Local Elections Database

The period immediately following local government reorganisation in 1974 saw a marked acceleration of party politicisation. One major cause of this development, according to Game and Leach, was the structural reorganisation itself. Not only did a large number of Independent councillors stand as Conservatives, but the boundary changes and the amalgamation of small and Independent dominated authorities in turn created larger and more overtly partisan ones (Game & Leach, 1996: 127).

In terms of local authorities, the picture is slightly different for the top tier of local government. Figure 3-4 shows that in 1973 only 2 of the 45 county councils had an overall majority of Independent councillors. This situation did not last long however, as control of the Isle of Wight was gained by the Conservatives in 1977, while the Independents lost majority control of Cornwall in 1985. However, although only 2 county councils were controlled by Independents in 1973, of the 3836 councillors in

total, 434 (11.3%) were not from the three main parties. By 1979 however, the number of Independent councillors had fallen to 281 (7.4%). There appears to be a spatial divide for the top tier of local government in 1973, with the Conservatives controlling only one authority north of Northamptonshire. The success of the Conservatives in this tier of local government during the period is clearly evident. The party only controlled 13 of these authorities in 1973. By 1979 however, all but 5 authorities were controlled by the Conservatives, leaving Labour with control of only Durham, South Yorkshire, and Tyne and Wear.

Figure 3-4 - Party Control of Local Government 1973 and 1979 - Top Tier
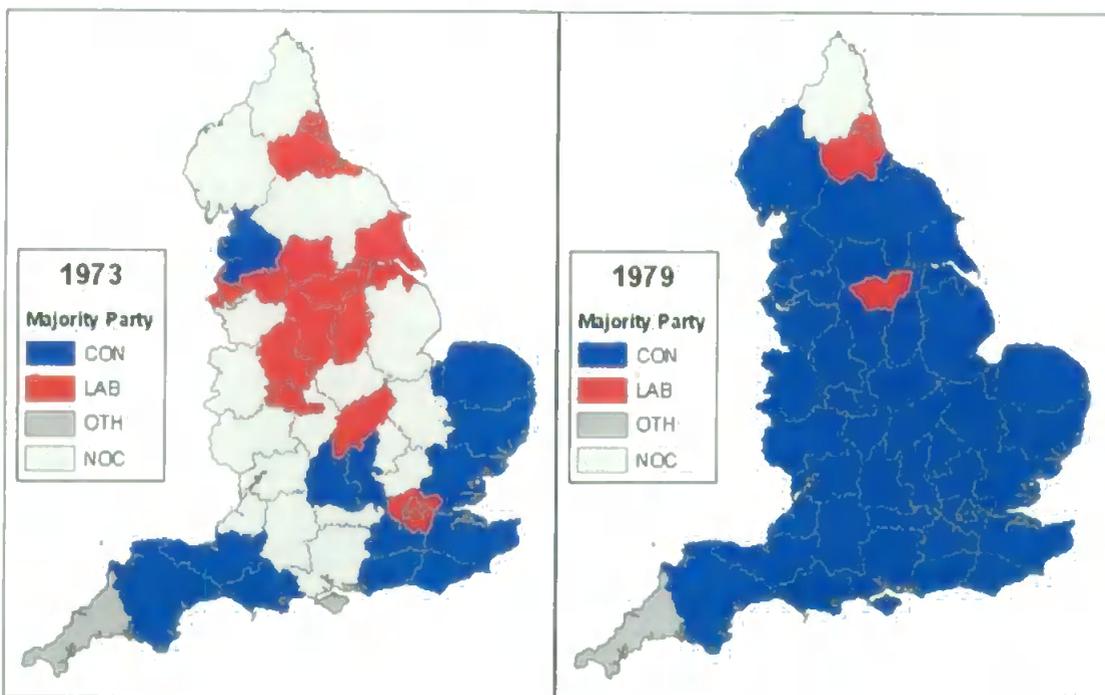
Source: British Local Elections Database

The dominance of the Conservatives proved to be only temporary however. In the following elections of 1981 the number of top tier councils controlled by the Conservatives had fallen to 19. In the same elections, Labour regained control of 12 of the 14 authorities they originally controlled in 1973.

The increase in party politicisation continued during the period up until 1992. Figure 3-5 shows that in 1992, Independent councillors were much rarer with only 119 (4%) out of 3,005 top tier councillors not being from the main parties. This process appears to have abated however. The 108 Independent councillors in 1996 again represented only 4% of the reduced number of top tier councillors. Indeed between 1986 and 1998 the proportion of Independent councillors has ranged only from between 3.3% to 4%. The number of hung councils however has not reduced. In 1992 the number of authorities where no party held a majority of seats was 13, while in 1996 25 authorities were hung. This figure was also as high as 23 from 1985-88 and 26 from 1993-94.

From 1979 until 1992 the Conservatives generally remained the most successful party in terms of control of top tier local authorities. One reason for the fewer number of these authorities with Labour majorities was the abolition of the metropolitan counties in the mid-1980s. Labour councillors controlled all six of these authorities when they were abolished. By 1992, the spatial distribution of party control among top tier authorities resembled the geographic divide in 1973. By 1996, however, the picture had changed dramatically. Political control across the country was virtually the opposite of that in 1979. Instead of controlling almost every top tier authority in the country the Conservatives controlled only one – Buckinghamshire! By 1996, hung authorities had replaced 15 of the former 17 Conservative authorities of 1992, with the Liberals now controlling Somerset.

The creation of new unitary authorities again cut into those top tier councils controlled by Labour, with Humberside and Cleveland being abolished in 1995.

Overall Labour were far more successful in retaining the authorities that they controlled in 1973. Of the 14 top tier councils originally controlled by the party, 5 were still controlled by the party in 1996, and the rest were abolished. Of these 9, all were controlled by Labour at the time that they were abolished.

Figure 3-5 - Party Control of Local Government 1992 and 1996 - Top Tier
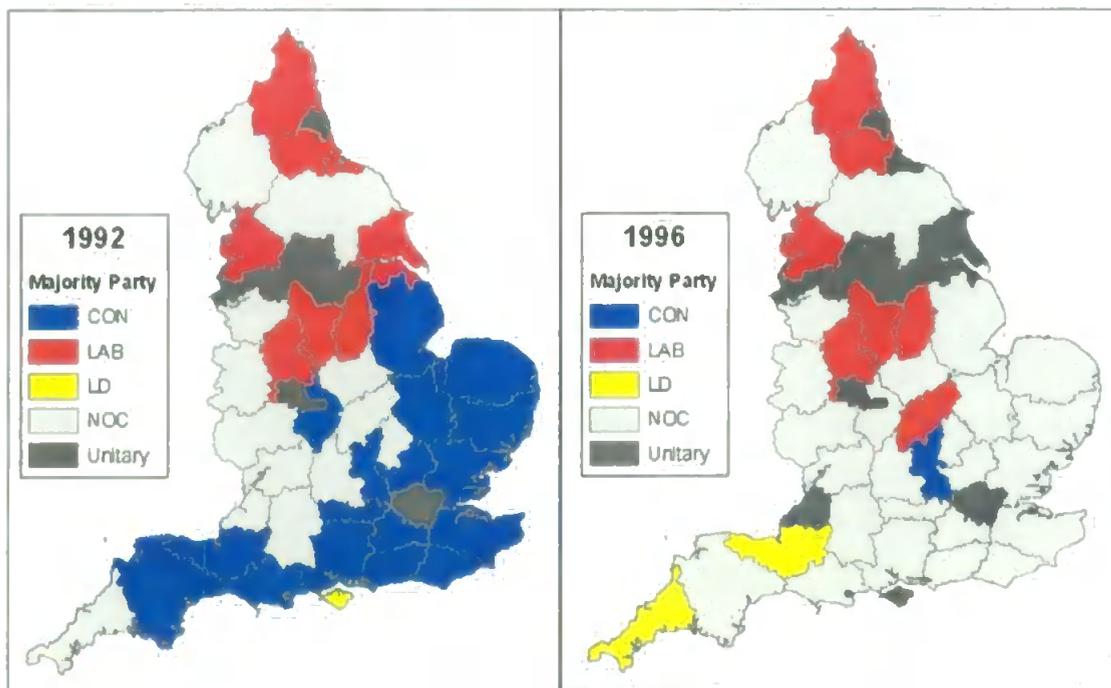
Source: British Local Elections Database

The geographical distribution of party support for second tier local authorities in 1992 and 1996 (Figure 3-6) resembled that of the top tier. By 1992 the Conservatives controlled only 89 (24.4%) of these councils, the majority being in the south of England. Labour however now controlled 111 (30.5%) second tier authorities, having made steady gains since 1979. The number of hung authorities had also increased steadily since 1979 reaching 115 (31.6%) in 1992. For the first time since the 1973 reorganisation, there were more second tier authorities that were hung than controlled by a single party.

If we were to compare the number of authorities controlled in 1992 with those for 1973 we might be mistaken into thinking that little had changed. The Conservatives controlled only 3.6% more authorities in 1992 than in 1973, Labour controlled only 1.9% fewer authorities, and the number of hung councils had increased by only 3.3%. While there appears to be little difference in the numbers of Conservative, Labour and hung councils between the two periods, the Liberal controlled authorities had increased from just one in 1973 to 24 in 1992. The number of Independent authorities had on the other hand decreased from 66 to 25 during the same period. There was also considerable change in the actual authorities controlled between the two years. Table 3-2 shows the control of authorities in 1973 by control in 1992. Of the 89 authorities controlled by the Conservatives in 1992 only 37 were originally controlled by the party in 1973. Of authorities that the Conservatives lost control of since 1973, the majority were hung in 1992. The reverse is true of those authorities that the party gained control of. The greatest number of these were hung in 1973.

Figure 3-6 - Party Control of Local Government 1992 and 1996 - Second Tier
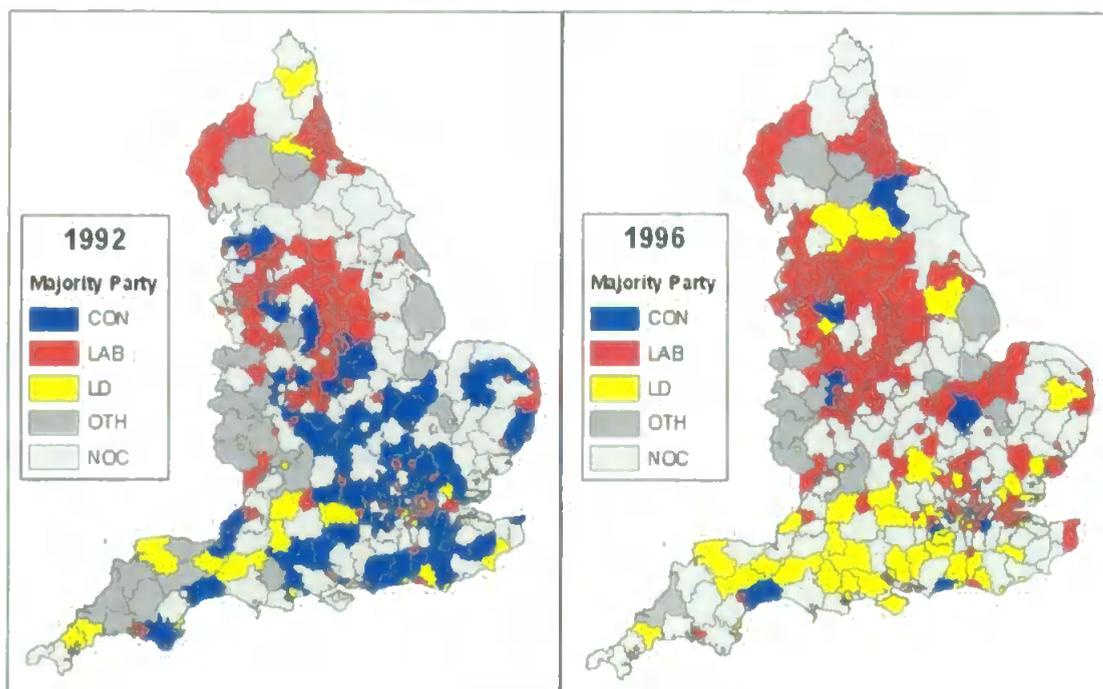
Source: British Local Elections Database

By 1996 the picture was even worse for the Conservatives with the party holding a majority of seats in a mere 13 (3.7%) of second tier authorities. They controlled even fewer authorities than did Independents, even though the number of Independent councils had fallen to 17 (4.8%). The number of hung councils was actually slightly lower in 1996 than at any time since 1992, with 106 (29.8%) of authorities having no majority party. Perhaps the most striking aspects of Figure 3-6 are the success of Labour and the Liberals. In 1996, Labour controlled almost half of all second tier authorities in England while the Liberals with 53 authorities controlled almost 15% of local councils. The Liberal's success however appears to have been on the back on Conservative unpopularity. Of those authorities controlled by the Liberals in 1996, the Conservatives controlled 41 (77.4%) in 1979. It was Labour however who were the main beneficiaries of the Conservatives misfortune with 59 Labour councils being formerly controlled by Conservatives in 1979.

Table 3-2 – Change in Party Control 1973 to 1992

Control 1973	Control 1992				
	CON	LAB	LD	OTH	NOC
CON	37	7	9		23
LAB	10	87	3		18
LD			1		
OTH	7	2	4	23	30
NOC	35	15	7	2	44

Source: British Local Elections Database

When comparing 1973 and 1979 to 1992 and 1996 it appears that no single party was able to capitalise on the demise of the Independents. Over four fifths of Independent councils in 1973 were either still controlled by Independents or hung by 1992. Of the Independent controlled councils in 1979 almost 90% were still not controlled by any one of the main parties in 1996.

Table 3-3 - Change in Party Control 1979 to 1996

Control 1979	Control 1996					
	CON	LAB	LD	OTH	NOC	Unitary
CON	12	59	41		67	11
LAB		69			3	8
LD						1
OTH	1		4	17	18	2
NOC		28	6		15	2

Source: British Local Elections Database

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the English local government system. It has shown how the structure of local government evolved from an historical need for the provision of services within local communities. It highlighted the structural differences between the different tiers of local government and explained why these differences led to the present structure of local government. In so doing the chapter has raised important questions regarding the effect of these structural differences upon the party system. The variation in district magnitudes is a particular area that needs addressing in order to determine whether this variation affects the party system as some authors have suggested (see Chapter 2.7.4).

The chapter also highlighted the increasing party politicisation of local government. It has charted the fortunes of the main parties over the period and shown how these fortunes have fluctuated dramatically. The decreasing importance of Independent councillors in a politically saturated system was identified along with the increasing place of hung councils. Such dramatic changes and variation in the local political landscape have yet to be explained. The following Chapter discusses the means by which we might provide some explanation of these developments.

Chapter 4   Methods

4.1   Introduction

This chapter outlines the data and methods employed in this thesis. It outlines the main hypotheses related to party system development and considers how these might best be tested in the context of English local government. It will discuss the suitability of the data used in the thesis, identifying the advantages and disadvantages with the chosen methods.

4.2   Research Questions

A variety of party systems appear to exist in English local government authorities. What is it about local government elections that allows so many different party systems to develop and be maintained, was an important question posed in Chapter 1.3. Chapter 2, discussed theoretical explanations for party system development. As much of the research on the subject applies to national government, however, the development of local party systems remains largely unexplained. In order to redress this lacuna in the research literature, our study attempts to explain the development of local party systems.

Our main hypotheses consider the nature of structural and socioeconomic characteristics of local authorities and their effect upon the development of local party systems. We begin by asking, what is the nature of local party systems? Duverger (1964) stated that the use of simple-plurality elections would favour two-party systems. To what extent is this the case for local government elections? The rationale underpinning Duverger's proposition was that the electorate would tend not to support small parties with little chance of winning. Chapter 3.5 showed that,

despite Duverger's claims, the Liberals had managed to become the second largest party in English local government. Were the Liberal's more able to achieve success under certain conditions of party competition? In order to address such issues, we feel it is necessary to develop a typology of party systems that can be applied to English local government. Such a classification will provide us with the means to examine the similarities and differences between types of party system.

Although investigating local authority party systems will clarify the nature of English local government and may provide some explanation for the Liberal success, it is important also to understand the direct effect of the electoral system upon third parties, such as the Liberals. District magnitude has been identified as possibly exaggerating the effect of the electoral system, resulting in discrimination of third parties. If the Liberals' success were in some way related to district magnitude, then this may partly explain any variation in party systems. What, therefore, is the effect of district magnitude upon local party systems? Are the Liberals, due to such discrimination, less successful in areas with higher district magnitude? In order to answer such questions we need to establish a suitable measure of electoral discrimination that can be applied to the parties.

Chapter 2 identified also, the importance of socioeconomic characteristics as determinants of voting in national elections. Little research has been conducted, however, that examines these relationships in local elections. To what extent do such ward level characteristics help explain local party system development in different types of local authority? Do specific social groups appear to support certain parties and does this support vary between different types of authority?

In order to provide answers to such questions, this research uses methods upon which a reliable study of local party systems can be based. Following sections discuss the methodological approach and methods that will be employed within the thesis.

4.3 Methodology

Chapter 2 highlighted the theoretical relationship between social class and voting in English elections. Approaches such as those by Himmelweit et al. (1985), however, focus on the individual voter not as a person in isolation, but as a member of many groups that respond to social and political contexts. This systems approach was originally advocated by Kurt Lewin (1951) and also, by Campbell et al. (1960) in their study, the *American Voter*. Lewin sought explanations of people's behaviour in the study of the changing environment and the individual's interpretation of that environment. He looked for indications of institutions' changing roles in the public's perception of these institutions and changes in that perception. In the case of voting, there is not only the interdependence of the political and economic climate and the parties' and the voters' responses but also the dependence of the present on the past. Changes in the individual's circumstances, changes in the life history of issues and in the parties' records and promises, as well as the individual's past voting record, interact to affect the relative strength of the influences that bear on the decision (Himmelweit et al, 1985: 2).

Such models offer an account of how voting need not be dependent solely upon an individual's social class. More recent studies focus upon how the expansion of a variety of public services can differentiate citizens as consumers of these services. Those who consume predominantly in the public sector (in areas such as transport or

housing) might well be expected to see jobs and services sustained, even at the cost of higher taxes. This public-private dualism cuts across traditional patterns of class alignment, and can be illustrated, by groups such as manual workers who own their own homes or middle class professionals employed within the public sector (Dunleavy and Husbands, 1985, Webb & Fisher, 1999: 18).

The discovery of such complex motivations behind voting decisions is ideally suited to a qualitative approach. By their very nature, qualitative studies endeavour to obtain some insight through an understanding of the perceptions of the subject. Individuals act according to their individual perception of their environment. In order to discover why people voted for a party therefore, we would first need an understanding of each individual's motivation. Methods such as in-depth qualitative interviews might help provide such an understanding (DeVaus, 1990).

A qualitative approach to the problem would, however, have a number of problems. In order for the results of a qualitative study to be applicable to party systems across the country as a whole we would need to be sure that we could generalise the findings from such a study to the whole country. For a qualitative approach, this would normally involve the specific selection of a sample based upon characteristics that reflect those of the wider population (Denscombe, 2002: 142). The variation in the nature of English local government (see Chapter 3) may, however, result in variations in electoral behaviour. In order to make valid and reliable generalisations, therefore, the sample would require participants from across the entire country. Such a cross-local survey would result in a substantial number of cases, meaning that a detailed qualitative study would prove too costly. In addition to the resources required to

undertake such a survey, other complex issues arise involving reliability of findings. Such issues include interviewer bias and variations in the interpretation of questions by respondents (see Pennings et al, 1999; DeVaus, 1990).

Because of the methodological problems associated with qualitative methods, studies of electoral behaviour have tended to use quantitative methods. This approach assumes that larger volumes of data overcome the problems of differences in individual perceptions. It is argued that if enough people are subjected to similar conditions then the majority will act in a similar way. Observing the differences between conditions and the differences between actions allows the quantitative researcher to draw inferences about the nature of the relationship between individuals and their actions.

Quantitative election studies tend to use close questioned surveys to collect the data. The use of these methods helps to ensure that the survey's questions and respondent's answers fall within a predefined framework. In many cases the use of such surveys eliminates the need for an interviewer, as questionnaires can simply be mailed to a representative sample. In addition to saving time and money, such methods also claim to be highly reliable, reducing unwanted effects - such as interviewer bias. Unfortunately, however, cross-local survey data relating to electoral behaviour in local government elections is unavailable for most of the period between 1973 and 1998.

Dunleavy and Husbands (1985) argue that the analysis of voting behaviour must deal strictly with aggregate social phenomena, focusing on shifts of party support in a mass

electorate. They dismiss studies that reduce changes to individual accounts of why particular voters acted as they did, and argue that even if plausible individual level explanations did exist, that the aggregate phenomenon would still have its "own collective properties and identity" (Dunleavy and Husbands, 1985: 18). Such aggregate data for the period is available in the form of the 1981 and 1991 British Census and the British Local Elections Database. As quantitative data studies must contain both sufficient numbers of cases and sufficient variation within the set for the purposes of the investigator, local elections score very highly on both counts (Stanyer, J. 1975: 26). The 1981 and 1991 British Census data are available at exactly the same level of aggregation as the electoral data - the local authority ward. A combination of both types of data result in a detailed cross-national dataset that is representative of the entire country.

4.4 Quantitative Measures

This section outlines the key measures used within the thesis. It begins by operationalising the concept of the party system into quantitative measures that accurately and reliably describe the phenomenon. It discusses also, the relevance of local parties and measures of proportionality before proceeding to a discussion of measuring relationships between ward characteristics and the party system.

4.4.1 Classifying Party Systems

The party systems of local government authorities differ from each other in different ways. According to Rallings and Thrasher (1997), to a significant degree we should talk of the local political system in the plural rather than the singular. The elections of individual authorities are affected by both local issues and the peculiar local

application of national issues. While national trends do operate, and the growing party politicisation of local government indirectly contributes to that picture of uniformity, important differences still continue. Any classification of party systems must distinguish, therefore, the party systems at the local authority level.

Mair (1996) suggests that the number of parties in competition is the most conventional and frequently adopted criterion for classification. For Mair, the conventional distinction between systems other than single-party systems is that between a two-party system, on the one hand, and a multiparty (i.e. more than two) on the other. This categorisation was believed to tap into the distinction between stable and consensual democracies associated with the two-party type and unstable conflictual democracies associated with the multi-party type (Mair, 1996: 84).

Sartori suggests that these classes do not adequately describe the party systems that exist and instead claims that seven classes of party system can be obtained from the original classification. Sartori broke down the single-party system into three categories. He classified a one-party system as one in which only one party is allowed to exist within the political system (Sartori, 1979: 221). This classification however, does not apply in the democratic system of English local government. The second single-party classification he used is that of a hegemonic party system. Unlike a one-party system, other parties do exist in a hegemonic system. These parties however are permitted only if they remain subordinate to a single main party (Sartori, 1979: 127). The final classification of single-party system is that of predominant-party. This is the only single-party classification that exists in a competitive system. Despite the presence of competitive elections however, the predominant party,

"governs alone, without being subjected to alternation, as long as it continues to win, electorally, an absolute majority" (Sartori, 1979: 127). This is the only one of Sartori's singe party classifications that applies to local government.

Sartori claimed that two-party systems were the least problematic in terms of definition. In these systems two parties compete for an absolute majority that is within reach of either party. Multi-party systems are those where, "no party is likely to approach or at least maintain a majority" (Sartori, 1979: 127) with a further three categories - limited pluralism, extreme-pluralism or atomised. Sartori suggests that party systems with 3-5 parties (limited-pluralism), have very different interactions than those with 6-8 parties (extreme pluralism), or those with 10 to 20 parties (atomised) (Sartori, 1979: 126). While this system works well to classify different national party systems, it has limited application in England. There are virtually no instances in local authorities where 5+ parties exist and so the classifications of extreme or atomised pluralism are for our purpose redundant. Although Sartori's framework "recommends itself on the grounds of being easily intelligible and easy to construct" (Sartori, 1979: 291), for party systems in local government, it appears that the traditional one-party, two-party, and multi-party trichotomy is more appropriate than Sartori's seven-category classification.

One classification that has been applied to local government is that developed by Game and Leach (1996) who classify the party systems in local government for each of the different tiers of local government that existed in 1995 (see Figure 4-1). Their six-category classification was as follows. 1) substantially non-partisan (60% or more seats held by Independents), 2) Weak Partisan (20-50% of seats held by

Independents), 3) Multi-party/fragmented (20% or more seats held by third party/parties), 4) Two-party (80% of seats held by two parties, neither over 55%), 5) One party dominant (55-60% of seats held by one party), 6) One-party monopolistic (70% or more of seats held by one party (Game & Leach, 1996: 128).

Although useful, Game and Leach's classification is a snapshot of the party system taken in 1995. As such, the classification takes little account of the fluctuations that occur in local party systems and is, therefore, of little use for our purpose.

Figure 4-1 - A Classification of Local Party Systems

	New Unitaries	Counties	London Boroughs	Metropolitan Districts	Non-Met. Districts (1995)	Total
Substantially non-partisan (60% or more seats held by Independents)	-	1	-	10	-	11
Weak Partisan (20-59% of seats held by Independents)	1	-	-	38	-	39
Multi-party fragmented (20% or more seats held by 3rd party/parties)	19	7	3	63	3	95
Two-party (80% of seats held by 2 parties, neither over 55%)	9	3	6	29	1	47
One-party dominant (55-60% of seats held by one party)	Con 1 Lab 6 LD 2	- 7 -	- 8 -	5 32 31	- 1 -	6 54 33
One party monopolistic (70% of seats held by one party)	Con – Lab 1 LD -	3 10 2	- 19 -	- 59 7	- 8 1	3 97 10
Total	39	33	36	274	14	396

Adapted from (Game & Leach, 1996: 127).

4.4.2 Measuring the Number of Parties

Rae believed that, "To talk accurately about party systems, it is essential to begin with some fairly precise measures which describe the competitive relationship between parties" (Rae: 1967: 47). The number of parties (N) is an important measure in determining the competitive nature of the party system. To derive N Rae simply counts the number of parties that received any votes or seats. He acknowledges that

although the measure may tell us how many competitive positions exist, "it tells us nothing about the relative strengths of these positions" (Rae: 1967: 49). To overcome this potential weakness, Rae also presents the concept of fractionalisation (F), based not only upon the number of party shares (P) but the relative equality of these party shares. The calculation of F is derived from the Hirschman-Herfindahl concentration index which is based upon simple probability of two randomly selected voters not choosing the same party and is specified as[1]:

$$HH = \sum_{i=1}^{N} p_i^2$$

Where p is the fractional share of the vote for each party. The value of HH ranges between 0 and 1, and provides a measure of the amount of concentration of parties in a political system. Values approaching 1 indicate a party system that is concentrated around a single party. To obtain the fractionalisation index (F) Rae simple subtracts the resulting value from one:

$$F = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^{N} p_i^2$$

According to Rae and others, the values produced are consistent with the concept of party system fractionalisation (Rae, 1967; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). Sartori uses Rae's index to classify the party system defined in terms of pairwise disagreement, thereby indicating the likelihood that any two members of a parliament will belong to

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[1] Monroe (2000: 117) incorrectly defines the Hirschman-Herfindahl concentration index as a measure known as the effective number of parties $1/\Sigma(p_i^2)$. The number of parties however is derived directly from the concentration index. Calculating the measure using Monroe's incorrect definition is therefore not recommended.

different parties (Sartori, 1979: 307). In his study, out of the 85 countries holding parliamentary elections between 1962 and 1968 he ranked the United Kingdom in 40th place with a fractionalisation index of 0.507, with Lebanon topping the table with a fractionalisation index of 0.945 (Sartori, 1979: 311). To provide an overall measure of fractionalisation, he calculates the mean of the index for some 27 democracies from 1945 to 1973. The mean fractionalisation for the United Kingdom over the 28-year period (0.512) was little different from the 1964 election (Sartori, 1979: 313), suggesting a fair degree of stability during the period.

Laakso and Taagepera (1979) refined the index of fractionalisation in order to provide a more intuitive measure of the number of parties in a system. Their method - the effective number of parties - provides a measure of the number of parties based upon either their relative vote share (N_V) or seat share (N_S). Taagepera and Shugart (1989) use this concept to analyse the proportionality in a variety of party systems, while Boucek (1998) uses the same measure in order to explore ways of examining the notion of single-party dominance (Boucek, 1998: 121). The use of N_V and N_S has since become widespread (Lijphart, 1994: 70; Cox, 1997: 29). One reason for this is that it tends to agree with our intuition about the number of serious parties. These closely resembles Sartori's (1976) estimates of the number of 'relevant' parties. Taagepera claims the measure comes as close as any operational index based on seat (or vote) shares alone can come - to Sartori's estimates - without detailed knowledge about the given country (Taagepera, 1999: 498).

Taagepera stresses that, "for most purposes N alone will do, just as we often deal with the means of distributions, without the concomitant standard deviations" (Taagepera,

1999: 499). However, for the classification of the party system in English government over a 25-year period N alone will not do. Although Sartori provided the mean values of fractionalisation over the period of his study he provided no measure of the dispersion of this value. The importance of such a measure is not ignored in Taagepera's attempt to supplement the number of parties. While he agrees that the mean is an important characteristic of a distribution it is not the whole story. We also require a second measure to reflect typical divergence from this mean, for example the standard deviation (Taagepera, 1999: 499). The divergence from the mean number of parties is an important measure when studying party systems. A large standard deviation is a reflection of an unstable party system.

The party systems in English local government are seldom static. Properly speaking any typology of these party systems must, therefore, include a classification of such changes. Stanyer (1975) focuses upon the instability of the party system and identified two types of instability that might exist. Episodic instability occurs when a general state of relative stability in party fortunes is occasionally interrupted by a short period of instability, whilst endemic instability occurs when the situation of rapidly and widely varying fortunes continues for a longer time (Stanyer, J. 1975: 48). While endemic stability might be considered as a system that is unstable for most of the period, the concept of episodic stability is more problematic. At what point is the party system recognised as unstable? Is a party system in which a single-party was predominant for almost the entire period classed unstable, be it episodic or otherwise? If no single-party ever has a majority of seats then does this mean the system is unstable or rather that such a system might be considered as a stable multi-party system. Rather than classifying the party system in terms of endemic or episodic

instability, the typology classification used within this thesis will classify the party system in terms of a stable or unstable dichotomy.

Having settled upon the characteristics of number and stability of parties it would seem appropriate to introduce some measure of strength of the party system. Cox (1997), notes the idea of a continuum of systems from strong to weak - developed by Sartori - is now commonly accepted within the literature. Here, 'weak' is defined as a system in which "strategic voting and elite coalitional activity act forcefully to depress the number of parties" (Cox, 1997: 10). Alternatively, 'strong' is defined as a system in which "strategic voting and incentives for coalitions are largely absent and thus put little download pressure on the number of competitors" (Cox, 1997: 10). This thesis will also employ a strong/weak classification of the party system. In this case however, strength will be defined in terms of the proximity of the party system to its ideal-type. A two-party system that conforms closely to an ideal type two-party system will be classed as strong, whereby those that have more in common with a single-party or multi-party system will be classed as weak.

The typology of party systems within this thesis utilises a classification based upon the mean and standard deviation of the elected number of parties (see Figure 4-2). The typology employs three classifications. The first is the party system type, and it relates to the number of parties that existed during the period. The party system type for an authority is produced by calculating the average number of elected parties and rounding to the nearest whole number. An authority is classed as single-party if the average effective elected number of parties lies between 1 and 1.5, and two-party where the value lies between 1.5 and 2.5. Any authority with an average number of

elected parties over 2.5 is classed as multi-party. The second classification relates to the strength of party system in relation to the number of parties. It is calculated by measuring the proximity of an authority's average number of elected parties to the centre of its party type category - what might be considered as the ideal-type. If the absolute difference between these values is less than 0.25 then the party system is classed as strong, else it is classed as weak. The third classification relates to the stability of the party system and is measured by calculating the standard deviation of the effective number of parties. A standard deviation greater than 0.5 indicates that the party system deviated from one type of classification into another approximately 65% of the time.

Figure 4-2 - A Typology of Party Systems in English Local Government
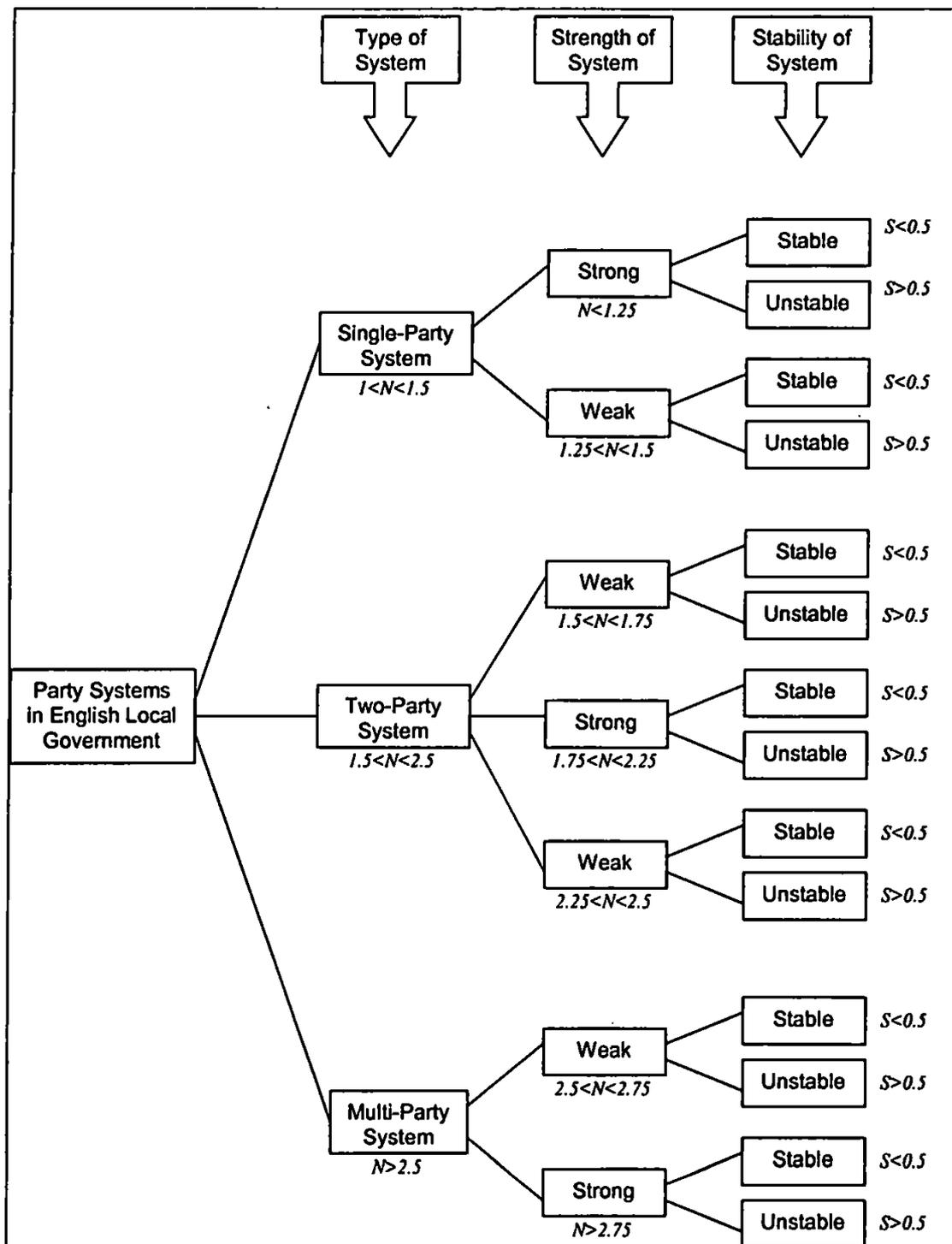
4.4.3 Which Parties are Relevant?

Calculating the number of parties in English local government is somewhat problematic. The large number of party labels used candidates and the complex definitions of what constitutes a political party (see Sartori, 1979), provides scope for alternative classifications of candidates into party groups. According to Epstein, "almost everything that is called a party in any western democratic nation can be so regarded" (Epstein, 1967: 5). Using this approach we would have to regard candidates from the Monster Raving Loony Party or the Lets Have A Party Party as belonging to a party in the same way as candidates challenging from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties. Ashford district council between 1983 and 1987 consisted of councillors using the following party labels: Conservative, Independent, Labour, Liberal/SDP, Rates Association, True Ashfordian and True Liberal. Do the Independent candidates belong to an Independent party? Do candidates representing the Residents Association belong to a party? Sartori would argue that,

> "a minor party must be counted, no matter how small it is, if it finds itself in a position to determine over time, and at some point in time, at least one of the possible governmental majorities" (Sartori, 1979: 122).

If we used Sartori's typology we might well classify the party system in Ashford as one of extreme pluralism. Recognising 'fringe' or 'joke parties' as legitimate parties, however, would result in a classification containing highly fragmented party systems. Ball imposes a far more restrictive definition,

> "Parties have a number of characteristics that define them from other groups. Among these are a degree of permanence, a commitment to fighting elections and gaining influence on the legislature, a commitment to gaining executive power, or to influencing those who have done so through strength in the legislature; a distinct identity" (Ball, 1981: 3).

In short, a group may only be considered as a party if they continually seek political power. Such a definition would include candidates from residents associations or even Independent candidates. Ingle, however, offers the following simple working definition of a party,

> "Parties are principally organisations of people seeking to wield political power in the name of some interest which binds them together and which distinguishes them from other groups, and that interest may be for example, religious geographical, ideological or economic, or a combination of these and others" (Ingle, 1989: 2).

This definition differs from that of Ball in that candidates from a party, can be distinguished from others by the possession of a shared interest which binds candidates together in a common cause. Sartori (1979: 26) states that "unless a party is different than a faction it is not a party (but a faction)". The difference between parties and factions are that parties are instrumental to collective benefits. If a party is not capable of governing in view of a general interest, then it does not differ from a faction (Sartori, 1979).

Local elections provide opportunities for small groups and Independent candidates to determine the governmental majority of the local authority. We might suppose, therefore, that any group of candidates with a common identity that have also controlled the council could be classed as a party. In some authorities it is the Independent councillors that hold a majority of seats. The only cause common to these councillors might be the desire to represent their individual ward. A complex classification would risk being extremely subjective and restrict subsequent research into using similar definitions in order to produce reliable results.

The presence of Independents and other categories of candidates might also affect the elected number of parties in such a way that would produce different values for locations where these candidates stood against those where they did not. In Eden shire district council in 1973, for example, the authority was comprised almost entirely of Independent councillors (see chapter 5.4.1). Classifying these councillors separately would result in an elected number of parties in excess of 30. If electors in Eden viewed these candidates as a coherent group then such a high value for the number of parties would be misleading. In order to reduce such problems the thesis considers only Conservative, Labour and Liberal candidates and councillors as belonging to a party. All other candidates are classed as belonging to a residual category of OTHER.

4.4.4   Measuring the Effects of District Magnitude

Chapter 2 discussed the theoretical effect of district magnitude upon the party system. In particular it has been claimed that increases in district magnitude under simple-plurality elections can exaggerate the disproportional nature of such elections. There is some debate, however, about the most suitable measure of proportionality for the classification of electoral systems. One of the oldest measurements (I) is that employed by Rae (1971). The index sums the difference between vote and seat share for each party and divides by the number of parties thus:

$$I = \frac{1}{n} \sum (v_i - s_i)$$

Where v_i is the vote share and s_i is the share of seats received by the ith party.

Lijphart, however, states that one problem with the Rae index is that it is overly sensitive to the presence of very small parties. If the hypothetical situation arises

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where an infinite number of other parties stand but receive no share of votes or seats then the system would appear to be perfectly proportional (Lijphart, 1995: 58). In contrast with I which registers the average deviation from proportionality per party, another method suggested by John Loosemore and Victor J. Hanby (1971) sums the difference between vote and seat share and divides not by the number of parties but by a constant of two:

$$D = \frac{1}{2} \sum (v_i - s_i)$$

The index, however, tends to exaggerate the disproportionality of systems where there are a large number of small parties (Lijphart, 1995: 60). Michael Gallagher (1991) proposed a solution to this particular problem. His "least-squares" method effectively weights proportionality according to the size of the difference between vote and seat share by squaring the differences:

$$LSq = \frac{1}{2} \sum (v_i - s_i)^2$$

Lijphart also supplements this measure of disproportionality with one that reports the largest deviation from proportionality by any party (Lijphart, 1995: 62). The choice of measure depends upon the classification of parties used. If smaller parties are classed simply as 'other parties' then the Loosemore-Hanby index will normally suffice. As this is the case in this thesis, we use the Loosemore-Hanby index.

4.4.5 Measuring the Effects of Socioeconomic Characteristics

There are almost countless quantitative methods that can be used to measure the relationship between ward socioeconomic characteristics and the party system. The following sections discuss the methods used in this thesis. The first two of these are

concerned with testing hypothesised effects by calculating the significant relationships within the data. This is followed by a discussion of a recent technique that can be used to estimate the number of individuals exhibiting certain voting behaviour.

4.4.6 Bivariate Analysis

The theorised relationships between different social groups and partisan voting can be examined by calculating the Pearson correlation scores between party vote shares and the proportion of residents within different social groups for all elections. The variation of this relationship over time can be gauged by calculating the correlation scores for each year in turn. This information will allow us to ascertain the extent to which such social groups are related to voting in local elections and the extent of any change over the period.

4.4.7 Multiple Regression Analysis

Although bivariate analysis is an important tool for measuring the effect of one variable upon another, it is unable to provide information about inter-relationships between three or more variables. As voting is likely to be the result of more than one characteristic a method that is able to identify the combined effect of such characteristics is required.

One of the most common methods used is ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. In order to test hypotheses, a mathematical model is constructed which defines the theorised relationship between the independent variable (Y) and the explanatory

variables (X_k). The method specifies the relationship between the dependent and explanatory variables as:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \cdots + \beta_k X_{ki} + \epsilon_i$$

where k is the number of explanatory variables included in the model, β is coefficient for each explanatory variable and ϵ = the total unexplained variance in the vote. This model possesses a number of properties that are desirable when applied to large data sets such as local government election results. The Gauss-Markov theorem proves two of the important properties of OLS, which is that the model provides the Best (minimum variance) Linear Unbiased Estimates (BLUE or MvLUE) of the coefficients (Dougherty, 1992). That the estimates of the coefficients for the model are unbiased means that the estimates are centred around the true population values of the parameters being estimated. The property of minimum variance means that the distribution of the coefficient estimates around the true parameter values is as narrowly distributed as is possible whilst still retaining an unbiased distribution. No other linear model for unbiased estimators has a lower variance for estimated coefficients than OLS. The estimates are also consistent and normally distributed. The estimates of the coefficients therefore approach the true value of the coefficient as the sample size gets larger (Studenmund, 1997: 113). For large data sets (such as those utilised within this thesis) therefore, the model should provide accurate estimates of the coefficients, providing the following assumptions of the OLS model are met.

Assumption one is that the regression model must be linear in the coefficients, correctly specified, and has an additive error term. The model for the explanation of class voting for the Labour party might, therefore, take the form:

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$$LABSHARE_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C1_i + \beta_2 C2_i + \beta_3 C3N_i + \beta_4 C3M_i + \beta_5 C4_i + \beta_6 C5_i + \epsilon_i$$

Where the dependent variable (*LABSHARE*) is the share of the Labour vote and the explanatory variables (*C1, C2, C3N, C3M, C4, C5*) are the census social class groups and β_1 to β_6 the size of each coefficient.

The coefficients in the model are estimates of each explanatory variable's effect upon the dependent variable. The error term (ϵ_i) is additive and in this case will contain all of the variation of the Labour vote share that is unexplained by the regression model. In addition to the effects of omitted variables, the error term will also capture the effects of any measurement error in the explanatory variables. Given that the data used is relatively robust to measurement error, the effect of this within the error term should be quite small.

Assumption two is that the error term has a zero population mean. The OLS model forces the distribution of the error term to have a central tendency of zero through the inclusion of the constant term β_0. If the mean of the error term is not equal to zero then the nonzero amount is implicitly subtracted from each error term and added to the constant term. While this produces an error term with a zero mean, the constant term is changed by the difference between the sample mean of the error term and zero. The constant term can be thought of as the fixed portion of the dependent variable that can not be explained by the independent variables while the error term represents the stochastic or random portion of the unexplained value (Studenmund, 1997: 96).

Assumption Three is that the explanatory variables are uncorrelated with the error term. This assumption can be summarised by stating that the expected value of the simple correlation coefficient between an independent variable and the error term is zero for all independent variables. If an explanatory variable and the error term were correlated with each other then the OLS estimates would be likely to attribute to the X some of the variation in Y that actually came from the error term. If the error term and X were positively correlated then the estimated coefficient would probably be higher than it would otherwise have been (biased upward).

Assumption Four is that observations of the error term are uncorrelated with each other. This means that the error term from one observation should not have an effect of the error term of another observation. If this does occur then the error term is said to be serially correlated (or autocorrelated) (Studenmund, 1997).

Assumption Five is that the error term has a constant variance. This means that the variance of the distribution from which the observations of the error term are drawn is constant (homoskedastic). If the variance of the distribution of the error term were to change for each observation then a precise estimation of the coefficients becomes difficult. This is because a deviation of the error term from the mean can only be known to be significant in relation to the standard deviation of the distribution in question. If one assumes that all error term observations are drawn from distributions with a constant variance when in reality they are drawn from distributions with different variances, then the relative importance of changes in the dependent variable

is difficult to judge. The OLS method would, therefore, generate imprecise estimates of the coefficients (Dougherty, 1992).

Assumption Six is that no explanatory variable is a perfect linear function of any other explanatory variables (no perfect multicollinearity). Perfect collinearity between two independent variables implies that they are really the same variable, or that one is a multiple of the other, or that a constant has been added to one of the variables. Because every movement of one variable is matched to the other the OLS estimation procedure will be incapable of distinguishing one variable from the other (Studenmund, 1997).

In addition to these six assumptions a seventh is usually added. The error term is normally distributed. A violation of the seventh assumption, however, does not produce unbiased or non-minimum variance estimators. Normal distribution of the error term instead allows the model to be used to test hypotheses about the coefficients, using standard tests for normal distribution (Studenmund, 1997).

The OLS model can be used to test two main hypotheses about the relationship between the dependent and explanatory variables. The first concerns the combined effect of all explanatory variables upon the dependent variable. If we were to examine the class relationship specified above for shire district partial council elections in 1982 we would need the following null hypothesis:

H_0: There was no relationship between class and Labour voting in English shire

district, partial council elections held in 1982.

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Calculating the F-statistic from the residuals in the regression model can test the validity of the null hypothesis that there is no relationship. The test works by determining whether constraining the regression equation to conform to the null hypothesis significantly reduces the overall fit of the regression model (Studenmund, 1997: 157). The null hypothesis of the F-test is that all of the coefficients in the equation are equal to zero simultaneously.

$$H_0: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \cdots = \beta_K = 0$$

The F-statistic is determined using the following equation:

$$F = \frac{ESS / K}{RSS / (n - K - 1)}$$

Where *ESS* is the estimated sum of squares (or regression sum of squares), *RSS* is the residual sum of squares and *K* is the number of independent variables included in the equation.

The SPSS regression output for the estimated and residual sum of squares generated for the model in 1982 shire district partial council elections is shown in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1 - Analysis of Variance for Regression Residuals

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	254035.833	6	42339.306	342.185	.000
Residual	147612.496	1193	123.732		
Total	401648.329	1199			

Substituting these values into the equation above produces the following F-statistic:

$$F = \frac{254035.833 / 6}{147612.496 / (1200 - 6 - 1)} = 342.185$$

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If the F-statistic is greater than or equal to the appropriate critical F-value (F_c) then the null hypothesis can be rejected. The test for the F-statistic is therefore:

Reject H_0 if $F \geq F_c$, do not reject H_0 if $F \leq F_c$

The critical value for the F-statistic with 6 degrees for freedom for the numerator and 1193 degrees of freedom for the denominator is 2.80 for 1-percent levels of significance. As the F-statistic is greater than the critical value we can reject the null hypothesis and can conclude that there is a relationship between class variables and voting for the Labour party at these particular elections.

The second hypothesis that can be tested concerns the individual slope coefficients ($\beta_1...\beta_i$). Do all of the class variables appear to have an effect on Labour voting and if not which ones do have an effect and is the effect positive or negative? The null hypothesis for the relationship between individual coefficients is similar to that for the whole regression model. To test for a negative relationship between social class 1 and Labour voting, one would use the following hypotheses:

H_0: There is no negative relationship between class 1 and voting for Labour candidates in English shire district, partial council elections held in 1982.

or

H_0: $\beta_1 \geq 0$, H_A: $\beta_1 < 0$

The t-statistic for each slope coefficient can be calculated using the formula:

$$t_k = \frac{\hat{\beta}_k}{SE(\hat{\beta}_k)}$$

Substituting the slope coefficient for class 1 and its standard error into the equation:

$$t_k = \frac{0.017}{0.103} = 0.17$$

If the t-statistic is greater than the appropriate critical t-value and the coefficient also has the expected sign then the null hypothesis can be rejected. The critical value for the t-statistic with 1193 degrees of freedom is 2.326 for 1-percent levels of significance. As the t-statistic is less than the critical value we can not reject the null hypothesis and can conclude that - when holding all variables constant - there is no evidence of a relationship between social class 1 and Labour voting in 1982 shire district partial council elections.

In addition to such hypothesis testing the OLS model allows us also to estimate the total and relative contribution of each explanatory variable to the variance in the dependent variable. The total contribution of the explanatory variables is measured using R^2. The value of R^2 ranges between 0 and 1. A value of 1 indicates that the model fits the data perfectly and that the dependent variable can be accurately predicted by the explanatory variables. A value of 0 indicates that the model predicts no better than simply using the mean value of the dependent variable. Generally the value of R^2 will increase with the inclusion of additional explanatory variables (Studenmund, 1997).

Regression models can, however, become complicated if a large number of explanatory variables are included. Knowing the relative contribution of each

variable allows us to retain the most relevant variables with only a slight reduction in the models explanatory power. This results in a model that is easier to interpret.

4.4.8 Ecological Inference

Ecological inference is the process whereby statements about individual behaviour are made from analysis of aggregate data. Ecological analysis was identified in chapter 1.4 as being particularly important in certain circumstances. In Ireland, for example, opinion polling started relatively recently and as a result, analysis of voting behaviour prior to 1969 is dependent upon aggregate data (Sinnot, 1995: 21). A similar problem, of course, besets research into English local party systems. Even today, there is little survey data available for English local elections. That which does exist tends to be a by-product of the wider focus upon parliamentary elections. Such data tends to concentrate, therefore, upon questions more relevant to parliamentary elections, those years when general elections were held, or areas that are aggregated to the parliamentary constituency - not the local authority or ward.

Although regression analysis is useful in identifying aggregate relationships between ward characteristics and voting, conclusions that can be drawn from such analysis about individual voting behaviour are limited. As Robinson (1950), has shown, relationships that exist at the aggregate level may appear stronger than the individual level relationships. If, for example, a positive correlation exists between the proportion of working class residents and Labour voting in wards, we could not infer from this alone that working class, people are more likely to vote Labour. One approach to the problem, as Sinnot correctly asserts,

> "...is to rigidly confine inference to the aggregate level, drawing conclusions
> simply about the kinds of areas that tend to support one party than another and

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bearing in mind that the strength of the relationships identified will be somewhat inflated" (Sinnot, 1995: 20).

If at the ward level we found such a positive relationship between working class residents and Labour voting, we could make inferences about only the aggregate behaviour. We could state, for instance, that residents from wards with higher proportions of working class residents *were more likely* to vote Labour, or that Labour voting *was generally* higher as the proportion of working class residents increased. In the case of this thesis, evidence from regression analysis is not used to infer individual behaviour but to test pre-formulated hypotheses regarding the nature of voting behaviour.

Ecological inference is extremely desirable, however, if the exact nature of the relationship between a social group and voting behaviour is required. Since such information would be useful in determining the behaviour of local voters, the following sections examine the nature of the problem of ecological inference, and review some of the methods used to infer such individual behaviour from aggregate data.

4.4.9 The Problem of Ecological Inference

The goal of ecological inference in this thesis is to determine the precise number of residents from social groups exhibiting specific electoral behaviour - such as partisan voting, turnout or voter registration. One might suppose that if the relationship between the working class and Labour voting were strongly or even perfectly correlated, then it would be a simple matter. The product of the regression coefficient for that class and the Labour vote would give an estimate of the actual percentage of

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voters within that class that voted for the party. The following hypothetical example demonstrates the flaw in this logic.

Table 4-2 shows a hypothetical example of class voting in five areas. In these areas the Conservative vote increases to exactly the same extent as the proportion of middle class voters. If these two variables were graphed on a scatter plot then the points would form a perfect 45% line from 0,0 to 1,1.

Table 4-2 - Hypothetical Example of Partisan Voting

Ward Name	Conservative Votes as a Proportion of Total Votes	Labour Votes as a Proportion of Total Votes	Middle Class Voters as a Proportion of Total Voters	Working Class Voters as a Proportion of Total Voters
Ward A	.90	.10	.90	.10
Ward B	.80	.20	.80	.20
Ward C	.70	.30	.70	.30
Ward D	.60	.40	.60	.40
Ward E	.50	.50	.50	.50

A normal linear regression model would estimate the slope for the relationship as follows:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Where Y_i is the proportion of Conservative votes and X_i is the proportion of middle class voters in each ward. In this case the value for the regression constants and coefficients are as follows:

$$\alpha = 0, \beta = 1, \varepsilon_i = 0$$

Which when substituted into the equation results in:

$$Y_i = X_i$$

As the error term is zero, the model must therefore explain the total amount of variance within the Conservative vote ($R^2 = 1$) for this data. We can estimate the

total proportion of middle class voting Conservative in each ward, therefore, simply by substituting X_i with the proportion of Conservative votes. In this case the number of upper class voters is always equal to the number of Conservative voters.

The results from this model allow us to estimate the number of middle class voters for a given Conservative vote. It does not, however, tell us how many middle class voters chose the Conservatives. One method of estimating this figure was developed by Goodman (1953, 1959) and his model has been the most frequently used method of ecological inference in US voting rights cases since the Supreme Court endorsed its use in the 1980s (King, 1997: 38).

Goodman uses a variation of the linear regression model that includes the proportion of working class voters - assuming that residents are either middle class or working class - and forces the regression line through the origin by omitting the constant from the equation. Goodman's regression equation is based upon the following accounting identity:

$$Y_i = \beta_i^m X_i + \beta_i^w (1 - X_i)$$

Where Y_i = the proportion of the Conservative vote and X_i = the proportion of middle class voters in each ward; the coefficient β_i^m represents the proportion of middle class voting Conservative in each ward and β_i^w the proportion of working class. Unfortunately trying to compute estimates of two unknowns β_i^m and β_i^w from only one observation of an election seems hopeless. Goodman resolves this problem by

assuming that $\beta_i^m = B^m$ and $\beta_i^w = B^w$ for all i - where B^b and B^w are the aggregate proportions of class voting. If this assumption is correct then the equation for Goodman's model becomes more manageable (King, 1997: 39):

$$Y_i = B^m X_i + B^w (1 - X_i)$$

Applying Goodman's regression to our hypothetical example produces the coefficients $B^m = 1$ and $B^w = 0$. That is 100% of middle class voters supported the Conservatives while no working class voters did. Table 4-3 shows for our hypothetical example, voting for each ward if this class relationship did exist. The model perfectly predicts voting for each ward.

Table 4-3 - Hypothetical Voting Outcome A

Ward Name	Middle Class Conservative Voters as a Proportion of Total Voters	Working Class Conservative Voters as a Proportion of Total Voters	Middle Class Labour Voters as a Proportion of Total Voters	Working Class Labour Voters as a Proportion of Total Voters	Error In Predicted Middle Class Conservative Voters
Ward A	.90	.00	.00	.10	.00
Ward B	.80	.00	.00	.20	.00
Ward C	.70	.00	.00	.30	.00
Ward D	.60	.00	.00	.40	.00
Ward E	.50	.00	.00	.50	.00

Goodman's assumption that $\beta_i^m = B^m$ and $\beta_i^w = B^w$ for all i can, however, be shown to be incorrect in many cases. The problem is that if the parameters vary and they turn out to be correlated with X_i, ordinary regression will not produce estimates of the average of these parameters (King, 1997). This might certainly be the case in English local elections. Evidence from Miller's (1988) survey of local attitudes suggests that voting decisions might be based not only upon an individual's own socioeconomic characteristics, but also those of their fellow residents- the so-called 'friends and

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neighbours' effect. If this were the case then we might expect middle class voters to vote disproportionately for Labour as the number of working class residents increased. Table 4-4 shows, for our example, an alternative set of voting outcomes based for the same hypothetical data. As the proportion of working class residents increases, so to does the proportion of middle class voting Labour. As a result the error in our ward estimates increase in proportion with the middle class voters not complying with our aggregate $B^m = 1$ estimate.

Table 4-4 - Hypothetical Voting Outcome B

Ward Name	Middle Class Conservative Voters as a Proportion of Total Voters	Working Class Conservative Voters as a Proportion of Total Voters	Middle Class Labour Voters as a Proportion of Total Voters	Working Class Labour Voters as a Proportion of Total Voters	Error In Predicted Middle Class Conservative Voters
Ward A	.80	.00	.10	.10	.10
Ward B	.60	.00	.20	.20	.20
Ward C	.40	.00	.30	.30	.30
Ward D	.20	.00	.40	.40	.40
Ward E	.00	.00	.50	.50	.50

There are other problems with using Goodman's regression to estimate individual level behaviour. The model does not restrict the estimates of the proportions to between 0 and 1. As a result the model can produce impossible results such as over 100% of working class voting Labour (King, 1997: 57). Even if estimates from Goodman's regression fall within the [0,1] interval, there may still be problems. For many wards the true possible values of the estimates fall within bounds that are far narrower than [0,1]. If for example, a ward consists of 100% middle class residents, we can determine precisely the proportion of middle class voting for each party. Even wards that are not so homogenous can provide narrower bounds than [0,1]. For Ward A in our example, the actual proportion of the middle class group voting Conservative must lie somewhere between 0.88 and 1. The Goodman model ignores this information.

4.4.10 A Solution to the Ecological Inference Problem

In 1997 Gary King published a proposed solution to the ecological inference problem. The method, in King's terms, not only "consistently works in practice" but also "is intended to put the ecological inference literature on a theoretical and empirical foundation" (King, 1997: 17). The King model claims to improve Goodman's regression in a number of ways. Firstly, it restricts the quantities of interest to lie between 0 and 1. Secondly, it takes account of the known bounds. Thirdly, the model does not assume that $\beta_i^m = B^m$ or $\beta_i^w = B^w$ but only that β_i^w and B^m or β_i^w and B^w are related in some way. In this way the model "borrows" information about the quantities of interest from the other wards in the data set. In his example, King uses the model to validate studies of the effect of ethnicity upon voter turnout in US district elections. This following section applies King's method[2] to a particular area of English local government. Our purpose here is to show that a largely unproven, though innovative method for ecological influence can be applied to the subject of our thesis.

In order to determine the suitability of the model for inference of individual level local voting behaviour, we examined the effects of the same ethnic division as King observed (i.e. black versus white) within the context of voter turnout[3] within London

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[2] Statistical software developed by Gary King and Ken Benoit was used in this thesis. The software, *E_zI A(n easy) Program for Ecological Inference*, is available from King's homepage on the World Wide Web at http://gking.harvard.edu (King, 1997: xix).

[3] Turnout varies quite considerably among local government elections and has itself been the subject of many different studies (See Miller, 1988; Downe, 1998). Rather than replicate

borough elections. The London boroughs are particularly pertinent as elections in these wards have the highest proportion of black residents (9.2% in 1990) of all types of local authorities. Downe (1998) found several socioeconomic characteristics to be related to voter turnout in London. Among these was the proportion of blacks, which is negatively correlated with voter turnout. Can we determine the extent to which blacks turn out to vote less than whites in London?

A negative relationship exists between the proportion of blacks and turnout in London borough elections. A normal linear regression of turnout on the proportion of blacks produces a constant $\alpha = 52.67$ and a coefficient $\beta = -0.47$. This can be interpreted in the following way. The aggregate turnout for the London boroughs in 1990 would be 52.67% if the proportion of blacks were zero. Holding all other variables constant, for every 1 percent increase in the proportion of blacks the turnout would be expected to decrease by 0.473 percent.

Using Goodman's method for ecological inference produces $B^b = 0.0535$ (the aggregate proportion of blacks turning out to vote) and $B^w = 0.5267$ (the aggregate proportion of whites turning out to vote). The value for B^w is the same as the constant in the normal linear regression equation, while the value for B^b is the predicted turnout when the proportion of blacks is 100%. Estimates from the Goodman model suggest that blacks in London are excluded from the voting process to a greater degree than whites. Moreover, if the Goodman model is accurate then there is a huge disparity between the two social groups when it comes to turnout. As

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such research within this thesis we take account of turnout only when attempting to estimate

already demonstrated, however, the assumptions of the Goodman model may not be correct, leading to unreliable estimates. In order to validate these findings, the following section uses the King method in order to attempt to determine the true proportions.

Before proceeding with the model it would be wise to check for the presence of aggregation bias. If blacks in heavily white wards, vote less than blacks in other wards, (because perhaps, they believe that their candidate has little chance of winning) then this will lead to B^b being underestimated and B^w being overestimated (King, 1997: 41). The effect of aggregation bias can be gauged by plotting Goodman's regression line to the data points on a scatterplot. If the regression line cuts across both of the vertical axes within the [0,1] interval then there is less evidence that aggregation bias exists (King, 1997: 282). Figure 4-3 plots the turnout in the 1990 London borough elections (T_i) by the proportion of blacks in those wards (X_i); Goodman's regression line is superimposed upon it. The regression line passes through both vertical axes between 0 and 1. This indicates that there is little aggregation bias and that the estimates from Goodman's model may indeed be reliable.

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individual level behaviour from aggregate data.

Figure 4-3 - Gauging the Presence of Aggregation Bias in London Boroughs.
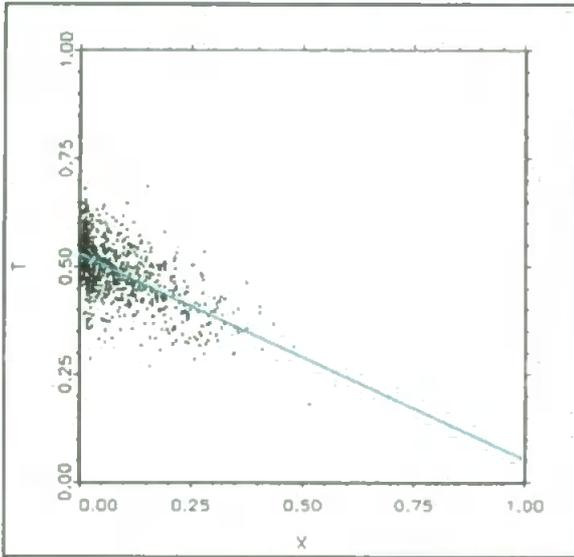
The King model uses information determined from the bounds of each possible true value of β_i^b and β_i^w. Church ward in Kensington and Chelsea, for example, has 3.17% of black residents and 83.11% of white residents. Turnout in the ward in 1990 was 46.8%.

Knowing this information allows us to specify the possible range of true values (bounds) for the proportion of black and white residents turning out to vote. The bounds for β_i^b are calculated as follows:

$$\max\left(0, \frac{T_i - (1 - X_i)}{X_i}\right) \le \beta_i^b \le \min\left(\frac{T_i}{X_i}, 1\right)$$

$$\max(0, -15.7666) \le \beta_i^b \le \min(14.7495, 1)$$

The bounds for β_i^w are calculated in a similar way:

$$\max\left(0, \frac{T_i - X_i}{1 - X_i}\right) \le \beta_i^w \le \min\left(\frac{T_i}{1 - X_i}, 1\right)$$

$$\max(0, 0.4506) \leq \beta_i^w \leq \min(0.4833, 1)$$

The true values for β_i^b in the Church ward must lie, therefore, between 0 and 1 while those for β_i^w must lie between 0.4506 and 0.4833. In this ward, therefore, the percentage of blacks that voted must have been between 0% and 100% while the percentage of whites voting must have been between 45.06% and 48.33%. Figure 4-4 plots all possible true values for turnout among blacks and whites in the ward. The graph highlights how the range of possible true values for β_i^w is very narrow while those for β_i^b are wide. For this ward we can make a very accurate estimate for turnout among whites but not for blacks.

Figure 4-4 - True Values for Turnout among Blacks and Whites in Church Ward
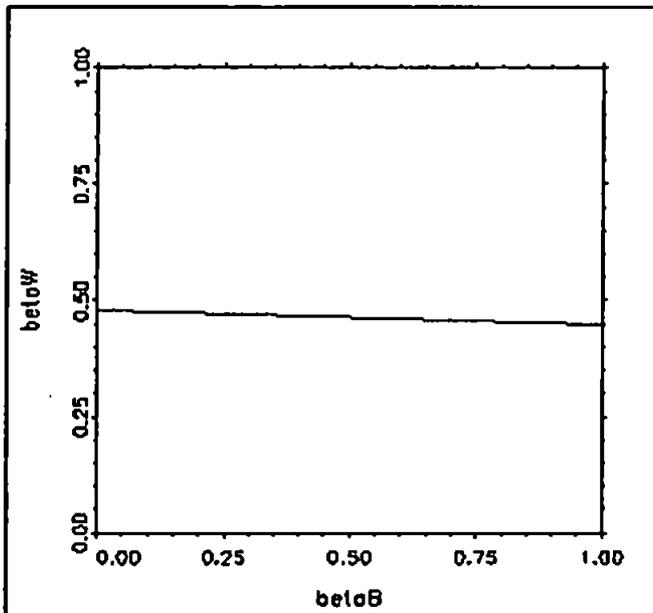
A scatterplot of the data can be used to give a sense of how much information exists in the deterministic bounds for all wards. Figure 4-5 shows a scatterplot of turnout (T) by the proportion of blacks (X). The overlaid cross on the graph gives an indication of the deterministic bounds for each election. Points that lie in the left

triangle have [0,1] bounds for β_i^b but narrow bounds for β_i^w (King, 1997: 89).

Nearly all of the data points lie in the left triangle. The true value for the proportion

of blacks turning out to vote can lie between 0% or 100% in these wards. A handful of

points lie in the bottom triangle. For such wards we are able to produce much better

estimates of turnout among black electors.

Figure 4-5 - Strength of Information Contained within the Deterministic Bounds.
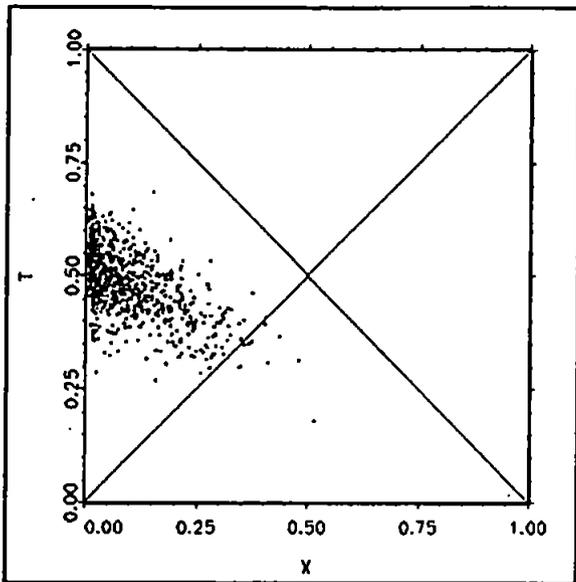
Another useful summary of the data is a tomography plot that re-expresses the data in

terms of what is known about β_i^b and β_i^w for all 1990 London borough elections (see

Figure 4-6). Those lines that are relatively steep indicate narrow bounds for β_i^b and

wide bounds for β_i^w. Lines that cut off either the top left or bottom right corners of

the graph have narrow bounds for both these quantities of interest (King, 1997:282).

Most of the lines are relatively flat indicating that β_i^b have very wide bounds while

those for β_i^w are relatively narrow. There is one case that distinctly cuts across the

bottom right corner of the graph indicating that the possible range of values for β_i^b

and β_i^w are limited for this election. This particular case is Liddle ward in the

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London borough of Southwark. This ward had a turnout of only 18.1% while the proportion of black residents was 51.5%. This limits the possible values of β_i^b to between 0 and 0.352 and the possible values for β_i^w to between 0 and 0.373 for this particular ward. Turnout among blacks in Liddle ward must, therefore, lie somewhere between 0% and 35.2%, while turnout for whites must lie between 0% and 37.3%).

Figure 4-6 - Tomography Plot of Deterministic Bounds β_i^b and β_i^w.
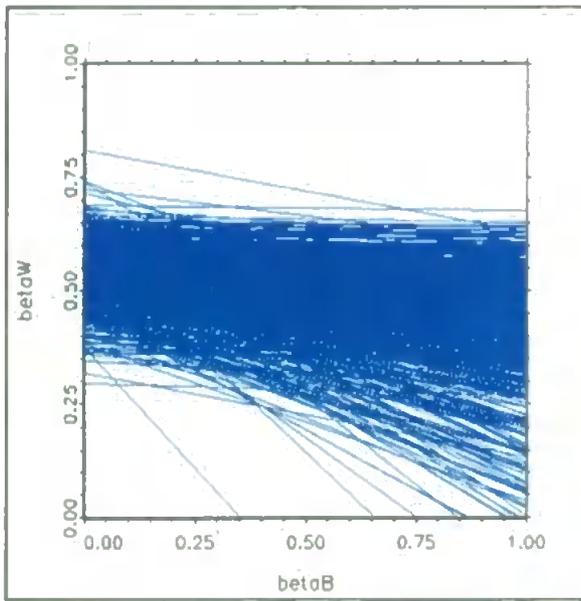
In using this approach the King model reduces the possible values for β_i^b and β_i^w from the entire 0,0 to 1,1 range to only those values that lie on the lines. Although this is a substantial improvement, we still need to determine where on the lines the true points most likely lie. If we examine Figure 4-6 we can see that the lines appear to emanate from half way up the left side of the graph. This is not unreasonable given that most of the data points lie within this area. The distribution of the lines for the entire data set can be estimated by calculating the truncated bivariate normal distribution for all elections, weighting each case by the actual number of residents in each ward. Calculating the truncated bivariate normal distribution allows the model to borrow

strength from data in other wards via the statistical proportion of the model (King, 1997: 115). Truncating the bivariate normal distribution ensures that the estimates line between 0 and 1.

The parameters of the truncated bivariate normal distribution are estimated using maximum likelihood and consist of the mean and standard deviations of β_i^b (0.0628,0.0510) and β_i^w (0.5010, 0.0681) with a correlation between β_i^b and β_i^w of 0.2018. The truncated bivariate normal distribution can be represented by overlaying the tomography plot shown in Figure 4-6 with 50% (inner) and 95% (outer) maximum likelihood contours (see Figure 4-7). The true values for β_i^b and β_i^w are most likely to lie within the centre of the contours. The contours are centred round the area where the lines appear most densely clustered, giving more confidence that the estimates are accurate.

Figure 4-7 - Tomography Plot with Maximum Likelihood Contours.
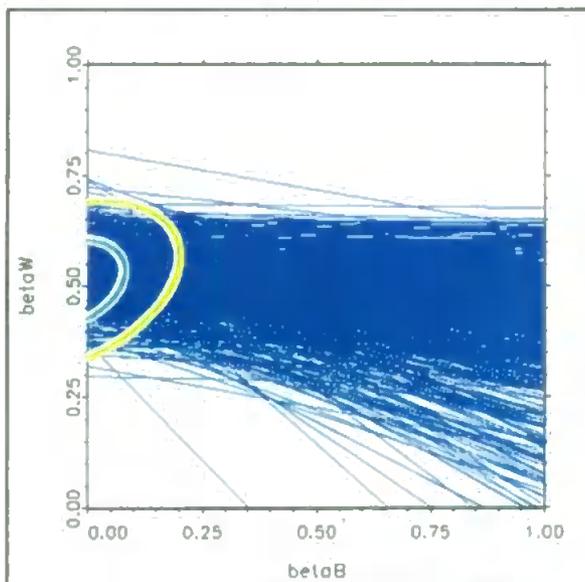
We can check these parameters by comparing them with an alternative non-parametric representation of the distribution of the lines (see Figure 4-8). This

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approach does not assume that the distribution of the lines is truncated bivariate normal. The height of the contours for any given value of β_i^b and β_i^w represent the probability of these values being the true values under this model. The probability that β_i^w is between 0 and 0.2 is extremely unlikely, with the highest probability being for values between 0.4 and 0.6. The most likely values for white turnout are between 40% and 60%. For any given value of β_i^b the probability is over 0.75. The probability appears, however, far higher for the smaller values of β_i^b. The graph indicates the lack of information about β_i^b. This uncertainty needs to be adequately represented in all inferences based upon this data (King, 1997: 229).

Figure 4-8 - Nonparametric Surface Plot of the Truncated Bivariate Normal Distribution.
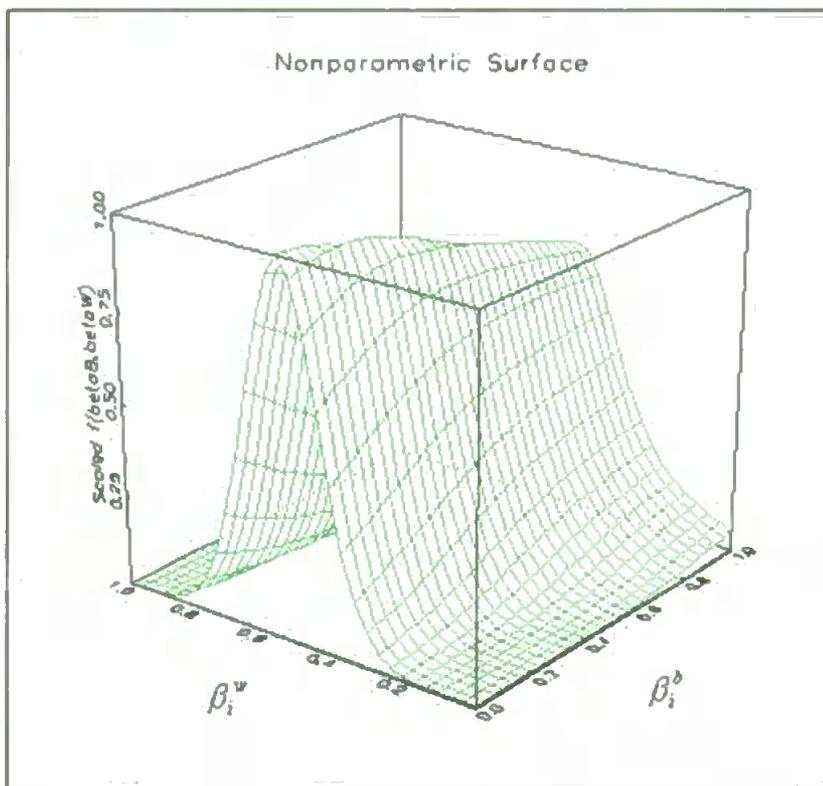
The additional information provided by these parameters allow the model not only to borrow strength from individual wards, but also make the model more resistant to

aggregation bias. There still remains, however, the task of estimating the aggregate proportions of voter turnout. The technique of simulation is the easiest way to estimate these values. The method involves drawing random samples of the parameters of interest from the probability distribution, averaging to approximate the mean and then calculating the standard deviation to approximate the standard error (King, 1997: 141). Increasing the number of random draws can increase the degree of precision obtained by the method. Smoothed histograms of the estimates are shown in Figure 4-9. The more the density estimates are centred within a range on the horizontal axis the more confidence we have that that range includes the true value of the aggregate parameter (King, 1997: 207).

Figure 4-9 - Posterior Distribution of the Aggregate Quantities of Interest.
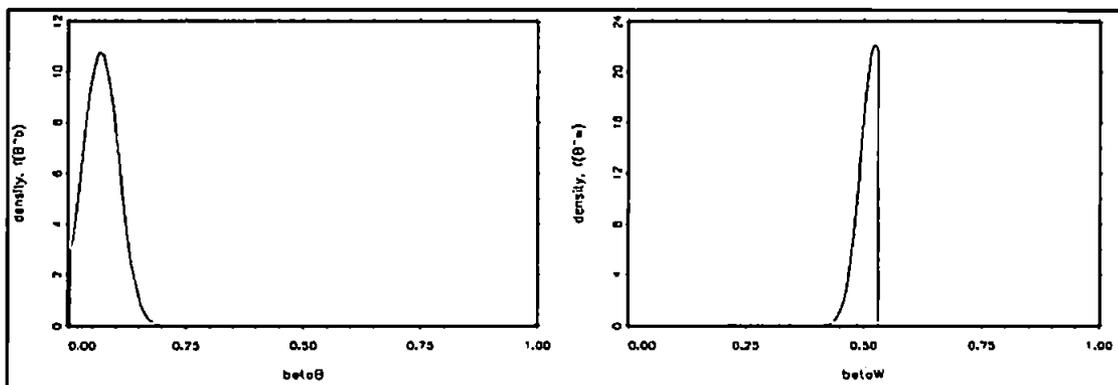
The model estimates the quantities of interest as $B^b = 0.066$ (standard error (s.e.)=0.020 and $B^w = 0.523$ s.e.=0.002). If the model is accurate then only 6.6% of blacks voted in the 1990 London borough elections compared with 52.3% of whites. By contrast, the Goodman model using the same data set estimated 5.3% of blacks voting and 52.7% of whites voting. The values for whites are similar for both models. Presence of aggregation bias, however, would probably lead to an underestimation of the proportion of blacks using the Goodman model. Although this effect does not

appear great the King model's estimate of 6.6% of blacks voting is likely to be more accurate.

4.5 Data Collection, Storage and Retrieval

Having determined that aggregate data and related methods are appropriate for conducting the study, we now discuss the methods behind data collection.

4.5.1 Electoral Data

The source data of local election results was derived from the British Local Election Database compiled by Collin Rallings and Michael Thrasher with the aid of an ESRC grant in 1991. Prior to the creation of this data, no comprehensive electoral data existed for local government elections, especially for the period between 1973 and 1981 (Rallings & Thrasher, 2002, Local Elections Overview: p1). These data and subsequent local elections have been stored in a format re-designed by myself.

The data sets contained over 90,000 individual ward election results and the irregular nature of the electoral arrangements of local authorities caused several problems in finding a suitable method of storage (Rallings & Thrasher, 2002, Local Elections Overview: p2). One potential problem perceived by the compilers was the efficient storage of such a large quantity of data. The results of each candidate needed to be stored along with the ward and year in which the election was held. This resulted in replicating for each candidate the ward-level data such as the ward name, the authority to which the ward belonged, the year of the election and voter turnout. The alternative of storing the ward level data in a different file and using lookup tables to cross reference the data store was rejected by Rallings and Thrasher. It was felt that

such a complicated system of lookup tables might be beyond the scope of many social scientists. The final method of storage was guided therefore not only by the limitations of computer systems available at the time but also by the data processing skills of potential researchers (Rallings & Thrasher, 2002, Local Elections Overview: p3).

However, the actual relational structure of the data was more complicated than was realised by Rallings and Thrasher. Wards in themselves do not have vacancies, candidates or voters. Wards hold elections in which candidates compete for vacant seats and voters turn out to vote. Storing the data in a more efficient relational form would therefore, require the data to be held in separate tables, not just for wards and candidates, but also for elections.

Another problem with the data is the "unique" 13-digit identification number that was assigned to each ward/candidate. This number was composed of; the last two digits of the year of the election; a 2-digit county code; a 2-digit district code; a 3-digit ward code; a 2-digit party code and a 2-digit candidate code. Such a coding system has a number of problems. The first of which is that the resulting number is not unique. As the district code is stored both for county and district elections, the years in which these two tiers of authority held elections simultaneously (1973 and 1976), produced identical codes. In order to overcome this problem the compilers stored the data for the different tiers in different data files. Other problems arise from the use of a single number to represent several different types of information. For each candidate the county code, district code, ward code and election year is duplicated. Storing such county, district and ward level information for each candidate is not only highly

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inefficient but also produces a code that is mainly meaningless in itself. The compilers might well be aware that the code "7301010010101" refers to the first Conservative candidate in the Abbey ward of Bath district council in Avon. For other users however the identification code means very little and requires some form of lookup table of the sort the compilers were striving to prevent. The code also produces problems when trying to match secondary data that use a different coding system or in producing aggregations of the data to different levels of analysis. How might we produce a summary of votes received by Conservatives in three vacancy elections as opposed to those received by Labour? With great difficulty! Other problems with such a code number arise when aggregation is required at a different level. How would we aggregate the data in terms of the proposed regional assemblies? Would we have to insert another 2-digit number between the year and the county?

Computer systems in the early 21st century are far more powerful than those used when the original database was complied and database software is now commonly available to most researchers. Of these software packages Microsoft's Access system is widely recognised as being one of the industry standards. Although this success may well be due to the market dominance of the Microsoft Corporation the database itself is based upon the sound concepts of a relational database system (RDBS). In such a system the data is stored in separate hierarchical tables dependent upon its relationship with other data within the database. The structure of the relationships must reflect as closely as possible the structure of the real-life relationships of the characteristics upon which the data is based. A relational local elections database system would, therefore, need to be split into several related tables. As local elections

are held within different countries (e.g. England, Scotland and Wales), the highest table in the hierarchy must be a table holding details of the countries in which elections are held. The next tier of English local government organisation are the administrative counties. The next relational table must therefore contain data relating to these divisions. The process continues until the last level in the hierarchy has been reached. In this case it is the number of votes cast for a candidate. If voter records were available then the last level would be a record of each individual voter. The basic structure of the Relational Local Elections Database is outlined in Figure 4-10. The nature of the structure results in a far more efficient means of storing the data. In the original Local Elections Database, the Abbey ward in Bath was stored 63 times for the elections from 1973 to its abolition after 1994. In the new relational Local Elections Database, the ward is stored only once.

Figure 4-10 - The Relational Local Elections Database
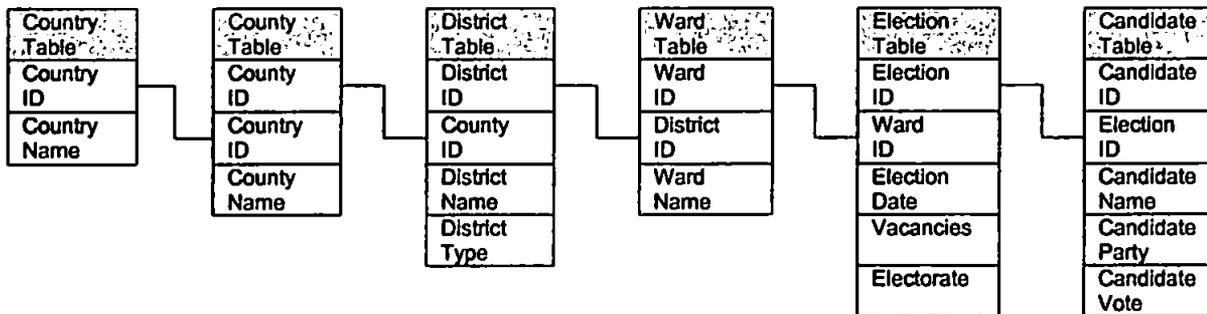
Storing information in this form allows local election information or surrogate variables - such as the effective number of parties (N) - to be retrieved from the database at different levels of aggregations. Information is retrieved from the database using standard commands expressed using Structured Query Language (SQL).

Table 4-5 shows the electoral variables constructed using SQL for each English local authority election held between 1973 and 1998.

Table 4-5 - Local Election Variables

Variable Name	Description
TYPE	Authority Type (e.g. LB - London Borough, SC - Shire County)
AVGNPS	Mean of the elected number of parties
STDNPS	Standard deviation of the elected number of parties
TIMESWON	Number of times the ward was won by the Liberals
LDFREQ	Number of times the ward was contested by the Liberals
YEAR	Year of Election
VACS	Number of Vacancies
ELECT	Total Electorate
TURNOUT	Turnout
TOTVOTE	Total Votes Cast
CONVOTE	Conservative Votes
LABVOTE	Labour Votes
LDVOTE	Liberal Votes
CONSHARE	Conservative Vote Share
LABSHARE	Labour Vote Share
LDSHARE	Liberal Vote Share
INDWON79	Dummy indicating Independent win prior to 1980
CONWON	Dummy indicating a Conservative win prior to this election
LABWON	Dummy indicating a Labour win prior to this election
LDWON	Dummy indicating a Liberal win prior to this election

Aggregate data used in this thesis has been derived from the new relational database.

4.5.2 Socioeconomic Data

Even at aggregate level, surveys are needed to produce socio-economic data of the society being studied. Such surveys are liable to errors other than simple misrepresentation of the general population. Unambiguous or unclear questions may lead respondents to give particular answers, or be interpreted by the respondents in a way that was not intended by the questionnaire designer. Interviewers may make mistakes in recording a respondent's answers and slips may also happen during the tedious process of coding questionnaires and the subsequent entry of data onto computers. Even so, sample surveys are generally reliable and powerful research tools and have become an indispensable part of electoral analysis and have played a crucial role in advancing our analysis of electoral behaviour (Denver, 1989: 6).

The most comprehensive form of demographic information on population data for Britain is the 10-year national Census (Marsh, 1993: 155), which since 1961 has produced statistical information at the ward level. Although this 'building brick' approach to producing statistics was initially incomplete - as it did not cover all wards - changes in 1971 saw the introduction of the Small Area Statistics (SAS), which covered all wards, civil parishes, and Enumeration Districts (Denham, 1993: 53). The major advantage of using these data is that they refer to the total population being studied and therefore, are not susceptible to sampling error in the way that survey data are (Denver, 1989: 22).

The SAS for 1981 and 1991 is available from the Manchester Information and Associated Services (MIMAS) world wide web site. The 1991 census data is available through an easy to use interface called CASWEB, which can be accessed over the Internet. Using CASWEB, the researcher simply selects the variables and the level of aggregation required and the resulting data set is automatically downloaded. Expect for the occasional network problem, the CASWEB system was relatively simple to use. Unfortunately, information from the 1981 census has not been converted to the CASWEB. In order to obtain the 1981 SAS, researchers must connect to the UNIX server at the Manchester University via a terminal emulator program such as TELNET. Once connected to the server, the researcher has access to the SASPAC system, which can be used to access the required information. The SASPAC system has its own set of commands, which must be precisely stated in order for the system to work. The commands must be contained in the correct sequence in a SASPAC command file that can be compiled using the editor on the

server. Once the researcher is satisfied that the SASPAC command file contains the appropriate commands in the correct sequence, SASPAC is instructed to proceed.

The result of the SASPAC output is either a data set containing the required variables or a log file containing a list of unintelligible errors. After straining to understand several such log files, correcting our command files and repeating the procedure, only to be confronted with more log files, we contacted the Census Dissemination Unit (CDU) at Manchester University. After much dialogue between the CDU and ourselves, we were finally able to retrieve the required data.

The complete data sets for the 1981 and 1991 censuses each contain more than 4,000 different variables for over 8,500 wards in England. Unfortunately there is no lookup table that links the census wards to the local election database wards. However, converting the census data into a similar relational database structure as the local elections data enabled us to use SQL to match wards according to their name and local authority. Each census ward could then be assigned an ID corresponding to the appropriate local election ward. Differences between ward names, however, resulted in over 3,000 wards not matching for the 1981 census. Further refinements and manual checking resulted in approximately half of these being matched. The remaining wards could not be matched because of boundary changes that took place between 1979 and 1982.

The combined data allowed the following socioeconomic characteristics to be constructed for matched wards holding elections between 1973 and 1998.

Table 4-6 - Ward Socioeconomic Characteristics

Variable Name	Description
AREA	Area of ward (square KM)
EASTING	Easterly grid position of ward centre (M)
NORTHING	Northerly grid position of ward centre (M)
RESIDENTS	Number of residents
DENSITY	Population density (Residents per Square KM)
PMALES	Males (%)
PMARRIED	Married (%)
PTOTOV16	Aged 16 years or over (%)
PEMPFULL	Employed full-time (%)
PEMPPART	Employed part-time (%)
PSELFWOUT	Self-employed without employees (%)
PSELFWITH	Self-employed with employees (%)
PWORKSEEK	Seeking work (%)
POTHACTIVE	Other economically active (%)
PPERMSICK	Permanently sick (%)
PRETIRED	Retired (%)
PSTUDENT	Students (%)
POTHINACT	Other economically inactive (%)
PTRAINEE	Trainees (%)
POWNEROCC	Owner-occupiers (%)
PCOUNCIL	Council tenants (%)
PHASSOC	Housing Association tenants (%)
PPRIVATE	Private tenants (%)
PNONPERM	Residents in non-permanent accommodation (%)
POTHTENUR	Residents in other tenure (%)
POWNBATH	Residents with own bath (%)
PRIPERS	Total residents in private accommodation
PCLASS1	Social Class 1 (%)
PCLASS2	Social Class 2 (%)
PCLASS3N	Social Class 3N (%)
PCLASS3M	Social Class 3M (%)
PCLASS4	Social Class 4 (%)
PCLASS5	Social Class 5 (%)
POTHCLASS	Other Class (%)
TOTCLASS	Total residents in class sample
PQUALIFIED	Residents qualified to diploma, degree or higher degree level (%)
TOTOV18	Total aged over 18 in qualification sample
PAGRICULT	Agricultural sector (%)
PENERGY	Energy sector (%)
PMINING	Mining sector (%)
PMANUF	Manufacturing sector (%)
PCONSTRUCT	Construction sector (%)
PDISCATER	Catering sector (%)
PTRANS	Transport sector (%)
POTHSERV	Other service sector (%)
TOTWORK	Total residents working in occupational sectors
PBLACK	Black residents (%)
PWHITE	Non-black residents (%)
TOTETH	Total residents in ethnic sample

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When examining the effects of class upon local party systems, we use the six category social class schema rather than the 18 category socioeconomic group classification. Although the latter provides a more detailed classification of occupational status, the larger number of categories results in much lower proportions of residents in each group. An explanatory model of party systems based upon socieconomic groups is much harder to achieve as the small variations in these variables are in themselves unlikely to produce large variations in the party system. As the six category social class schema provides higher proportions of residents in each group, it is more suitable for an explanatory model of party systems (see Chapter 8).

4.5.3 Geographical Information System

The final source of data used in this thesis, is the digitised boundary data. The data contains information needed for producing geographical maps of local authority and wards (see Chapter 3.5). The data is available from the UKBORDERS service at the Edinburgh Data and Information Access (EDINA) web site. The digitised boundary data is utilised by an appropriate geographical information system (GIS). The GIS used is the ArchInfo package by ESRI. ArchInfo has the advantage of being able to link directly to the relational database. Using SQL, geographical maps can be produced for any of the socioeconomic or electoral variables held within the database. The use of this system is quite complicated. Fortunately the Department of Geographical Sciences at the University of Plymouth offer an undergraduate course based upon ArchInfo, which we were able to attend. The final structure of the database is shown in Figure 4-11

Figure 4-11 - Relational English Local Election, Census and Geographic Database

Country Table	County Table	District Table	Ward Table	Election Table	Candidate Table

Country ID		County ID		District ID		Ward ID		Election ID		Candidate ID
Country Name		Country ID		County ID		District ID		Ward ID		Election ID
		County Name		District Name		Ward Name		Election Date		Candidate Name
				District Type				Vacancies		Candidate Party
								Electorate		Candidate Vote

Ward Boundary Data		1981 Census Table 2		1981 Census Table 1		1991 Census Table 1		1991 Census Table 2
Ward ID		Ward ID		Ward ID		Ward ID		Ward ID
Boundary Data		Ward Data		Ward Data		Ward Data		Ward Data

4.6 Calculating Socioeconomic Data Between Censuses

Since a full British census is conducted once every 10 years, strictly speaking we know only the socioeconomic characteristics of wards holding elections in 1981 and 1991. The scope of the research however covers the period between 1973 and 1998. We therefore need a method for estimating ward socioeconomic characteristics before and after each census.

In terms of the theoretical relationship between such characteristics and voting, one of the most important is social class. The Registrar General's social class schema was introduced into the census in the 1920s as a categorisation of occupations that reflected the wealth or poverty and the culture associated with class. Although the schema was retained in 1991, the title was extended to social class based upon occupation. According to Dale (1993) this was to make clear that "occupation provides the key to the classification" (Dale, 1993: 46). In order to maintain consistency between the 1981 and 1991 censuses, this thesis uses the standard six-category classification of class.

Unfortunately, the census data do not provide information relating to social class for years when a census was not held. One method of estimating these values is to calculate the missing data from a linear extrapolation of the 1981 and 1991 census data. While this is mathematically feasible, there are good reasons for not using this method. One argument is that the results may be improbable or even impossible. If, for instance, the proportion of residents in social class 5, was 40% in 1981 and 10% in 1991 then the predicted figure (assuming a strictly linear trend) for 1996 would be -5%. Figure 4-12 illustrates this effect. It plots the correlation coefficients between each of the extrapolated social classifications and the Labour vote share in shire district wards with partial council elections.

Figure 4-12 - Social Class and Labour Voting using Extrapolated Census Data
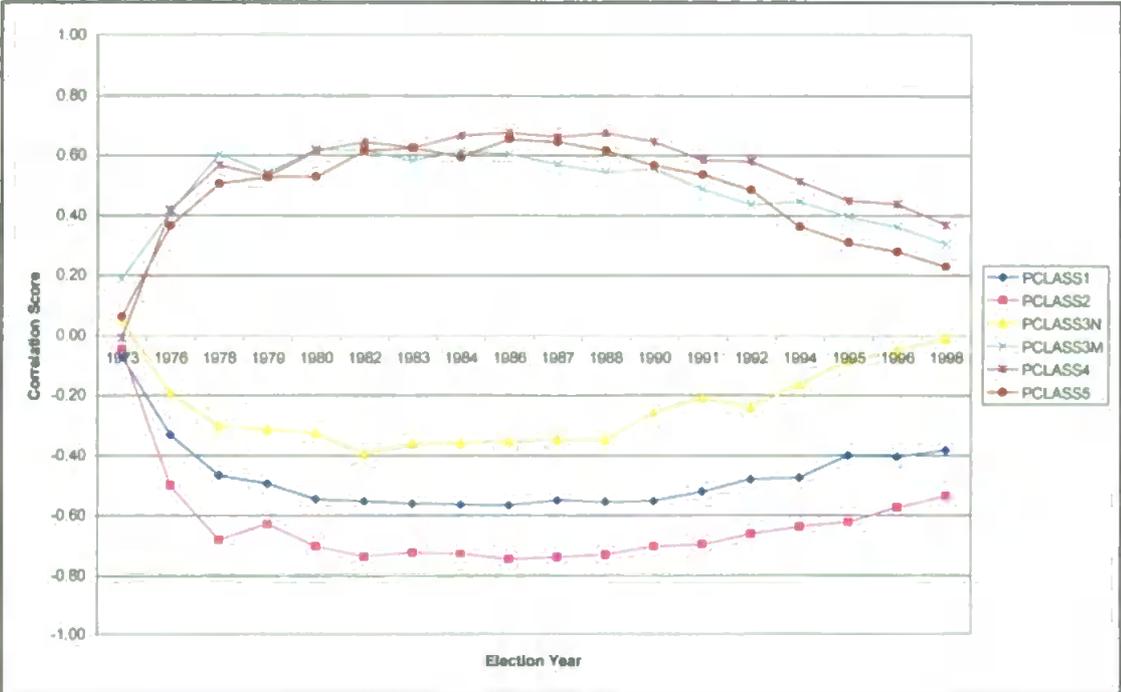
The strength of the relationships between the extrapolated social class and Labour voting appear fairly constant between the two census years of 1981 and 1991. Both before and after these years however, the strength of these relationships deteriorates rapidly. Although the decline in the relationship between class and vote may reflect

real changes in this relationship, it is highly doubtful that the period between 1973 and 1981 is accurately represented on this graph. We would not expect to see little class voting occurring in 1973 followed by rapid class-alignment over a five-year period. Clearly this method produces inaccurate results for the 1973-81 period. If this were the case for the pre-1981 census period then this would also raise doubts about the post 1991 census period if the same method were used for both periods.

As a linear extrapolation appears unsatisfactory, we could have proceeded by using a non-linear equation to estimate the missing values. We considered that such a model would be more difficult to operationalise and decided instead to assume that little geographic change occurred in individual wards around the census years. Although the geographic composition of wards would no doubt have changed, we assume that the change would be so little, its effect upon our analysis will be small. Our preliminary analysis of the relationship between partisan voting and ward socioeconomic characteristics appears to confirm this assumption (see Chapter 7.3.2).

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the nature of the research problems associated with this thesis. It began by formulating broad research questions and then considered the methodologies that may be used to provide answers to such questions. One area of interest within the thesis is the relationships between socioeconomic characteristics and partisan voting. A qualitative methodology would be useful in determining the nature of these relationships. In depth qualitative interviews could determine the voters perception of themselves and their relationship with political parties in local government. The problems associated with the scale of such projects, however, were

instrumental in leading us to reject a qualitative methodology in favour of a quantitative approach.

Having settled upon a quantitative approach, the chapter proceeded to discuss the various methods that could be used to answer our research questions. The first of these sections discussed how best to operationalise the concept of the party system into quantitative measures. The number of parties in the system was identified as being the most important characteristic, and the effective number of parties as being a commonly used measure that intuitively reflects this characteristic. The mean and standard deviation of this measure should enable us to provide a typology of party systems based upon the central tendency and stability of the number of parties.

We then discussed appropriate measures for determining the effect of district magnitude upon the third party. Measures of proportionality are particularly useful in determining the amount of discrimination that a party receives for an electoral system. Due the to nature of our classification of parties, we decided to use the Loosemore-Hanby index to measure this concept.

The chapter then focused upon various methods used to determine the relationships between aggregate ward socioeconomic data and voting. Bivariate analysis is useful in determining whether a socioeconomic characteristic is related to voting and as such is useful as a preliminary tool used for establishing if theoretical relationships are feasible. However, the determinants of party system development are likely to be more complicated than the relationships which bivariate analysis can express. We discussed, therefore, the widely used method of multiple regression analysis. The

method differs from bivariate analysis in that the effect of several explanatory variables can be considered in a single model. In so doing, regression analysis allows us to observe the effect of each characteristic upon partisan voting holding all other characteristics constant. This enables us to test the individual hypothesis regarding each characteristic in turn.

Finally, we discussed the possibility of using statistical models to estimate accurately from aggregate data the behaviour of specific social groups. Much of the discussion focuses upon a new method developed by Gary King that claims to improve substantially the ability of researchers to make ecological inferences. In order to gauge the suitability of the method, we applied it to the problem of voter turnout among blacks in London. The results revealed that turnout among blacks in London appears to be much lower than for whites. The method was verified using Goodman's regression and a non-parametric approach. Although differences existed, all three methods appeared to show a marked reduction in turnout among blacks. This exercise gave us confidence in King's method for ecological inference and his method will be discussed and used in Chapter 9.

We are confident that the methods outlined in this chapter will provide a useful means of studying the evolution and development of party systems in English local government. Subsequent chapters apply these methods, beginning with a classification of party systems since local government reorganisation in 1973.

Chapter 5 Party Systems in English Local Government

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the variety of party systems that existed in English local government between 1973 and 1998. It applies to local authorities, the previously developed classification of party systems (see Chapter 4.4.1). The first section outlines, according to previous theories, the expected nature of the party systems, and formulates appropriate hypotheses based upon these expectations. Following sections address each type of local government authority in turn[1]. Within each section, authorities are listed according to their primary classification - the elected number of parties. Authorities that may be considered as typical of the categories are then examined in more detail, to establish whether their classification appears appropriate. Each section also highlights party systems in which the third party was successful in gaining control and concludes by summarising evidence supporting or refuting the initial hypotheses.

5.2 Local Government - A Favoured Two-Party System?

Duverger (1964: 217) stated that, "the simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system". Of all the hypotheses that were defined in his book this formula was claimed to approach "the most nearly perhaps to a true sociological law" (Duverger, 1964: 217). His study of national party systems cites Britain as being a particularly good case and earlier we highlighted how this still appears to be the case

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[1] Only the shire counties are included in the detailed analysis of the first-tier as Greater London and the metropolitan counties provide too few cases for comparison. For the second-

– at least in terms of seats in the national legislature (see Chapter 1.2). Chapter 3.4-3.5 highlighted variations and change in English local government since 1973. The nature of these changes were not only structural, with changes in the number of councillors, wards and authorities; but also political, with increasing party politicisation of local government, a reduction in the number of Independent councillors and increases in the number of Liberal councillors. One factor that did not change, however, was the voting system. If "Duverger's Law" were indeed a sociological law, we would expect therefore, local government elections to favour two-party systems also. If this were the case then we would expect to find supporting evidence for the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1.1: The use of simple plurality in English local government elections favours two-party systems.

Classifying local government party systems according to the number of parties and then observing if a two-party system is the most common, may provide evidence to support this hypothesis. Riker (1994), however, argues that the hypothesis is far more difficult to falsify. According to him, Duverger's use of the term "favour" is ambiguous, suggesting that the proposition is not deterministic, merely probabilistic. The law is itself, therefore, neither a sufficient nor necessary condition for the existence of a two-party system. In short, discovering a two-party system where plurality elections are not held would not disprove the theory and neither would a lack of two-party systems in English local government. The status of Duverger's proposition as a genuine social law is still questioned by political scientists.

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tier, the shire districts, metropolitan boroughs and London boroughs are included. New unitary authorities established in the mid-1990s and later are excluded.

Nevertheless, given that a national two-party system appeared to exist during the period, there is merit in observing if this were the case for local government also.

What about party systems that do not fall into the two-party classification? Duverger is quite clear about the inability of third parties to prosper under a plurality system. Although the number of parties might temporarily increase from two to three, successive defeats for the third party would result in a loss of support and a reversion back to a stable two-party system. We would expect, therefore, those multi-party systems that did exist to be weak. Duverger, however, is not as clear about single-party systems in elections using the plurality formula. Under this formula, a single-party system that remained intact over a long period, must have been the result of a fairly homogenous electorate (Stewart, 2000:129). If this were the case then we would expect these party systems to be stable. These observations regarding single and multi-party systems give rise to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1.2: Single-party systems in English local government tend to be stable.

Hypothesis 1.3: Multi-party systems in English local government tend to be weak.

Unlike Duverger's Law, these hypotheses can be easily falsified. If a minority of single party systems are stable or a minority of multi-party systems are weak then the hypothesis will not be supported. Strength can be measured by the party system's proximity to the numerical criterion for the elected number of parties. A two-party system can be classed as stronger as the central tendency of the number of parties approaches two. Stability is a measure of the deviation from the party system's central tendency over the period. Unstable party systems will, therefore, experience

significant changes in the number of parties over time. Comparing the proportion of single-party systems that are stable with those that are unstable is one way of testing the validity of hypothesis 1.2. Similarly, comparing the proportion of multi-party systems that are weak with the proportion that are strong should provide an adequate test of hypothesis 1.3.

Duverger's proposition does not describe the nature of the two-party system being favoured. It tells us nothing about whether over time, it is the same two parties in the system, or the extent to which third parties exist. Chapter 3.5 highlighted the significant increase in the number of Liberal controlled authorities. What was the relationship between this success and the party systems in these authorities? If, in a two-party system, the Liberals quickly replaced one of the dominant parties, then the number of parties would change little. If, however, this transition were gradual, then the system would be less stable and also exhibit the characteristics of a multi-party system (i.e. an increase in the elected number of parties). According to Duverger, this would be unlikely. A lack of success by the third party over successive elections would inhibit the its ability to survive. Therefore, their best strategy under such a system is to gain control of an authority quickly and decisively, leading to hypothesis 1.4.

Hypothesis 1.4: English local authorities won by Liberals tend to have strong and stable two-party systems.

Counting the number of Liberal authorities and observing if strong and stable two-party systems were the most common in these authorities can test this hypothesis.

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Although all local government elections use the plurality system, the frequency of when elections are held varies for the second tier authorities. The London boroughs hold whole-council elections every four years, while the metropolitan boroughs elect a third of councillors three out of four years. The shire districts, however, may hold either whole-council or partial-council elections. This variation within the shire districts provides an excellent opportunity to observe any possible effect of election frequency upon the party system. Whole council elections provide a mechanism whereby the electorate can produce large changes in council composition in a single election. In an authority holding whole-council elections a completely dominant party[2] could lose every seat on the council. If the authority held partial council elections, however, the same party could lose only one-third of its seats. As there is far greater opportunity for the party system in whole council elections to vary, we would expect, therefore, that:

Hypothesis 1.5: English local authorities holding partial-council elections will be more stable than those holding whole-council elections.

The above proposition can be examined by comparing the number of stable party systems in authorities holding whole-council elections with those holding elections by thirds. Finding that a higher proportion of stable party systems in authorities holding partial council elections would provide evidence to support hypothesis 1.5.

It was demonstrated previously that the different types of local authority differ, not only socioeconomically, but also structurally and politically (See Chapter 3.3-3.5). Each section tests the hypotheses for each type of authority in turn. All authorities

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[2] Controls every seat on the council.

within each type are listed according to the measures for strength and stability outlined previously (see Chapter 4.4.1). The classification of party system type is determined by the mean value for the elected number of parties (N_S). Mean values of N_S below 1.5 are classed as single-party, from 1.5 to 2.5 inclusive, two-party, while those above 2.5 are classed as multi-party. The strength of the system is measured by the proximity of the mean N_S to the centre of the single/two/multi-party category. A strong two-party system must be between 1.75 and 2.25, else it would be classed as weak. The stability of the system is measured using the standard deviation (s.d.) of N_S. Systems are considered as unstable if they vary widely from the mean elected number of parties (s.d.>0.5). An indication of whether the Liberals controlled the authority at any time during the 26 year period is also provided in the tables. The mean and standard deviation of the number of parties was calculated using the political composition for every year (26 cases in all where the authority existed in every year from 1973 to 1998).

There are sound methodological and practical reasons for using 26 data points and not just those where the council changed its composition or held elections. Firstly, the councils were in existence for every year during the 25-year period, not just during election years and no doubt the electorate still perceived the council to be under some form of political control during the years when no elections were held. If only those years where the council composition changed were analysed, those authorities that held by-elections would have more data points than others, giving additional weight to those authorities.

Another variation on this method might be to divide the 26 years into two or more periods. Chapter 3.4.3 highlighted how contestation was lower towards the beginning of the period. If, as a result, some party systems were more stable during this time (simply because there was no challenge to incumbents), then these might be more easily identified. In addition to this involving a subjective decision regarding the cut-off point for each period, it would also reduce the number of years for each authority. Dividing the time period into three, for example, would result in a duration of only six or seven years for each term. This may reduce the reliability of the measures of central tendency and dispersion if a specific local issue led to a temporary increase in the elected number of parties. If such events occurred once over a 26-year period it would (and should) have little impact on our classification of the party system. Over a six-year period however, this temporary increase might result in the party system being classed as unstable when generally it was not. Such concerns led us to measure the party systems across the entire period of 1973-1998.

5.3 Party Systems in English Shire County Councils

A total of 39 top-tier shire county councils existed after 1973 (although Avon, Berkshire, Cleveland, Humberside and the Isle of Wight were abolished after 1993). The classifications of party systems for these authorities are shown in

Table 5-1. Sub-totals are provided that indicates the total number of two-party/multi-party systems and the number classified as weak/strong and stable/unstable within these categories. Although some authorities, such as Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, experienced periods where single-party systems existed, none could be classed as predominantly single-party throughout the entire period. Indeed, 29 (74%) of the counties are classed as having two-party systems, the mean number of elected parties (N_S) in these councils being greater than 1.5 and less than 2.5. Two-party systems are, therefore, the most common in English shire counties, supporting hypothesis 1.1. It appears that shire county elections do favour two-party systems.

Table 5-1 - Party Systems in English Shire County Councils

County Name	Count	Mean N_3	S.d. N_3	System Type	Strength	Stability	LIB Controlled
Durham	26	1.81	0.36	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Nottinghamshire	26	1.94	0.15	Two	Strong	Stable	No
West Sussex	26	1.98	0.44	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Cleveland	22	2.00	0.14	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Derbyshire	26	2.00	0.12	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Staffordshire	26	2.04	0.21	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Northamptonshire	26	2.13	0.29	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Somerset	26	2.16	0.37	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Lancashire	26	2.16	0.37	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Humberside	22	2.16	0.17	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Norfolk	26	2.24	0.48	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Avon	22	2.24	0.36	Two	Strong	Stable	No
N						12	
Surrey	26	1.92	0.52	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Buckinghamshire	26	2.04	0.51	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Kent	26	2.21	0.52	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Suffolk	26	2.23	0.56	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
N					16	4	
Dorset	26	2.26	0.44	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Isle Of Wight	22	2.30	0.23	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Cheshire	26	2.38	0.44	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Warwickshire	26	2.42	0.42	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Leicestershire	26	2.42	0.45	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Cumbria	26	2.45	0.23	Two	Weak	Stable	No
N						6	
Hertfordshire	26	2.25	0.54	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Hampshire	26	2.30	0.52	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Devon	26	2.32	0.54	Two	Weak	Unstable	Yes
East Sussex	26	2.34	0.50	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Cornwall	26	2.41	0.78	Two	Weak	Unstable	Yes
Bedfordshire	26	2.41	0.53	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Essex	26	2.41	0.54	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
N				29	13	7	
Hereford & Worcester	26	2.79	0.47	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Shropshire	26	3.21	0.42	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
N						2	
North Yorkshire	26	2.92	0.61	Multi	Strong	Unstable	No
Gloucestershire	26	2.94	0.63	Multi	Strong	Unstable	No
N					4	2	
Berkshire	22	2.55	0.45	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Lincolnshire	26	2.62	0.41	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Wiltshire	26	2.65	0.43	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Northumberland	26	2.69	0.30	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
N						4	
Cambridgeshire	26	2.58	0.58	Multi	Weak	Unstable	No
Oxfordshire	26	2.59	0.60	Multi	Weak	Unstable	No
N				10	6	2	

Source: British Local Elections Database.

All of the remaining 10 shire counties, are classed as having multi-party systems (mean $N_S > 2.5$) between 1973 and 1998. As no single-party systems existed, we cannot test hypothesis 1.2 for the shire counties. Of the multi-party systems, four are classed as strong, with two of these being stable and two being unstable. Of the six weak party systems, four are classed as stable and two - Cambridgeshire and Oxfordshire - as unstable. Although the majority of multi-party systems are weak,

supporting hypothesis 1.3, there are only two more weak party systems than there are strong. For the shire counties there is only some evidence that multi-party systems tend towards two-partyism.

5.3.1 Typical Two-Party Systems in English Shire County Councils.

We can establish the suitability of the typology by studying authorities that may be considered as typical of the various classifications. The ideal type for a strong and stable two-party system would have a mean $N_S = 2$ with no standard deviation. Although no such ideal types exist in English local government we can examine those authorities that are closest to the ideal types. Derbyshire is a typical example of a shire county with a strong and stable two-party system. The mean elected number of parties over the period was 2 with a standard deviation of 0.12 (mean N_S=2, s.d.=0.12)[3]. Table 5-2 shows the council's composition during the period[4]. Conservative and Labour dominated the council with never less than 87% of the seats between them and with N_S ranging from 1.79 to 2.17. The one occasion when the Conservatives gained control of Derbyshire was in 1977 when the party produced a 278-page manifesto (Gyford et al, 1989, 169). The temporary gain of 37 council seats in these elections may, however, have been related to the general unpopularity of the Labour government, rather than the Conservative "mammothesto". Despite the Liberals contesting over three-quarters of the seats from 1985 onwards, the party has had little success, never winning more than 8.4% of seats. Although Labour controlled Derbyshire for most of the period, the relative strength of the

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[3] In order to be more concise, this notation is used in future.

Conservatives and absence of a significant third party, suggest that the classification

of a two-party system in Derbyshire is appropriate. The lack of a third party is,

moreover, what we would expect to find if hypothesis 1.1 was correct.

Table 5-2 – Number of Elected Parties for Derbyshire from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_S
1973	25	61	5	7	LAB	2.17
1977	62	30	0	6	CON	2.01
1981	21	59	1	3	LAB	1.79
1985	24	54	4	2	LAB	2.01
1989	27	51	3	3	LAB	2.11
1993	21	55	7	1	LAB	2.01
1997	12	45	6	1	LAB	1.86

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Suffolk is among those shire counties classed with an unstable but strong two-party

system (mean N_S=2.23, s.d.=0.56). The Conservatives controlled the council for

much of the period, pioneering such policies as teacher appraisal in local schools

(Wilson & Game, 1998: 34). Despite this, Labour was also very strong, resulting in a

two-party classification for the authority. The instability of the system is apparent,

however. When, in 1977, the Conservatives won 85% of the seats, the value of N_S

fell to 1.35. The decrease in Conservative strength towards the end of the period,

together with an increase in Liberal strength, resulted in an increase of N_S to 3.19 in

1993, falling back to 2.81 in 1997. For Suffolk, the range of N_S is far greater, than the

more stable system of Derbyshire and appears, therefore, to be appropriately classed

as unstable.

Table 5-3 – Number of Elected Parties for Suffolk County Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_S

[4] Only the base year (1973) and years when council composition changed are shown in these Tables. For that reason mean N_S values may be different in these Tables compared with Table 5-1.

1973	47	29	3	3	CON	2.19
1977	70	9	1	2	CON	1.35
1981	49	31	0	2	CON	2.00
1985	50	23	3	4	CON	2.10
1989	46	26	4	4	CON	2.27
1993	27	31	17	5	NOC	3.19
1997	31	33	15	1	NOC	2.81

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Cumbria is an example of an authority where a minority administration formed when no single-party had an overall majority. One party, usually the largest, was permitted by the others to take all committee chairs and vice chairs, and govern as if it were in overall majority (Wilson & Game, 1998, 290). Cumbria is classed as having a weak but stable two-party system (mean N_S=2.45, s.d.=0.23). Although Labour and Conservative councillors dominated the council throughout, Independents and others were relatively strong towards the beginning of the period. As in Suffolk, the number of seats being won by Liberals increased sharply after 1989, the party replacing Independents and others as the third largest group in the council.

Table 5-4 - Number of Elected Parties for Cumbria County Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	31	38	1	12	NOC	2.64
1977	52	23	0	7	CON	2.05
1981	35	42	3	3	LAB	2.29
1985	36	39	5	3	NOC	2.42
1989	37	37	6	3	NOC	2.48
1993	28	39	13	3	NOC	2.77
1997	23	44	12	4	LAB	2.62

Source: British Local Elections Database.

These typical examples of two-party systems in the shire counties appear to confirm the method of classification. Only two parties dominated the three authorities highlighted during the period. The classification of Derbyshire as a strong and stable system reflects the fact that N_S ranged narrowly between 1.79 and 2.19. Although Suffolk was also classed as strong, a single-party system existed in 1977 and a multi-party system existed in 1993. Suffolk appears, therefore, to be appropriately

classified as unstable. The nature of council control in Cumbria is also reflected well by its categorisation of weak but stable two-party system. The Conservatives and Labour were the main two-parties, with either the Liberals or Independents being relatively strong for most of the period.

5.3.2 Typical Multi-Party Systems in English Shire County Councils.

Among the multi-party systems that existed in the English shire counties, Shropshire is among those classed as strong and stable (mean N_S=3.21, s.d.=0.42). The mean value of N_S never falls below 2.5 and exceeds the 3.5 threshold on only one occasion. Although Shropshire was one of the few authorities that resisted party politicisation immediately following the 1974 reorganisation (Gyford et al, 1989: 26), the number of Independents and others still fell from 31 in 1973 to 22 in 1977. This decline coincides with the only term in which the council was not hung. The 1977 elections saw the number of Labour seats fall from 17 to five, the Conservatives gaining control of the council with a twenty seat increase from 1973. The Liberals made inroads into the council in 1981, resulting in a quite even division of seats between the three main parties and Independents. This is reflected by the value of N_S in that year being 3.81, the highest elected number of parties of the period.

Table 5-5 - Number of Elected Parties for Shropshire County Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_3
1973	12	17	3	31	NOC	2.83
1977	32	5	4	22	CON	2.56
1981	18	21	11	16	NOC	3.81
1985	20	25	10	11	NOC	3.50
1989	27	24	8	7	NOC	3.07
1993	24	23	13	6	NOC	3.33
1997	17	8	13	6	NOC	3.47

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Gloucestershire is classed as having a strong but unstable multi-party system (mean N_S=2.94, s.d.=0.63). For most of this period, there was no party with overall control of the council. The exception to this was in 1977 when the Conservatives won 79% of the seats and N_S fell to 1.64. This is in stark contrast to 1985 when the elected number of parties exceeds 3.5 with seats distributed fairly evenly between the three main parties and Independent councillors. A prolonged period where no one party has overall control can lead to formation of a minority administration where the largest party assumes the role of a majority party (Wilson & Game, 1998). Although this kind of administration existed in Gloucestershire in 1993, it led to an agreement by Labour and the Conservatives to vote down the Liberal administration on the basis that the Conservatives would hold chairs one year and Labour the next (Stewart, 2000: 165).

Table 5-6 - Number of Elected Parties for Gloucestershire County Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_S
1973	30	18	5	8	NOC	2.83
1977	46	3	0	12	CON	1.64
1981	25	17	11	8	NOC	3.39
1985	18	14	23	8	NOC	3.57
1989	20	16	23	4	NOC	3.30
1993	10	20	30	3	NOC	2.82
1997	21	18	22	2	NOC	3.17

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Among the multi-party systems in the shire counties, Northumberland is classed as being weak but stable (N_S=2.69, s.d.=0.3). Although the Labour party always had a plurality of seats in Northumberland from 1973 to 1997, the Conservatives, Liberals and others were also strong in the county. The elected number of parties ranged from 2.75 in 1981 to a perfect three party system in 1977. Unlike other authorities where the decrease in Independents appears to coincide with a rise in Conservative councillors, this decrease in Northumberland coincides with a rise in the number of

Liberals elected. The council had a tradition of cross-party working - based upon a war time agreement to minimise conflict - which lasted into the 1980s (Stewart, 2000: 129). Such closeness between the two-parties may have helped marginalise the Independents in Northumberland.

Table 5-7 - Number of Elected Parties for Northumberland County Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	10	28	3	21	NOC	2.88
1977	20	21	0	21	NOC	3.00
1981	14	34	15	3	LAB	2.75
1985	12	30	20	4	NOC	2.98
1989	17	38	8	3	LAB	2.41
1993	13	39	11	3	LAB	2.39
1997	13	43	8	2	LAB	2.09

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Cambridgeshire is classed as having a weak and unstable multi-party system (mean N_s =2.58, s.d.=0.58). From 1973 to 1997 the authority experienced single-party, two-party and multi-party systems with N_s ranging from 1.44 to 3.16. During this time, the council alternated between Conservatives majority councils (particularly in 1977 with 82% of seats) and periods where no single party held a majority.

Table 5-8 - Number of Elected Parties for Cambridgeshire County Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	28	22	5	13	NOC	3.16
1977	56	7	1	4	CON	1.44
1981	35	19	11	3	CON	2.69
1985	29	21	26	1	NOC	3.03
1989	46	20	10	1	CON	2.27
1993	33	21	21	2	NOC	3.00
1997	33	10	16	0	CON	2.41

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Our typical multi-party systems appear to be appropriately classified. In addition to strong first and second parties, significant numbers of third parties or Independents were present in all. The strong multi-party systems of Shropshire and Gloucester were characterised by long periods where no single party held a majority of council

seats. Although hung councils did exist for Northumberland and Cambridgeshire, they were not the norm. More often than not one of the main parties was able to secure a majority of seats in these weak multi-party systems.

5.3.3 Third Party Success in English Shire County Councils

In   addition   to   the   classification   of   party   system,

Table 5-1 shows also, those councils gained by the Liberals during the period. Although all of these successes were in authorities that were classed as having two-party systems, there is little evidence to support hypothesis 1.4 that the party would tend to win councils where a strong and stable two-party system existed. For the shire counties the Liberals were more successful in authorities with weak two-party systems such as Devon and the Isle of Wight. Whereas Duverger suggested that third parties would find it difficult to survive after successive elections without gaining power, evidence from the shire counties suggests that third parties can build support gradually to achieve a winning majority. How were the Liberals able to overcome any mechanical and physiological effects of the electoral system?

Somerset was the only authority with a strong and stable two-party system (mean N_S=2.16, s.d.=0.37) that the Liberals gained. We should expect, therefore, to see a sudden rise to victory for the party. This was indeed the case. The Liberals in Somerset, progressed from being the third party in 1981 with 14% of the seats, to replace the Conservatives as the largest party in the council at the following elections (see Table 5-9). Despite a temporary blip in 1989, the Liberals took control of the council from the Conservatives in 1993 increasing their seat share in that year alone by 42 percentage points, from 29.8% to 71.9%.

The success of the Liberals in Somerset may support some of the reasoning behind Duverger's Law. Prior to 1985, there was an absence of a distinct second party in Somerset and the Liberals only required a small number of seats to become an almost joint-second party. If Duverger's own logic were correct, once the Liberals reached this position, they would no longer be subject to the psychological effects associated

with being politically irrelevant. When the Conservatives and Independents lost

support in 1985, voters appear to have viewed the Liberals party as having a real

chance of winning and supported the party. The case of Somerset appears to confirm

Duverger's psychological effect. It also shows how the Liberals can circumvent these

effects by leapfrogging over small second parties.

Table 5-9 - Number of Elected Parties for Somerset County Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	34	8	2	12	CON	2.29
1977	44	3	0	9	CON	1.55
1981	33	9	8	7	CON	2.53
1985	24	7	26	0	NOC	2.50
1989	32	6	17	2	CON	2.40
1993	13	2	41	1	LIB	1.75
1997	17	3	37	0	LIB	1.95

Source: British Local Elections Database.

It was not always the case that the Liberals suddenly came to power in the shire

counties. Cornwall is classed as having a weak and unstable two-party system (mean

N_S=2.41, s.d.=0.78). Cornwall from 1973 to 1981, was a single party system with N_S

ranging from 1.23 to 1.42. The county was dominated by Independents with 90% of

seats being held by such councillors. Since 1981 however, N_S has always exceeded

2.5 as the main parties gradually eroded support for the Independents. This

subsequently resulted in council control shifting to the Liberals in 1993.

Table 5-10 - Number of Elected Parties for Cornwall County Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	5	3	0	71	IND	1.23
1977	13	1	0	65	IND	1.42
1981	16	6	12	45	IND	2.54
1985	16	5	30	28	NOC	3.18
1989	14	8	32	25	NOC	3.27
1993	6	8	41	24	LIB	2.65
1997	7	8	39	25	NOC	2.76

Source: British Local Elections Database.

The Liberals' rise to power in Devon was also quite gradual. The party held 11 council seats in 1973, more than trebling to 39 by 1995. Control of the county passed to the party in 1997 when the total number of seats was reduced following the elevation of Plymouth to unitary status. Many of these seats were held by Labour councillors, which reduced the party's share of county councillors, providing a majority for the Liberals. The only other county controlled by the Liberals was the Isle of Wight. The party held seven seats on the council for eight years before they gained 20 seats (and control of the council) in 1981.

One method of gauging the extent to which the Liberals performed better or worse than expected for the different classifications of party system would be to calculate the chi-square statistic for each classification. Unfortunately this cannot be relied upon for the English shire counties as 50% of the cells have an expected count of less than five. For chi-square to be reliable the expected count must be greater than five in 80% of the cells. Another less sophisticated method in this case might be to examine the observed and expected frequencies of Liberal success for each of the different categories. The difference between the observed Liberal success in two-party or multi-party systems and that normally to be expected, was no more than one. This suggests that there is little relationship between this difference in the party system and

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Liberal success in the shire counties. The difference between the observed and expected frequency of Liberal success in stable or unstable party systems was no more than 0.5, while the difference between strong or weak party systems was no more than 1.1. The party does not, therefore, appear to have been more successful in any one type of party system in the shire counties.

5.3.4 A Summary of Party Systems in English Shire County Councils.

Overall, for the English shire counties, the typology describes appropriately, the nature of the party systems that exist for each authority, providing a simple method of categorising into single-party, two-party and multi-party systems that are weak/strong and stable/unstable. The majority of party systems in shire district councils are two-party, while the majority of multi-party systems are weak. Evidence from the shire counties supports, therefore, both hypotheses 1.1 and 1.3: Shire county elections do appear to favour two-party systems and the majority of multi-party systems are weak. This particular evidence supports Duverger's original hypothesis that simple plurality elections favour two-party systems. Hypothesis 1.2 could not be tested since there were no single-party systems. The small number of counties controlled by the Liberals created some difficulty in testing hypothesis 1.4. There appeared, however, to be no significant difference in the observed number of Liberal controlled authorities for each classification and that which would normally be expected. For the shire counties, therefore, we cannot accept hypothesis 1.4 that English local authorities won by the Liberals tend to have strong and stable two-party systems.

5.4 Party Systems in the English Shire District Councils

There were 296 shire districts after 1973. Although there were a number of changes in the number and pattern of elections we can say that 182 (61%) of the authorities held whole council elections once every 4 years. The remaining 114 (39%) held partial council elections, with roughly one third of the councillors elected once every four years for wards with more than one councillor. We might expect the majority of the English shire districts to be two-party systems since this appeared to be the case for the English shire counties examined above.

Table 5-11 shows the party systems that existed in the English shire district authorities between 1973 and 1998. Of these authorities, 222 (75%) are classed as two-party systems - almost exactly the same proportion as shire counties. Of the remaining 74, only 18 are single-party systems while the remaining 56 are classed as multi-party systems. If our classification is appropriate for the shire districts then the large number of two-party systems appears to support hypothesis 1.1.

Unlike the shire counties, single-party systems do exist in the districts. Of these, 3 (17%) can be classed as strong and stable, 15 (83%) as weak but stable. There were no unstable single party systems for the shire districts during this period. This supports hypothesis 1.2 that single party systems in English local government tend to be stable. It appears, therefore, that Stewart (2000: 129) was correct in asserting that the relative homogeneity of many authorities means that elections by simple plurality can have an even greater impact in these local authorities than on parliament, thus leading to one-party authorities. It appears that this process is far greater in the shire districts than counties. One possible explanation for this may be the difference in of geographical size between the two tiers - the smaller districts being far more likely to be homogenous than counties.

Among those authorities classified as multi-party, 22 (39%) can be classed as strong and stable, 8 (14%) as strong but unstable, 21 (38%) as weak but stable, 5 (9%) as weak and unstable. As with multi-party systems in the shire counties, the majority of them are stable (77%). Unlike the counties, however, the majority of multi-party systems in the districts are strong (53%). Evidence from the shire districts does not, therefore, support hypothesis 1.3 that multi-party systems in local government tend

towards two-party systems. The majority of multi-party systems in the districts appear not to be gravitating towards a two-party system.

But what of the effect of the electoral cycle upon the party systems? Hypothesis 1.5 states that the party system of authorities holding partial-council elections will be more stable than are those holding whole-council elections. Of the 114 authorities electing by thirds, 95 (83.3%) are stable. While of the 182 authorities holding whole-council elections, a slightly smaller proportion fall into the same category, 140 (76.9%). Although weak, evidence from the shire districts appears, therefore, to support the hypothesis, suggesting that authorities with whole-council elections are more likely to produce larger changes in political composition than are those not electing the entire council.

Table 5-11 - Party Systems in English Shire Districts from 1973 to 1998

District Name	Election Type	Count	Mean N₃	S.d. N₃	System Type	Strength	Stability	LIB Controlled
Eden	Whole	26	1.11	0.15	Single	Strong	Stable	No
Castle Point	Whole	26	1.22	0.30	Single	Strong	Stable	No
Wansbeck	Whole	26	1.23	0.20	Single	Strong	Stable	No
N						3	3	
Stoke On Trent	Partial	26	1.29	0.25	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Richmondshire	Whole	26	1.29	0.31	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Surrey Heath	Whole	26	1.29	0.45	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Holderness	Whole	22	1.32	0.15	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Bolsover	Whole	26	1.34	0.24	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Kingston Upon Hull	Partial	22	1.34	0.20	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Epsom & Ewell	Whole	26	1.34	0.12	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Ashfield	Whole	26	1.38	0.33	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Mansfield	Whole	26	1.39	0.17	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Corby	Whole	26	1.39	0.24	Single	Weak	Stable	No
South Herefordshire	Partial	24	1.40	0.32	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Harlow	Partial	26	1.40	0.15	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Spelthorne	Whole	26	1.43	0.39	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Stevenage	Partial	26	1.43	0.29	Single	Weak	Stable	No
North Cornwall	Whole	26	1.47	0.25	Single	Weak	Stable	No
N					18	15	15	
Nottingham	Whole	26	1.75	0.31	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Crawley	Partial	26	1.76	0.22	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Horsham	Whole	26	1.76	0.29	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Thurrock	Partial	26	1.77	0.47	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Woodspring	Partial	22	1.77	0.29	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Vale Of White Horse	Whole	26	1.79	0.41	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Wyre	Whole	26	1.79	0.42	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Derwentside	Whole	26	1.79	0.41	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Burnley	Partial	26	1.80	0.17	Two	Strong	Stable	No
East Devon	Whole	26	1.80	0.38	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Redditch	Partial	26	1.82	0.23	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Lewes	Whole	26	1.84	0.32	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
South Buckinghamshire	Whole	26	1.84	0.30	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Wokingham	Partial	26	1.84	0.44	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Bromsgrove	Whole	26	1.85	0.27	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Brentwood	Partial	26	1.85	0.29	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Middlesbrough	Whole	22	1.85	0.08	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Tamworth	Partial	26	1.85	0.35	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Leicester	Whole	26	1.86	0.21	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Leominster	Partial	24	1.87	0.49	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Slough	Partial	26	1.87	0.38	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Gedling	Whole	26	1.88	0.34	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Broxtowe	Whole	26	1.88	0.29	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Worthing	Partial	26	1.89	0.34	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Blackpool	Whole	26	1.89	0.39	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Barrow In Furness	Partial	26	1.89	0.24	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Tunbridge Wells	Partial	26	1.90	0.49	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Waverley	Whole	26	1.91	0.35	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Oxford	Partial	26	1.91	0.13	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Rossendale	Partial	26	1.92	0.33	Two	Strong	Stable	No
West Devon	Whole	26	1.92	0.43	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Poole	Whole	26	1.92	0.25	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Derby	Partial	26	1.93	0.24	Two	Strong	Stable	No
South Ribble	Whole	26	1.94	0.34	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Gravesham	Whole	26	1.94	0.18	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Eastbourne	Partial	26	1.95	0.26	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Lichfield	Whole	26	1.96	0.39	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Plymouth	Whole	26	1.96	0.36	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Dartford	Whole	26	1.96	0.20	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Huntingdonshire	Partial	26	1.97	0.38	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Hyndburn	Partial	26	1.97	0.35	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Worcester	Partial	26	1.98	0.09	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Luton	Whole	26	1.98	0.32	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Warrington	Whole	26	1.99	0.23	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Welwyn Hatfield	Partial	26	1.99	0.09	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Canterbury	Whole	26	1.99	0.48	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Charnwood	Whole	26	2.00	0.41	Two	Strong	Stable	No

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District Name	Election Type	Count	Mean N_3	S.d. N_3	System Type	Strength	Stability	LIB Controlled
Thamesdown	Partial	26	2.00	0.19	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Southampton	Partial	26	2.00	0.34	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Northampton	Whole	26	2.00	0.30	Two	Strong	Stable	No
East Dorset	Whole	26	2.03	0.31	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Blyth Valley	Whole	26	2.03	0.41	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
East Lindsey	Whole	26	2.05	0.34	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Brighton	Partial	23	2.05	0.24	Two	Strong	Stable	No
East Hampshire	Whole	26	2.05	0.36	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Dover	Whole	26	2.07	0.25	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Erewash	Whole	26	2.07	0.20	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Bridgnorth	Whole	26	2.07	0.48	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Bournemouth	Whole	26	2.08	0.46	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Beverley	Whole	22	2.08	0.39	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Glanford	Whole	22	2.08	0.47	Two	Strong	Stable	No
The Wrekin	Whole	26	2.08	0.35	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Runnymede	Partial	26	2.09	0.31	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Dacorum	Whole	26	2.09	0.14	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Great Yarmouth	Partial	26	2.10	0.29	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Hartlepool	Partial	22	2.11	0.42	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Bristol	Partial	22	2.11	0.18	Two	Strong	Stable	No
North Warwickshire	Whole	26	2.11	0.36	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Rochester Upon Medway	Whole	24	2.11	0.39	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Preston	Partial	26	2.11	0.25	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Test Valley	Whole	26	2.14	0.41	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Mid Sussex	Whole	26	2.14	0.43	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Guildford	Whole	26	2.14	0.43	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
South Staffordshire	Whole	26	2.14	0.36	Two	Strong	Stable	No
South Norfolk	Whole	26	2.15	0.26	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
South Holland	Whole	26	2.15	0.30	Two	Strong	Stable	No
North East Derbyshire	Whole	26	2.16	0.42	Two	Strong	Stable	No
North Devon	Whole	26	2.17	0.32	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Kings Lynn & West Norfolk	Whole	26	2.17	0.48	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Waveney	Partial	26	2.17	0.41	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Copeland	Whole	26	2.17	0.32	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Tonbridge & Malling	Whole	26	2.18	0.39	Two	Strong	Stable	No
New Forest	Whole	26	2.18	0.16	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Christchurch	Whole	26	2.18	0.43	Two	Strong	Stable	No
North Wiltshire	Whole	26	2.18	0.38	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Newcastle-under-Lyme	Partial	26	2.18	0.37	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Watford	Partial	26	2.19	0.33	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Hambleton	Whole	26	2.19	0.50	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Chichester	Whole	26	2.21	0.34	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Carlisle	Partial	26	2.22	0.19	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Bath	Partial	22	2.23	0.41	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Chorley	Partial	26	2.23	0.29	Two	Strong	Stable	No
St Edmundsbury	Whole	26	2.23	0.50	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Harrogate	Partial	26	2.24	0.34	Two	Strong	Stable	Yes
Gloucester	Partial	26	2.25	0.49	Two	Strong	Stable	No
N							**95**	
West Somerset	Whole	26	1.76	0.74	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Restormel	Whole	26	1.87	0.52	Two	Strong	Unstable	Yes
Wycombe	Whole	26	1.90	0.73	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Cannock Chase	Partial	26	1.91	0.56	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Tandridge	Partial	26	1.94	0.56	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Torridge	Whole	26	2.01	0.50	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Blaby	Whole	26	2.02	0.52	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Newbury	Whole	26	2.02	0.50	Two	Strong	Unstable	Yes
Hinckley & Bosworth	Whole	26	2.04	0.63	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Rutland	Whole	26	2.05	0.69	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
South Hams	Whole	26	2.09	0.58	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Wear Valley	Whole	26	2.12	0.54	Two	Strong	Unstable	Yes
Mid Bedfordshire	Whole	26	2.17	0.54	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Melton	Whole	26	2.17	0.69	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
East Yorkshire	Whole	22	2.18	0.60	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
South Cambridgeshire	Partial	26	2.20	0.80	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Suffolk Coastal	Whole	26	2.20	0.67	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
West Wiltshire	Whole	26	2.23	0.56	Two	Strong	Unstable	Yes

District Name	Election Type	Count	Mean N₃	S.d. N₅	System Type	Strength	Stability	LIB Controlled
South Bedfordshire	Partial	26	2.24	0.67	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
Broadland	Partial	26	2.25	0.65	Two	Strong	Unstable	No
						115	20	
North Shropshire	Whole	26	1.51	0.21	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Lincoln	Partial	26	1.54	0.34	Two	Weak	Stable	No
East Cambridgeshire	Whole	26	1.54	0.41	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Broxbourne	Partial	26	1.55	0.26	Two	Weak	Stable	No
South Shropshire	Whole	26	1.56	0.31	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Oadby & Wigston	Whole	26	1.57	0.35	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Hove	Whole	23	1.58	0.30	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Norwich	Partial	26	1.58	0.07	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Scunthorpe	Partial	22	1.59	0.21	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Mid Devon	Whole	26	1.59	0.29	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
North Dorset	Whole	26	1.60	0.35	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Teesdale	Whole	26	1.61	0.38	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Easington	Whole	26	1.61	0.33	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Sedgefield	Whole	26	1.64	0.26	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Chesterfield	Whole	26	1.65	0.20	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Nuneaton & Bedworth	Partial	26	1.65	0.32	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Halton	Partial	26	1.68	0.32	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Torbay	Whole	26	1.69	0.41	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Wealden	Whole	26	1.70	0.39	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Ipswich	Partial	26	1.72	0.19	Two	Weak	Stable	No
East Northamptonshire	Whole	26	1.72	0.36	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Chiltern	Whole	26	1.74	0.46	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Cotswold	Whole	26	1.74	0.36	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Ellesmere Port & Neston	Partial	26	1.74	0.24	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Chester Le Street	Whole	26	1.75	0.31	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Ribble Valley	Whole	26	1.75	0.29	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Darlington	Whole	26	2.25	0.23	Two	Weak	Stable	No
York	Whole	22	2.26	0.45	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Wansdyke	Whole	22	2.26	0.28	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Southend On Sea	Partial	26	2.26	0.38	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Crewe & Nantwich	Partial	26	2.26	0.17	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Bassetlaw	Partial	26	2.27	0.23	Two	Weak	Stable	No
East Hertfordshire	Whole	26	2.28	0.35	Two	Weak	Stable	No
West Lancashire	Partial	26	2.28	0.43	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Adur	Partial	26	2.28	0.32	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Chelmsford	Whole	26	2.28	0.33	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Woking	Partial	26	2.28	0.47	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
St Albans	Partial	26	2.28	0.43	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Eastleigh	Partial	26	2.29	0.49	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Stockton-on-Tees	Whole	22	2.30	0.24	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Great Grimsby	Partial	22	2.30	0.32	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Portsmouth	Partial	26	2.30	0.34	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Gosport	Partial	26	2.30	0.43	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Newark & Sherwood	Whole	26	2.32	0.18	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Langbaurgh	Whole	22	2.32	0.20	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Durham	Whole	26	2.33	0.41	Two	Weak	Stable	No
East Staffordshire	Whole	26	2.33	0.37	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Cherwell	Partial	26	2.34	0.31	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Tewkesbury	Whole	26	2.34	0.23	Two	Weak	Stable	No
South Somerset	Whole	26	2.35	0.42	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Uttlesford	Whole	26	2.35	0.39	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Fenland	Whole	26	2.35	0.25	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Fareham	Partial	26	2.36	0.49	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Hertsmere	Partial	26	2.36	0.20	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Fylde	Whole	26	2.37	0.29	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Rochford	Partial	26	2.37	0.45	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
North Hertfordshire	Partial	26	2.37	0.26	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Peterborough	Partial	26	2.38	0.27	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Wellingborough	Whole	26	2.38	0.10	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Reading	Partial	26	2.38	0.46	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Cheltenham	Partial	26	2.38	0.38	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Northavon	Whole	22	2.39	0.31	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Stratford On Avon	Partial	26	2.39	0.35	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Winchester	Partial	26	2.40	0.31	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes

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District Name	Election Type	Count	Mean N_3	S.d. N_3	System Type	Strength	Stability	LIB Controlled
Basildon	Partial	26	2.41	0.32	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Cambridge	Partial	26	2.41	0.23	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Blackburn	Partial	26	2.42	0.47	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Boothferry	Whole	22	2.42	0.35	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Breckland	Whole	26	2.43	0.23	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Derbyshire Dales	Whole	26	2.43	0.36	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Shepway	Whole	26	2.43	0.36	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Kingswood	Whole	22	2.47	0.26	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Rother	Whole	26	2.47	0.36	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Colchester	Partial	26	2.47	0.34	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Hart	Partial	26	2.48	0.46	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Aylesbury Vale	Whole	26	2.48	0.14	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Exeter	Partial	26	2.48	0.43	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Daventry	Partial	26	2.49	0.36	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Chester	Partial	26	2.50	0.47	Two	Weak	Stable	No
							79	
Rushcliffe	Whole	26	1.53	0.54	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Bracknell Forest	Whole	26	1.60	0.55	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Caradon	Whole	26	1.65	0.54	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Windsor & Maidenhead	Whole	26	1.71	0.56	Two	Weak	Unstable	Yes
Arun	Whole	26	1.74	0.57	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Oswestry	Whole	26	2.25	0.53	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
South Northamptonshire	Whole	26	2.26	0.64	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Gillingham	Partial	24	2.27	0.60	Two	Weak	Unstable	Yes
Ryedale	Whole	26	2.28	0.64	Two	Weak	Unstable	Yes
Reigate & Banstead	Partial	26	2.28	0.75	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
South Wight	Whole	22	2.32	0.51	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Epping Forest	Partial	26	2.32	0.86	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Sevenoaks	Whole	26	2.32	0.52	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
North Norfolk	Whole	26	2.32	0.69	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Warwick	Whole	26	2.36	0.55	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Penwith	Partial	26	2.38	1.11	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Forest Heath	Whole	26	2.39	0.56	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Rushmoor	Partial	26	2.39	0.55	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
North West Leicestershire	Whole	26	2.39	0.56	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Teignbridge	Whole	26	2.40	0.61	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Herefordshire	Partial	24	2.41	0.76	Two	Weak	Unstable	Yes
Amber Valley	Partial	26	2.41	0.57	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Kennet	Whole	26	2.42	0.80	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Harborough	Whole	26	2.43	0.67	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Thanet	Whole	26	2.44	0.53	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Purbeck	Partial	26	2.44	0.54	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
Milton Keynes	Partial	26	2.47	0.54	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
South Derbyshire	Whole	26	2.49	0.50	Two	Weak	Unstable	No
N					222	107	28	
Mole Valley	Partial	26	2.75	0.30	Multi	Strong	Stable	Yes
Bedford	Partial	26	2.76	0.42	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Braintree	Whole	26	2.79	0.42	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Rugby	Partial	26	2.80	0.29	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Hastings	Partial	26	2.80	0.40	Multi	Strong	Stable	Yes
Wyre Forest	Partial	26	2.81	0.39	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
High Peak	Whole	26	2.85	0.49	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Staffordshire Moorlands	Whole	26	2.86	0.26	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Craven	Partial	26	2.90	0.43	Multi	Strong	Stable	Yes
Mid Suffolk	Whole	26	2.90	0.32	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
South Kesteven	Whole	26	2.91	0.42	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Babergh	Whole	26	2.93	0.45	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Shrewsbury & Atcham	Partial	26	2.97	0.41	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
South Lakeland	Partial	26	3.03	0.45	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Salisbury	Whole	26	3.03	0.34	Multi	Strong	Stable	Yes
Scarborough	Whole	26	3.08	0.49	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Stafford	Whole	26	3.12	0.40	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Boston	Whole	26	3.22	0.38	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Stroud	Partial	26	3.23	0.48	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Castle Morpeth	Whole	26	3.34	0.32	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Cleethorpes	Whole	22	3.43	0.18	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
Tynedale	Whole	26	3.44	0.34	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
N							22	Contd..../

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District Name	Election Type	Count	Mean N_s	S.d. N_s	System Type	Strength	Stability	LIB Controlled
Alnwick	Whole	26	2.79	0.82	Multi	Strong	Unstable	Yes
Wychavon	Whole	26	2.83	0.53	Multi	Strong	Unstable	No
Weymouth & Portland	Partial	26	2.84	0.50	Multi	Strong	Unstable	No
West Oxfordshire	Partial	26	2.84	0.67	Multi	Strong	Unstable	No
Havant	Partial	26	2.85	0.55	Multi	Strong	Unstable	No
Maidstone	Partial	26	2.95	0.51	Multi	Strong	Unstable	No
Kettering	Whole	26	2.97	0.60	Multi	Strong	Unstable	No
West Lindsey	Partial	26	3.00	0.56	Multi	Strong	Unstable	Yes
N						30	8	
Malvern Hills	Whole	26	2.50	0.29	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Three Rivers	Partial	26	2.50	0.31	Multi	Weak	Stable	Yes
Taunton Deane	Whole	26	2.51	0.22	Multi	Weak	Stable	Yes
Congleton	Partial	26	2.51	0.31	Multi	Weak	Stable	Yes
Lancaster	Whole	26	2.51	0.48	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Allerdale	Whole	26	2.54	0.25	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Macclesfield	Partial	26	2.55	0.42	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Mendip	Whole	26	2.58	0.35	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Pendle	Partial	26	2.58	0.35	Multi	Weak	Stable	Yes
Vale Royal	Whole	26	2.59	0.42	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Swale	Partial	26	2.62	0.32	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Carrick	Whole	26	2.63	0.41	Multi	Weak	Stable	Yes
Forest Of Dean	Whole	26	2.65	0.42	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Medina	Whole	22	2.67	0.49	Multi	Weak	Stable	Yes
North Kesteven	Whole	26	2.68	0.45	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Maldon	Whole	26	2.69	0.39	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Ashford	Whole	26	2.69	0.41	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Selby	Whole	26	2.69	0.29	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Basingstoke & Deane	Partial	26	2.71	0.36	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Sedgemoor	Whole	26	2.72	0.34	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Elmbridge	Partial	26	2.74	0.45	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
N							21	
West Dorset	Whole	26	2.51	0.76	Multi	Weak	Unstable	No
Berwick Upon Tweed	Whole	26	2.54	0.77	Multi	Weak	Unstable	No
South Oxfordshire	Whole	26	2.55	0.51	Multi	Weak	Unstable	No
Tendring	Whole	26	2.65	0.53	Multi	Weak	Unstable	No
Kerrier	Whole	26	2.69	0.61	Multi	Weak	Unstable	No
N						56	26	5

Source: British Local Elections Database.

5.4.1 Typical Single-Party Systems in English Shire District Councils.

The shire districts provide an ideal opportunity to study single-party systems. The typology identifies 18 authorities with such systems. Eden in Cumbria is classed as a single-party system that was strong and stable (mean N_s=1.11, s.d.=0.15). Eden is, however, a peculiar case in that it is one of the only authorities to be controlled exclusively by Independents. Between 1973 and 1998, none of the main three parties has ever held a majority or plurality of seats. No less than 84% of the seats were won by Independent candidates at any election with N_s ranging only from 1 to 1.49. Independents, according to Rallings and Thrasher (1997: 142), are much more likely

to be elected in rural wards with a below average electorate size. This is certainly the case for Eden where residents have little choice of candidate. Since 1973, out of 352 candidates, only 31 were from the three main parties.

Given the lack of national parties, to what extent can Eden be considered as a single-party system? Do the Independent councillors behave as if they are a party, that is, working together towards common goals? Do voters identify Independents in Eden as a coherent party group? We have no way to determine these questions using our data. The model has, however, highlighted the exceptional case of Eden as being worthy of further study.

Table 5-12 - Number of Elected Parties for Eden Shire District Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_S
1973	0	0	0	37	IND	1.00
1979	0	1	0	36	IND	1.06
1983	0	0	0	37	IND	1.00
1987	1	0	0	36	IND	1.06
1991	0	0	4	33	IND	1.24
1995	0	2	4	31	IND	1.40

Source: British Local Elections Database.

The single party system in Harlow is classed as weak but stable (mean N_S=1.4, s.d.=0.15). During this period, however, the Labour party has always held overall control of the council, with no less that 76% of seats held by the party at any one time. Although the elected number of parties ranged from 1.15 to only 1.63 the figure was over the 1.5 threshold for eight years in the period under examination. This is particularly interesting, as the MP for Harlow was a Conservative until the landslide parliamentary elections of 1997. We might expect, therefore, that the level of competition between the two parties would be high in the local elections. This appears not to be the case. The average difference in vote share between the two

parties is over 30 points for the period. Rallings & Thrasher (1997: 161), hypothesise that many electors in Harlow, "desire different policy outcomes from the two types of election and adjust their vote accordingly".

Table 5-13 - Number of Elected Parties for Harlow District Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N$_s$
1973	0	38	4	0	LAB	1.21
1976	3	35	4	0	LAB	1.41
1979	6	35	1	0	LAB	1.40
1980	7	33	2	0	LAB	1.54
1982	3	34	5	0	LAB	1.48
1983	3	34	4	1	LAB	1.49
1984	4	33	5	0	LAB	1.56
1986	2	36	4	0	LAB	1.34
1987	2	37	3	0	LAB	1.28
1988	4	35	3	0	LAB	1.41
1991	6	33	3	0	LAB	1.56
1992	7	32	3	0	LAB	1.63
1994	6	33	3	0	LAB	1.56
1995	2	37	3	0	LAB	1.28
1996	0	39	3	0	LAB	1.15
1998	1	38	3	0	LAB	1.21

Source: British Local Elections Database.

The party system in Harlow provides evidence to support the hypothesis that single party systems are likely to be stable due to the inherent electoral homogeneity of the authority. If voters in Eden view the Independents as a coherent party then this would support the hypothesis also. Although such authorities do not disprove the hypothesis that local government elections favour two-party systems, they do demonstrate that the electoral system is not itself a sufficient condition for two-parties. The en-bloc support for a single party (or group of Independents), may well be representative of specific local policy desires of the electorate.

5.4.2 Typical Two-Party Systems in English Shire District Councils

Among the 222 shire districts classed as having two-party systems during the period, Welwyn Hatfield is a typical example of a strong and stable system (mean N$_S$=1.99, s.d.=0.09). The Conservatives and Labour dominated the council with the two parties

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controlling all of the seats in the council for 22 years with the value of N_S ranging from 1.82 to 2.18. Although the Labour councillors had an absolute majority for 17 years, the Conservatives as the second party, have also been very strong during those years, controlling the council for five years, and winning 45% of the seats on average over the period.

Table 5-14 – Number of Elected Parties for Welwyn Hatfield Shire District Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	19	24	0	0	LAB	1.97
1976	24	19	0	0	CON	1.97
1978	23	20	0	0	CON	1.99
1979	21	22	0	0	LAB	2.00
1980	18	25	0	0	LAB	1.95
1983	19	24	0	0	LAB	1.97
1986	17	24	2	0	LAB	2.13
1987	18	23	2	0	LAB	2.16
1988	19	22	2	0	LAB	2.18
1990	19	24	0	0	LAB	1.97
1991	21	26	0	0	LAB	1.98
1992	24	23	0	0	CON	2.00
1994	23	24	0	0	LAB	2.00
1995	20	27	0	0	LAB	1.96
1996	16	31	0	0	LAB	1.82
1998	20	27	0	0	LAB	1.96

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Wycombe is among those shire districts classed as having strong but unstable two-party systems (N_S=1.9, s.d.=0.73). The party system could be classed as multi-party in 1973 when the Conservatives held a bare majority with 51% of the seats. Most of the remaining seats were distributed between Labour and Independents resulting in N_S=2.79. Between 1976 and 1990, however, Conservatives controlled 85-90% of the seats. The loss of seats by the party in 1991, resulted in a two-party system, and further gains by Labour and the Liberals in 1995 again produced a multi-party system that lasted until 1998.

Table 5-15 - Number of Elected Parties for Wycombe Shire District Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	30	12	3	14	CON	2.79
1976	53	0	0	6	CON	1.22
1979	52	2	0	5	CON	1.27
1983	50	6	1	3	CON	1.41
1987	51	4	4	1	CON	1.37
1991	38	9	10	3	CON	2.20
1995	24	15	18	3	NOC	3.17

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Examples of weak two-party systems also exist in the shire districts. Penwith in Cornwall is such, with a weak and unstable two-party system (mean N_s=2.38, s.d.=1.11). Between 1973 and 1982, there existed a single-party system with the number of elected parties ranging from 1.11 to 1.36. The council was dominated by Independents with no less then 73% of seats held by such councillors. Since then however, the authority has seen evidence of increasing party politicisation. Before 1984, all of the three main parties contested less than a third of council seats. Since then the Liberals and Labour have, on average, contested over half the seats, while the Conservatives contested over two-thirds. In 1973 there were almost two Independent candidates for every vacancy. From 1984 onwards, however, there were on average, almost two vacancies to every Independent candidate. Such factors resulted in the transition to a weak two-party system in 1982 and subsequently into a strong multi-party system in 1986. The number of parties continued to increase from 1986 onwards, reaching a peak of 3.93 in 1994 and remaining high since then. The pattern of the party system in Penwith is similar to its higher tier authority of Cornwall. Both had single-party systems prior to 1980 and multi-party systems after 1986. Unlike Cornwall where the Liberals gained control in 1993, the seats in Penwith were more evenly distributed between the parties resulting in a hung authority from 1986 onwards.

Table 5-16 - Number of Elected Parties for Penwith Shire District Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	0	1	1	38	IND	1.11
1979	4	1	0	29	IND	1.35
1980	2	1	2	29	IND	1.36
1982	4	1	2	27	IND	1.54
1983	5	1	2	26	IND	1.64
1984	6	2	1	25	IND	1.74
1986	11	5	2	16	NOC	2.85
1987	12	5	2	15	NOC	2.90
1988	14	7	2	11	NOC	3.12
1990	13	10	1	10	NOC	3.12
1991	10	13	3	8	NOC	3.38
1992	11	10	4	9	NOC	3.64
1994	10	9	7	8	NOC	3.93
1995	9	6	11	8	NOC	3.83
1996	4	9	11	10	NOC	3.64
1998	7	6	12	9	NOC	3.73

Source: British Local Elections Database.

5.4.3 Typical Multi-Party Systems in English Shire District Councils

Among the 56 shire districts with multi-party systems, Tynedale in Northumberland may be considered a typical strong (mean N_S=3.44) and stable (s.d.=0.34) system. The lowest number of elected parties was between 1976 and 1979 when Independents held a narrow council majority. Although the number of such councillors decreased steadily after 1976, falling to just four by 1995, this did not result in any single party gaining an absolute majority of seats. Tynedale is a good example of a party system that does not support hypothesis 1.3. Electors in Tynedale do not appear to identify a third party that is unable to win and therefore not worth voting for. Rather it suggests that once established, a multi-party system may not conform to Duverger's law.

Table 5-17 - Number of Elected Parties for Tynedale Shire District Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	8	11	4	22	NOC	2.96
1976	8	11	4	24	IND	2.84
1979	10	8	10	19	NOC	3.53
1983	12	7	12	16	NOC	3.73
1987	16	9	12	10	NOC	3.80
1991	17	13	8	9	NOC	3.66
1995	11	19	13	4	NOC	3.31

Source: British Local Elections Database.

The multi-party system of West Oxfordshire is as strong but unstable (mean N_S=2.84, s.d.=0.67). At the beginning of this period, the party system could be classed as a weak two-party system with 78% of seats held by Independents and N_S=1.57. The number of Conservative seats increased from one to 20 in the elections of 1976. This dramatically increased N_S to 2.36 with no single party having overall control of the council. Five of these gains were from previous Independent councillors standing on a Conservative ticket. Although the Conservatives controlled the council in 1983, 1987 and 1988, the number of elected parties increased steadily throughout the period, reaching a high point of 3.94 in 1998. The instability of the system is due to a steady increase in the number of parties during the 25-year period. Rather than gravitating towards a two-party system, West Oxfordshire appears to have gravitated towards multi-partyism. One explanation for this might lie with the mass resignation of Conservative councillors over the new-right policies of central government (Chandler, 2001: 129). This resulted in a doubling of Independent councillors to 25 by 1991. The Liberals and Labour benefited as this number fell back to its pre-1991 value in following elections. By the end of the period the council seats were distributed evenly among the four groups. West Oxfordshire is a good example of how national politics can affect the party systems of local government.

Table 5-18 - Number of Elected Parties for West Oxfordshire Shire District Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	1	8	1	35	IND	1.57
1976	20	4	0	21	NOC	2.36
1979	24	5	2	18	NOC	2.58
1980	23	6	2	18	NOC	2.69
1982	24	6	5	14	NOC	2.88
1983	25	5	5	14	CON	2.76
1984	23	4	8	14	NOC	2.98
1986	22	4	10	13	NOC	3.12
1987	25	3	9	12	CON	2.80
1988	26	4	6	13	CON	2.68
1991	11	6	7	25	IND	2.89
1992	15	6	8	20	NOC	3.31
1994	13	6	12	18	NOC	3.57
1995	12	9	13	15	NOC	3.88
1996	9	11	14	15	NOC	3.85
1998	14	10	12	13	NOC	3.94

West Dorset is also an example of a multi-party system that does not appear to be tending towards a two-party system. Unlike West Oxfordshire, however, the authority is classed as weak and unstable (mean N_S=2.51, s.d.=0.76). Both Labour and the Conservatives were marginalised towards the beginning of the period. Independent councillors dominated between 1973 and 1979, with no less than 78% of the seats going to these candidates and the Liberals were the second largest party until 1983. This is reflected in the number of parties being 1.55 in 1973 and 1.46 in 1976. Since 1979 however, the number of Independent councillors decreased steadily as the number of seats won by the three main parties increased. It has been the Conservative and Liberal councillors that have benefited more from the decrease in Independents. The number of Labour councillors increased only from two to five after 1979 and went down to just one in 1983.

Table 5-19 - Number of Elected Parties for West Dorset Shire District Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	0	2	10	43	IND	1.55
1976	2	1	7	45	IND	1.46
1979	8	2	8	37	IND	2.02
1983	15	1	6	33	IND	2.24
1984	17	1	6	31	IND	2.35
1986	11	2	8	34	IND	2.25
1987	14	3	13	25	NOC	3.03
1991	18	5	11	21	NOC	3.32
1995	18	5	13	19	NOC	3.44
1997	20	5	12	18	NOC	3.39
1998	19	5	13	18	NOC	3.44

Source: British Local Elections Database.

5.4.4 Third Party Success in English Shire District Councils

The Liberals in the shire districts never gained control of authorities classed as single-party. Change in control in a single-party system could only occur if another party almost instantly succeeded the dominant one. Any gradual change in the controlling

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party would result in the party system becoming a two-party system, as both would coexist during the transformation. Evidence from the shire districts suggests that it is difficult for the Liberals to quickly gain control of an authority dominated by a single party.

Liberal Success did occur in districts classed as two-party. Aylesbury Vale (Buckinghamshire) is one such with a mean N_S=2.48. The system is also classed as stable with a standard deviation of just 0.14. Independent councillors controlled the council towards the beginning of the period, but their number was reduced from 31 to 18 in the 1976 elections as Conservative councillors increased from 11 to 29. The following elections saw the beginning of a 12-year Conservative administration. Aylesbury Vale experienced dramatic socioeconomic changes during this time. Between 1971 and 1991 the county of Buckinghamshire had the fastest population growth in the UK (around 30%). This population increase was not distributed evenly however, as a local political coalition - made up of action groups, local residents and councillors - rigorously campaigned for the protection of the green belt and areas of outstanding natural beauty in the south of the county. As a result, the more northerly district of Aylesbury Vale received much of the increase in population and housing (Murdoch et al, 2000: 205). Such changes are unlikely to have helped the Independent candidates, as new migrants may not have the same background knowledge of these candidates as longer-term residents, and therefore may be more likely to identify with one of the mainstream parties instead. In attempting to deal with the increased pressure upon local authority services, the Conservative council proposed to invite private tenders for refuse collection during the 1980s. The threat of joint industrial action however, was sufficient for the council to drop the scheme

(Holliday, 2000: 177). Such strong feeling towards local issues coupled with a decrease in Conservative support and lack of Labour presence provided ideal ground for Liberal success in Aylesbury Vale. The party quickly replaced Independents as the second largest group winning almost twice as many seats as these candidates in 1987 and gaining control of the authority in 1995.

Table 5-20 - Number of Elected Parties for Aylesbury Vale Shire District Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	11	12	0	31	IND	2.38
1976	29	9	2	18	NOC	2.69
1979	33	8	1	16	CON	2.39
1983	34	4	5	15	CON	2.37
1987	34	2	14	8	CON	2.37
1991	28	1	21	8	NOC	2.61
1995	12	5	33	8	LIB	2.54

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Success for the Liberals also occurred in some multi-party systems. In Taunton Deane, the Conservatives were the strongest party from 1973 to 1991, with majority control throughout most of the period. The authority is classed, however, as weak but stable, with a mean N_S of 2.51 (s.d.=0.22) placing it just over the multi-party threshold. When it came, Liberal success was extremely sudden. The party held no seats on the council until 1983 when they gained a single seat. In the following elections of 1987 the Liberals increased their seats to 15 and then to 29 in 1991. In the elections of 1991, 15 Conservative councillors lost their seats on the council, while the Liberals enjoyed an increase of almost the same amount from 15 to 29, giving overall control of the council to what had been the third party. The Liberals managed to sustain their majority to 1998, which meant that the council has only been hung for a total of three years during the period under study.

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Table 5-21 – Number of Elected Parties for Taunton Deane Shire District Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	22	13	0	13	NOC	2.80
1976	26	11	0	11	CON	2.51
1979	26	14	0	9	CON	2.52
1983	32	10	1	6	CON	2.07
1987	28	7	15	3	CON	2.63
1991	13	7	29	4	LIB	2.61
1995	14	7	29	3	LIB	2.57

Source: British Local Elections Database.

The shire districts provide enough cases for chi-square to be an appropriate statistic for gauging the extent to which the Liberals performed better or worse than expected in the different party system classifications. Testing for the relationship between the type of party-system and Liberal success produces a two-tailed significance of 0.09 (χ^2 =4.77, d.f.=2), which is statistically significant at the 10% level. This figure is not entirely unexpected as the party failed to gain control of any districts classed as single-party when the expected number should have been four. From this we can deduce that it is far more difficult than would normally be expected, for a third party to completely replace a dominant party in a shire districts. We would have expected the Liberals to gain control of 11 authorities with multi-party systems and they actually gained control of 12. They also gained control of 44 authorities with two-party systems when we expected only 37. The party performed slightly better than expected, therefore, in both multi-party and two-party systems.

When focussing upon Liberal success in strong and stable two-party systems, the party also appears to perform better than expected. Of the 95 systems classed in this way the Liberals won 22 (expected=19), of the remaining 201 the party won 37 (expected=40). Calculating the chi-square statistic (χ^2 =0.912, d.f.=2) however, provides a two-tailed significance of 0.34. The difference in observed and expected

frequencies is not significantly different to what might occur by chance. The shire districts provide only some evidence to support hypothesis 1.4.

5.4.5 A Summary of Party Systems in English Shire District Councils.

The typical examples of party systems in the shire districts suggest that the method of classification is appropriate for this type of authority. The two-party classification was by far the largest with only a quarter of the authorities classed as single or multi-party. Evidence from the shire districts certainly supports the hypothesis that plurality elections in English local government favour two-party systems. The typology allowed us to identify single-party systems such as Eden and Harlow, reflecting well, the strength and stability of these party systems. All of the 18 single-party systems were classed as stable, supporting hypothesis 1.2 that single party systems in English local government tend to be stable. The remaining multi-party systems were found to be stronger than expected. Over half of these authorities were classed as strong. Evidence from the shire districts does not, therefore, support hypothesis 1.3 that multi-party systems in local government tend to be weak. The majority of multi-party systems in the districts do not appear, therefore, to be gravitating towards a two-party system. The success of the Liberals in strong and stable two-party systems initially appeared to be slightly better than expected. This difference, however, was shown to be no more than might normally occur by chance and we cannot, therefore, accept the hypothesis that authorities won by the Liberals will tend to have strong and stable party-systems. The party appears to be successful equally in party systems that are stable to those that are unstable. Evidence from the shires suggests, therefore, that the Liberals can build gradually upon support, rather than having to win quickly. The mixture of electoral cycles allowed us to examine also the relationship between this

aspect of the electoral system and party system. We found that the proportion of stable party systems in authorities holding partial-council elections was, greater than in those holding whole council elections. Although the difference is small, this supports hypothesis 1.5, suggesting that whole-council elections result in greater changes in council composition than partial-council elections.

5.5 Party Systems in Metropolitan Borough Councils

The classifications of the party systems in the 36 metropolitan boroughs are shown in

Table 5-22. As with the shire counties and districts the majority of councils (24) are classed as two-party systems. Of the remaining 12 authorities, seven are classed as single party systems and five as multi-party systems. The metropolitan boroughs appear, therefore, to support the hypothesis that plurality elections in local government favour two-party systems.

Among the seven single-party systems, only Rotherham in South Yorkshire is classed as strong and stable, with the remaining six being weak but stable. There were no unstable single-party systems for the metropolitan boroughs during this period. This supports hypothesis 1.2 that single-party systems tend to be stable. The majority of multi-party systems were classed as weak with three of these being stable and one being unstable. The one remaining borough, Stockport, is strong and stable. This supports hypothesis 1.3 that multi-party systems tend to be weak although the numbers are rather small.

Table 5-22 - Party Systems in the Metropolitan Boroughs

District Name	Count	Mean N_s	StDev N_s	System Type	Strength	Stability	LIB Controlled
Rotherham	26	1.16	0.12	Single	Strong	Stable	No
N					1	1	
Wigan	26	1.32	0.17	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Knowsley	26	1.35	0.27	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Barnsley	26	1.36	0.37	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Gateshead	26	1.44	0.19	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Salford	26	1.45	0.35	Single	Weak	Stable	No
Wakefield	26	1.45	0.35	Single	Weak	Stable	No
N				7	6	6	
St. Helens	26	1.77	0.26	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Sheffield	26	1.78	0.15	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Newcastle Upon Tyne	26	1.90	0.36	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Bury	26	1.92	0.31	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Dudley	26	1.96	0.22	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Bolton	26	1.96	0.20	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Wolverhampton	26	2.03	0.22	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Bradford	26	2.05	0.19	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Oldham	26	2.07	0.29	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Leeds	26	2.13	0.34	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Birmingham	26	2.14	0.17	Two	Strong	Stable	No
Trafford	26	2.14	0.30	Two	Strong	Stable	No
North Tyneside	26	2.21	0.28	Two	Strong	Stable	No
N					13	13	
Tameside	26	1.56	0.31	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Doncaster	26	1.56	0.33	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Sunderland	26	1.59	0.28	Two	Weak	Stable	No
South Tyneside	26	1.61	0.46	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Manchester	26	1.63	0.24	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Coventry	26	1.64	0.24	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Sandwell	26	1.73	0.25	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Wirral	26	2.37	0.22	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Kirklees	26	2.40	0.27	Two	Weak	Stable	No
Liverpool	26	2.46	0.31	Two	Weak	Stable	Yes
Rochdale	26	2.50	0.29	Two	Weak	Stable	No
N				24	11	11	
Stockport	26	2.78	0.41	Multi	Strong	Stable	No
N					1	1	
Calderdale	26	2.50	0.34	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Sefton	26	2.58	0.33	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
Walsall	26	2.74	0.43	Multi	Weak	Stable	No
N						3	
Solihull	26	2.50	0.61	Multi	Weak	Unstable	No
N				5	4	1	

Source: British Local Elections Database.

5.5.1 Typical Single-Party Systems in Metropolitan Borough Councils.

Among the seven single-party systems, only Rotherham in South Yorkshire was classed as strong and stable (mean N_S=1.16, s.d.=0.12). The Labour party controlled the council for the entire period with no less than 81% of the seats going to these candidates at any one time while the value of N_S ranged only from 1.03 to 1.46. An additional 12 seats were contested in the 1980 elections after the boundary changes. Labour candidates won all of these seats and since then the party has held at least 90%

of the total council seats. Rotherham is a good example where local culture has helped to create a self-identity for the local authority. According to Stewart (2000: 21), such identities have a life of their own and may represent the past rather than the present. Even though no longer a mining area, the leadership in Rotherham referred to the authority as if it were still a mining community. Despite a large reduction in the number of working class residents, Rotherhams's party system still appears to reflect that of a traditional mining community, providing perhaps, some explanation of why other parties are reluctant to contest seats in the authority[5].

Table 5-23 - Number of Elected Parties for Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_S
1973	3	50	0	1	LAB	1.16
1975	7	44	0	3	LAB	1.46
1976	6	45	0	3	LAB	1.41
1978	6	46	0	2	LAB	1.35
1979	4	50	0	0	LAB	1.16
1980	3	63	0	0	LAB	1.10
1982	4	61	1	0	LAB	1.17
1983	4	60	2	0	LAB	1.20
1986	2	63	1	0	LAB	1.10
1987	1	62	2	1	LAB	1.13
1991	1	65	0	0	LAB	1.03
1992	2	64	0	0	LAB	1.06
1994	3	63	0	0	LAB	1.10
1995	2	64	0	0	LAB	1.06
1996	1	65	0	0	LAB	1.03
1998	1	65	0	0	LAB	1.03

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Gateshead (Tyne and Wear) is among those single-party systems classed as weak and stable (mean N_S= 1.44, s.d.=0.19). The Labour party controlled the council for the entire period, but unlike Rotherham, the party did not totally dominate, holding less than 75% of the seats in 19 of the 26 years examined. Towards the beginning of the period those seats not held by Labour went mainly to the Conservatives.

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[5] On only four occasions between 1973 and 1998, was every seat contested in Rotherham. Contestation was even lower in the poll tax elections of 1990. The Labour party was unchallenged in nine of the 22 wards.

Conservative strength has decreased steadily since the reorganisation in 1982, with the Liberals replacing them as the second largest party towards the end of the period.

Table 5-24 - Number of Elected Parties for Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	6	71	0	1	LAB	1.20
1975	10	65	2	1	LAB	1.41
1976	13	59	4	2	LAB	1.66
1978	14	56	5	3	LAB	1.81
1979	11	57	6	4	LAB	1.78
1980	11	61	4	2	LAB	1.58
1982	8	55	1	2	LAB	1.41
1983	7	56	1	2	LAB	1.37
1984	7	57	1	1	LAB	1.32
1986	5	59	2	0	LAB	1.24
1987	4	58	3	1	LAB	1.28
1990	2	60	4	0	LAB	1.20
1991	1	60	5	0	LAB	1.20
1992	1	56	7	2	LAB	1.37
1994	1	51	12	2	LAB	1.58
1995	1	50	13	2	LAB	1.63
1998	0	51	15	0	LAB	1.54

Source: British Local Elections Database.

5.5.2 Typical Two-Party Systems in Metropolitan Borough Councils

Bradford is a typical example of a two-party system that is strong and stable (mean N_s=2.05, s.d.=0.19). Labour and Conservative councillors dominated with no more than 10% of the seats being held by other parties - the value of N_s ranges only from 1.54 to 2.27. The Conservatives controlled the council from 1973 to 1980. Their number decreased after 1980, as the number of Labour councillors increased to 71 in 1996. In only two of the last 13 years of the period under study, did Labour not control Bradford with the party holding over 77% of the total seats on the council in 1996 and 1997. The Conservatives were still relatively strong, however. Only Birmingham had a higher number of Conservative councillors than Bradford between 1981 and 1995. The prolonged strength of the party might be due partly to the geographical make-up of the authority itself. Unlike many urban boroughs the boundaries of Bradford extend far beyond the core cities into more traditional Conservative rural areas and moorland (Stewart, 2000: 73). The internal politics of

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the authority might also help explain the party's relative strength. The Conservatives, in the early 1980s, had a very close working relationship with Labour in Bradford. The two parties formed a pact whereby Labour agreed to a Conservative minority administration to prevent a small number of Liberal councillors from controlling the balance of power (Leach et al, 1991: 79). Such a close relationship may well have lessened in Bradford, the losses experienced by the Conservatives in other authorities.

Table 5-25 - Number of Elected Parties for Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_S
1973	53	31	9	0	CON	2.25
1975	57	28	8	0	CON	2.11
1976	61	27	5	0	CON	1.93
1978	60	28	4	1	CON	1.97
1979	51	38	4	0	CON	2.13
1980	37	50	3	0	LAB	2.09
1982	42	42	6	0	NOC	2.27
1983	43	41	6	0	NOC	2.27
1984	44	40	6	0	NOC	2.27
1986	36	51	3	0	LAB	2.07
1987	38	49	3	0	LAB	2.10
1988	44	44	2	0	NOC	2.09
1990	40	48	2	0	LAB	2.07
1991	35	53	2	0	LAB	2.01
1992	38	50	2	0	LAB	2.05
1994	35	51	4	0	LAB	2.11
1995	27	59	4	0	LAB	1.92
1996	13	71	6	0	LAB	1.54
1997	14	70	6	0	LAB	1.58
1998	18	65	7	0	LAB	1.76

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Coventry (West Midlands) was classed as a weak but stable two-party system (mean N_S=1.64, s.d.=0.24). Although Labour controlled for most of the period, the Conservatives were relatively strong towards the beginning, gaining the council briefly in 1978. The combined share of the seats for the two parties has never fallen below 96%. The number of Conservative seats fell dramatically, however, from 23 to 15 in 1980, recovered slightly in 1982, only to fall again in 1986 to 13 seats. Labour councillors throughout the latter half of the period, consolidated their control of Coventry. The elected number of parties indicates a single-party system for seven of the last 11 years.

Table 5-26 - Number of Elected Parties for Coventry Metropolitan Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_S
1973	12	42	0	0	LAB	1.53
1975	21	33	0	0	LAB	1.91
1976	26	28	0	0	LAB	2.00
1978	29	25	0	0	CON	1.99
1979	23	31	0	0	LAB	1.96
1980	15	39	0	0	LAB	1.67
1982	19	35	0	0	LAB	1.84
1983	21	33	0	0	LAB	1.91
1984	20	34	0	0	LAB	1.87
1986	13	40	1	0	LAB	1.65
1987	11	41	2	0	LAB	1.61
1988	10	43	1	0	LAB	1.50
1990	9	44	1	0	LAB	1.44
1991	8	46	0	0	LAB	1.34
1992	12	42	0	0	LAB	1.53
1994	13	41	0	0	LAB	1.58
1995	11	43	0	0	LAB	1.48
1996	4	49	0	1	LAB	1.21
1998	7	45	0	2	LAB	1.40

Source: British Local Elections Database.

5.5.3 Metropolitan Borough Councils with Multi-Party Systems

Stockport in Greater Manchester is the only multi-party metropolitan borough classed as strong and stable (mean N_S=2.78, s.d.=0.41). Although so classed, the mean elected number of parties is very close to the weak multi-party threshold (2.75), while the standard deviation is close to the unstable threshold (0.5). These values reflect the fact that towards the beginning of the period, the Conservatives controlled the council for eight out of ten years. Councillors standing on a Labour or Liberal ticket have also been fairly strong throughout the period, resulting in the fact that no single party controlled the council for 18 of the years examined. Not only are levels of turnout in Stockport generally higher than the other metropolitan boroughs (Rallings and Thrasher, 1994, Stewart, 2000: 133), but party contestation is much higher also. With three or more candidates contesting each seat in every year, only three other authorities (Leeds, Liverpool and Wolverhampton) had similar levels of contestation. Unlike the more working-class Rotherham, Stockport appears to be far less homogenous in terms of its cultural identity.

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Table 5-27 - Number of Elected Parties for Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	27	16	13	4	NOC	3.08
1975	34	12	10	4	CON	2.54
1976	39	11	7	3	CON	2.12
1978	40	13	4	3	CON	2.01
1979	35	16	6	3	CON	2.36
1980	33	22	5	3	CON	2.47
1982	32	20	8	3	CON	2.65
1983	30	18	12	3	NOC	2.88
1984	28	17	15	3	NOC	3.04
1986	24	16	18	5	NOC	3.36
1987	22	15	22	4	NOC	3.28
1988	22	14	24	3	NOC	3.14
1990	18	17	25	3	NOC	3.18
1991	17	17	26	3	NOC	3.14
1994	13	17	30	3	NOC	2.90
1995	10	23	27	3	NOC	2.90
1996	2	27	31	3	NOC	2.33
1998	3	27	30	3	NOC	2.41

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Calderdale is a typical example of those metropolitan boroughs with a weak but stable multi-party system (mean N_s=2.5, s.d.=0.34). The council was controlled by Labour for eight years, Conservatives for five years and hung for the remaining 13 years. During this time the elected number of parties ranged from 1.94 in 1976 - when the Conservative party held 67% of the seats, to 3.02 between 1984 and 1986 - when no one party held more than 41% of the seats. The performance of the Liberals in Calderdale reflects that which we would expect to find if hypothesis 1.4 (and Duverger) was correct. The party gradually increases its strength, fails to gain control of the council, and thus loses support to the established parties. A loss of support by Labour, after its parliamentary victory in 1997, appears to have benefited the Liberals, however.

Table 5-28 - Number of Elected Parties for Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	18	28	5	0	LAB	2.30
1975	28	18	5	0	CON	2.30
1976	34	13	4	0	CON	1.94
1978	34	11	6	0	CON	1.98
1979	26	17	7	1	CON	2.56

Contd.../

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1980	23	22	9	0	NOC	2.67
1982	22	23	9	0	NOC	2.67
1983	20	22	11	1	NOC	2.90
1984	16	22	15	1	NOC	3.02
1986	15	22	16	1	NOC	3.02
1987	16	24	14	0	NOC	2.84
1988	18	26	10	0	NOC	2.65
1990	20	29	5	0	LAB	2.30
1991	21	28	5	0	LAB	2.33
1992	25	22	7	0	NOC	2.52
1994	23	22	7	2	NOC	2.74
1995	17	28	7	2	LAB	2.59
1996	8	37	8	1	LAB	1.95
1997	8	36	9	1	LAB	2.02
1998	13	28	12	1	LAB	2.66

Source: British Local Elections Database.

The only metropolitan borough council classed as having a weak and unstable multi-party system was Solihull (mean N_S=2.5, s.d.=0.61). The instability of the party-system is apparent. Despite the fact that the Conservatives controlled the council for 18 consecutive years from 1973 (N_S being only 1.64 in 1978), the elected number of parties increased after 1984, resulting in a strong multi-party system towards the end of the period. In 1985 the Conservatives controlled five of the 32 metropolitan boroughs, by 1986 Solihull was the only one remaining (Gyford et al, 1989: 307). Although Liberals are generally the partners in a coalition with Conservatives, in Solihull after 1991, it was the Ratepayers (Stewart, 2000: 162-3). The previous Conservative administration's policies - including financial devolution of some schools in 1981 (Young & Rao, 1997: 286) - resulted in the lowest per-head spending on primary and secondary education, of all the metropolitan boroughs (Game & Leach, 1994: 108). This made them ideal coalition partners for the Ratepayers! Despite such policies, the Conservative administration was perceived as relatively 'wet' (in Thatcherite terms). After the abolition of the metropolitan counties, some services provided by this tier were provided by joint arrangements between the metropolitan boroughs. Although this might have caused conflict between Solihull and the Labour controlled metropolitan authorities, Solihull worked well with these

authorities (Leach et al, 1991). The accommodating nature of the authority might explain why the Conservative administration survived longer than in Sefton or Bury.

Table 5-29 - Number of Elected Parties for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N$_S$
1973	28	12	2	9	CON	2.57
1975	30	12	2	7	CON	2.37
1976	34	12	1	4	CON	1.97
1978	38	12	0	1	CON	1.64
1980	36	13	0	2	CON	1.77
1982	33	12	2	4	CON	2.08
1983	34	12	2	3	CON	1.98
1984	33	13	1	4	CON	2.04
1986	28	14	2	7	CON	2.52
1987	28	14	3	6	CON	2.54
1988	29	14	4	4	CON	2.43
1990	27	15	5	4	CON	2.61
1991	23	16	6	6	NOC	3.04
1992	24	15	6	6	NOC	2.98
1994	22	15	8	6	NOC	3.22
1995	21	14	10	6	NOC	3.36
1996	16	16	12	7	NOC	3.69
1998	20	17	11	3	NOC	3.18

Source: British Local Elections Database.

5.5.4   Third Party Success in Metropolitan Borough Councils

Liverpool was the only metropolitan borough gained by the Liberals prior to 1998. Classed as weak but stable (mean N_S=2.46, s.d.=0.31), the authority had the highest proportion of Liberal councillors (48.5%) of any English local authority in 1973 (Eastbourne excluded). Before gaining the authority in 1998, the Liberals were the second largest party with an average seat share of 38.5%. This process of entrenchment, began in the 1960s with the emergence of community politics in the form of the *Focus* leaflets. The 1973 elections saw such leaflets distributed in every ward and the number of Liberal seats tripled, resulting in the Conservatives becoming the third party in the authority (Gyford & James, 1983: 78). Other local factors also influenced the party system in Liverpool. During the 1980s, the Labour party was infiltrated by Militant Tendency, an extreme left wing group. The activities of the group led to the expulsion of its members from the party in the late 1980s (Rallings &

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Thrasher, 1997: 159). This in turn resulted in a large increase in the number of Independent councillors in 1992 and demonstrates the extent to which national policy decisions can influence the local party system.

Table 5-30 - Number of Elected Parties for Liverpool Metropolitan Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N$_s$
1973	9	42	48	0	NOC	2.36
1975	14	42	43	0	NOC	2.57
1976	17	42	40	0	NOC	2.68
1978	24	40	35	0	NOC	2.88
1979	23	46	30	0	NOC	2.76
1980	21	40	38	0	NOC	2.81
1982	21	42	36	0	NOC	2.80
1983	18	51	30	0	LAB	2.56
1984	13	58	28	0	LAB	2.27
1986	7	55	37	0	LAB	2.21
1987	4	51	44	0	LAB	2.15
1988	2	56	39	2	LAB	2.10
1990	2	67	28	2	LAB	1.86
1991	2	63	27	7	LAB	2.06
1992	2	38	37	22	NOC	2.97
1994	2	45	43	9	NOC	2.48
1995	2	49	43	5	NOC	2.29
1996	1	51	41	6	LAB	2.27
1998	0	39	52	8	LIB	2.29

Source: British Local Elections Database.

5.5.5 A Summary of Party Systems in Metropolitan Borough Councils.

Evidence from the metropolitan boroughs provided mixed results. The majority of party systems (24) are two-party supporting hypothesis 1.1 that the use of simple plurality favours two-party systems. All of the single-party systems are classed as stable. The typical examples of single-party systems that are strong (Rotherham), or weak (Gateshead) support hypothesis 1.2 and highlights the difficulty other parties have in these relatively homogenous areas. With the exception of Stockport, all the multi-party systems support hypothesis 1.3. The experience of the Liberals in Calderdale is a particularly good example of an authority that supports the proposition. After gradually increasing their share of the seats, the party lost almost two-thirds between 1988 and 1990, and the authority reverted back to a two-party system. With only one Liberal authority in the metropolitan boroughs, it is difficult to

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test hypothesis 1.4. The initial strength of the party at the beginning of the period and problems associated with the left-wing militant party, however, is not generally typical of the metropolitan boroughs. Nevertheless, the Liberal's success in Liverpool appears to contradict the hypothesis that the party will tend to gain authorities with strong and stable two-party systems. The Liberal's brand of community politics appears, in Liverpool at least, able to overcome the effects of the plurality system.

5.6 Party Systems in London Borough Councils

Among the 32 London borough councils, the majority (27, or 84%) can be classed as two-party, with an average number of elected parties between 1.5 and 2.5. Of the remainder, four are classed as single-party, while only one is classed as multi-party. Two-party systems in London, to a greater extent than other types of authority examined, appear to be the norm. Of the single-party systems, only Newham is classed as strong and stable, the remaining four being classed as weak but stable. Evidence from London appears to support both hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2. Havering is the only London borough classed as multi-party. Although classed as weak but stable, supporting hypothesis 1.3, no conclusions can be drawn from only a single authority.

Table 5-31 - Party Systems in London Borough Councils

District Name	Count	Mean N_S	StDev N_S	System Type	Strength	Stability	LIB Controlled
Newham	26	1.12	0.10	Single-party	Strong	Stable	No
N					1	1	
Islington	26	1.30	0.33	Single-party	Weak	Stable	No
Barking & Dagenham	26	1.36	0.25	Single-party	Weak	Stable	No
Hackney	26	1.38	0.40	Single-party	Weak	Stable	No
N				4	3	3	
Bromley	26	1.76	0.36	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Croydon	26	1.76	0.27	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Westminster	26	1.78	0.17	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Hammersmith & Fulham	26	1.80	0.32	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Redbridge	26	1.81	0.40	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Hounslow	26	1.81	0.18	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Barnet	26	1.84	0.34	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Hillingdon	26	1.86	0.33	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Enfield	26	1.89	0.12	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Ealing	26	1.93	0.12	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Kingston Upon Thames	26	2.00	0.49	Two-party	Strong	Stable	Yes
Merton	26	2.01	0.28	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Lambeth	26	2.06	0.45	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Brent	26	2.08	0.20	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
Bexley	26	2.20	0.36	Two-party	Strong·	Stable	No
Waltham Forest	26	2.24	0.45	Two-party	Strong	Stable	No
N						16	
Sutton	26	1.91	0.52	Two-party	Strong	Unstable	Yes
N					17	1	
Lewisham	26	1.51	0.30	Two-party	Weak	Stable	No
Tower Hamlets	26	1.55	0.40	Two-party	Weak	Stable	Yes
Richmond Upon Thames	26	1.59	0.35	Two-party	Weak	Stable	Yes
Haringey	26	1.65	0.30	Two-party	Weak	Stable	No
Greenwich	26	1.66	0.21	Two-party	Weak	Stable	No
Kensington & Chelsea	26	1.68	0.04	Two-party	Weak	Stable	No
Southwark	26	1.69	0.46	Two-party	Weak	Stable	No
Camden	26	1.71	0.21	Two-party	Weak	Stable	No
Wandsworth	26	1.73	0.26	Two-party	Weak	Stable	No
Harrow	26	2.34	0.44	Two-party	Weak	Stable	No
N				27	10	10	
Havering	26	2.75	0.36	Multi-party	Weak	Stable	No
N				1	1	1	

Source: British Local Elections Database.

5.6.1 Typical Single-Party Systems in London Borough Councils

Newham is the only single-party system classed as strong and stable (mean N_S=1.12, s.d.=0.1). Labour dominated the council with no less than 87% of the seats going to the party at any time, and the elected number of parties ranging only from 1 to 1.29. Compared with other London boroughs, levels of contestation are low in Newham, with a candidate to seat ratio of less than three in every year except 1986. This is less than the London boroughs on the whole (see appendix four). In fact, the only authority with lower levels of contestation was Barking and Dagenham. Given the

almost total monopoly of seats by Labour (and total monopoly in 1986 and 1998),

potential candidates may well feel it is not worth contesting these seats.

Table 5-32 - Number of Elected Parties for Newham London Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	0	63	0	7	LAB	1.22
1974	0	61	0	9	LAB	1.29
1978	0	57	0	3	LAB	1.10
1982	0	54	6	0	LAB	1.22
1986	0	60	0	0	LAB	1.00
1990	2	57	1	0	LAB	1.11
1994	0	59	1	0	LAB	1.03
1998	0	60	0	0	LAB	1.00

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Barking and Dagenham has the lowest levels of contestation of all the London

boroughs. Like Newham, the authority has a stable single-party system. Unlike

Newham, however, Barking and Dagenham is classed as weak (mean N_S=1.36,

s.d=0.25). Although Labour controlled the council for the entire period, there are a

greater number of councillors from the other parties, than in Newham. Labour did

particularly well in the "poll-tax" elections of 1990. Barking and Dagenham was one

of the lowest taxing Labour strongholds. Labour voters had little reason, therefore, to

change their allegiance. Non-Labour supporters, on the other hand, had an incentive

to switch to Labour as a sign of protest (Wilson & Game, 1998: 212). As a result,

Labour's share of the seats increased from 73% to 92%, highlighting the effect of

national policy upon the local party system.

Table 5-33 - Number of Elected Parties for Barking and Dagenham London Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	0	53	0	4	LAB	1.15
1978	3	42	0	3	LAB	1.29
1982	3	37	3	5	LAB	1.63
1986	3	35	5	5	LAB	1.79
1990	0	44	1	3	LAB	1.18
1994	0	44	2	2	LAB	1.19
1996	0	47	1	3	LAB	1.17

Source: British Local Elections Database.

5.6.2 Typical Two-Party Systems in London Borough Councils.

Ealing is a typical example of a strong and stable two-party system (mean N_S=1.93, s.d.=0.12). Although traditionally Labour, with a high proportion of ethnic minorities and black councillors (Gyford et al, 1998: 48), control of the authority alternated between Labour and the Conservatives, with no more than three seats being held by other candidates at any time. The cycle of this alternation in Ealing is particularly interesting. The loss of 21 Labour seats to the Conservatives in 1978 can be explained by the unpopularity of the Labour government at the time. The Falklands conflict might also have helped reduce Conservative losses in the following 1982 elections (Wilson & Game, 1998). Labour eventually regained the council in 1986, only to lose control again in 1990, the very year when the poll-tax issue should have benefited the party. Ealing at the time, however, was among the 'looney-left' councils targeted by the government and tabloid newspapers (Gyford et al, 1989: 311). It is possible that the media attention might have softened the impact of the poll tax upon the Conservative vote in the authority and delayed the reversion back to a Labour controlled authority. The resulting party-system in Ealing is typical of that envisaged by Duverger under simple plurality. Although the salient issues, and thus choice of party, may change over time, voters in Ealing form into two distinct groups to express their policy desires.

Despite contesting as many seats as the largest two-parties in 1982 and receiving over one-fifth of the votes in Ealing, the Liberals appear to be completely marginalised in terms of seats. Ealing highlights the extent to which plurality elections can

discriminate against the third party. The extent of such discrimination in London is examined in more detail in Chapter 6.

Table 5-34 – Number of Elected Parties for Ealing London Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	25	45	0	0	LAB	1.85
1974	24	46	0	0	LAB	1.82
1978	41	28	0	1	CON	1.99
1982	37	30	0	3	CON	2.15
1986	20	47	3	0	LAB	1.87
1990	40	30	0	0	CON	1.96
1994	20	47	3	0	LAB	1.87
1996	19	48	3	0	LAB	1.83
1997	20	48	3	0	LAB	1.86
1998	15	53	3	0	LAB	1.66

Source: British Local Elections Database.

The London borough of Kensington and Chelsea is also interesting. It is the most stable two-party system within the London boroughs (mean N_s=1.68, s.d.=0.04) and unlike Ealing, where political control fluctuated between two parties, Conservatives controlled Kensington and Chelsea for the entire period. With Labour always second, the party system is extremely stable. For the 17 years between 1982 and 1998, there was no change in the political composition whatsoever. According to Stewart (2000: 169), the party system in Kensington and Chelsea strongly reflects a socioeconomic division within the authority, which is sharply divided between affluent areas returning Conservatives and more deprived areas returning Labour (Stewart, 2000: 169).

Table 5-35 - Number of Elected Parties for Kensington & Chelsea London Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N$_s$
1973	46	24	0	0	CON	1.82
1974	52	19	0	0	CON	1.64
1978	39	13	0	2	CON	1.72
1982	39	15	0	0	CON	1.67
1998	39	15	0	0	CON	1.67

Source: British Local Elections Database.

Figure 5-1 illustrates that this social division also reflects a class cleavage within the authority. Using data from the 1991 census, it divides the wards into those where the majority of residents are categorised as middle class (social classes 1, 2 and 3N) or working class. A clear division is apparent in the north of the authority with the five most northerly wards all being categorised as working class and all returning a full slate of Labour councillors. The wards of South Stanley and Church are also classed as working class. While since 1978, South Stanley has returned a full slate of Labour councils in every election, Church always returned a full slate of Conservatives. South Stanley, however, adjoins a large working class area in the adjacent borough. South Stanley's immediate neighbour in Hammersmith and Fulham is Sands End, which also traditionally returns only Labour councillors. Church, on the other hand, is surrounded entirely by middle class wards. Kensington and Chelsea provides, therefore, not only evidence that voting behaviour is influenced by the socioeconomic characteristics of a ward, it supports also the argument that voting is influenced by the characteristics of the immediate neighbourhood (see Miller, 1991; Rallings et al; 1998). The effect of the electoral system, however, helps clearly to maintain the two-party system in Kensington and Chelsea. If the Liberals had been awarded the same proportion of seats as votes there would have been seven Liberal councillors elected in 1998 when the party polled 13.8% of the vote.

Figure 5-1 - Class Composition in Kensington & Chelsea
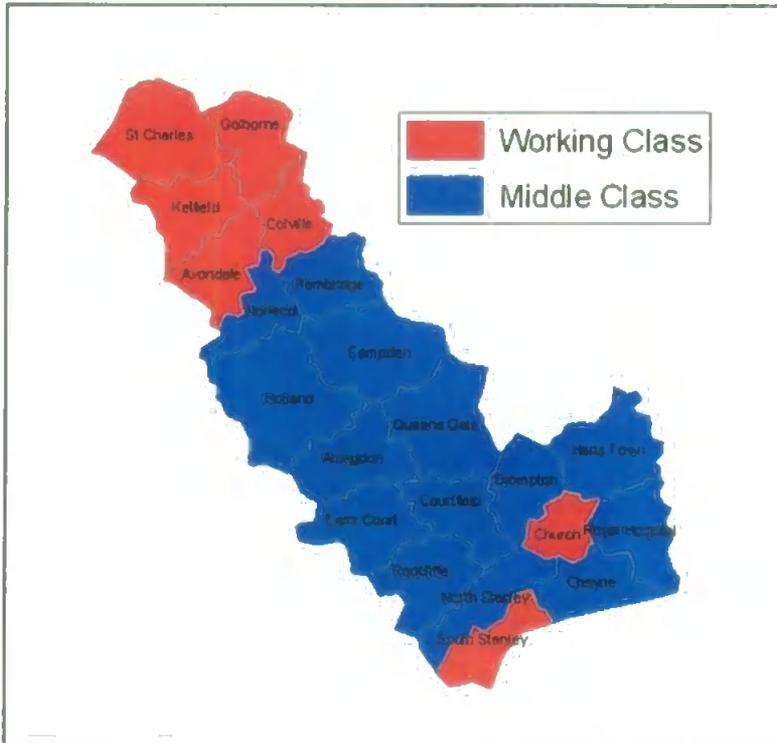
5.6.3 Typical Multi-Party Systems in London Borough Councils

Havering is the only London borough council classed as having a weak but stable multi-party system (mean N_S=2.75, s.d.=0.36). For 17 of the 26 years, no single party had overall control and the elected number of parties ranged from 2.26 to 3.33. Local spending issues appear to be important such as housing,, with candidates representing Ratepayers groups and Residents Associations being strong throughout the entire period. The political composition is such that it provides minor parties and Independents with a far greater opportunity to influence policy decisions through coalition formation or alliances than in single-party or two-party systems. A combination of such factors may cause the electorate to perceive such candidates as more politically relevant, resulting in increased support for the group. Indeed the loss of Conservative support in the "poll-tax" elections of 1990 resulted in additional seats for such candidates.

Table 5-36 - Number of Elected Parties for Havering London Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_S
1973	17	35	0	12	LAB	2.47
1974	23	31	0	10	NOC	2.58
1978	38	12	0	13	CON	2.26
1982	37	12	5	9	CON	2.45
1986	28	20	5	10	NOC	3.03
1990	19	25	6	13	NOC	3.33
1994	11	31	4	17	NOC	2.86
1996	12	31	3	17	NOC	2.83
1998	14	29	3	17	NOC	2.97

Source: British Local Elections Database.

5.6.4 Third Party Success in London Borough Councils

Kingston upon Thames is a good example of a London borough that supports hypothesis 1.4. The authority is among those two-party systems classed as strong and stable (mean N_S=2, s.d.=0.49). The reduction in the number of seats after the 1974 elections appeared to damage both the Labour and Liberals. When the Liberals did recover, they did so extremely quickly. They held no seats in 1981, but by 1986 had almost replaced the Conservatives as the largest party. Local politics is strong in Kingston upon Thames, the party introduced neighbourhood committees composed of councillors elected for their area (Stewart, 2000; Wilson & Game, 1998: 333). Such a view of community politics was strongly advocated in the local Liberal party's manifesto and according to Stewart (2000: 131), highlights how the party locally can make advances, while nationally they might not.

Table 5-37 - Number of Elected Parties for Kingston upon Thames London Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_S
1973	49	21	0	0	CON	1.72
1974	48	16	6	0	CON	1.89
1978	44	6	0	0	CON	1.27
1982	40	3	7	0	CON	1.51
1986	24	4	22	0	NOC	2.32
1990	25	7	18	0	NOC	2.51
1994	18	6	26	0	LIB	2.41
1996	17	6	25	0	LIB	2.43
1997	18	6	26	0	LIB	2.41
1998	21	10	19	0	NOC	2.77

Source: British Local Elections Database.

The Liberals were also successful in Sutton, the only London borough with a strong but unstable two-party system (mean N_S=1.91, s.d.=0.52). The classification of unstable reflects the fact that Sutton has been a single-party, two-party and multi-party system. Unlike Kingston upon Thames, the Liberals in Sutton became the dominant party in what was essentially a single-party system towards the end of the period. Sutton provides little evidence supporting the hypothesis that they will tend to win authorities with strong and stable two-party systems. The party also appears able to win authorities in unstable systems.

Table 5-38 - Number of Elected Parties for Sutton London Borough Council from 1973 to 1998.

YEAR	CON	LAB	LIB	OTH	CTL	N_s
1973	31	23	0	5	CON	2.30
1974	33	15	7	4	CON	2.52
1978	47	7	2	0	CON	1.39
1982	46	7	3	0	CON	1.44
1986	21	7	28	0	NOC	2.46
1990	18	6	32	0	LIB	2.27
1994	4	5	47	0	LIB	1.39
1998	5	5	46	0	LIB	1.45

Source: British Local Elections Database.

As with the English shire counties, we cannot use the chi-square statistic to gauge the extent to which the Liberals performed better or worse than expected, for the different classifications of party system. The small number of London boroughs results in 50% or more of the cells with an expected count of less than five. Comparing the observed and expected frequencies of Liberal success, however, reveals that the party performed slightly worse than expected. As half of the London boroughs were classed as strong and stable, we should expect to find over half of the Liberal successes to be in this classification if the hypothesis were true. Of the four authorities gained by the party, only one was classed as strong and stable. Evidence from the London boroughs does not, therefore, support hypothesis 1.4.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined the party systems that existed in local government between 1973 and 1998. It developed several hypotheses - underpinned by the theoretical effects of the electoral system suggested by Duverger - on the expected nature of local party systems. The typology of party systems presented, then enabled us to gauge easily, the overall nature of the party system within an authority. Typical examples of the different classifications were highlighted and the party systems for these authorities were examined in greater detail, allowing us to assess if the method of classification appeared appropriate. Examining the party systems in this way provided us with evidence to test the previously formulated hypotheses.

The different classifications of party systems appeared to reflect accurately the party system for each type of authority. Stable single party systems, such as Rotherham, were characterised by long periods where a single party dominated the authority. Such dominance by a single-party was not as evident in authorities classed as two-party (Suffolk), while the political composition of multi-party systems such as Cambridgeshire and West Oxfordshire appeared far more fragmented. As the typology reflects well, the actual party systems that existed, it was subsequently used to test the hypothesis for each type of authority.

The first hypothesis tested, for local government, Duverger's general proposition that simple-plurality favours two-party systems. For the shire county and district councils, almost three-quarters are classed as having two-party systems. This figure was slightly lower for the metropolitan boroughs (64%) and slightly higher for the London

boroughs (84%). The classification of the majority of local government authorities as two-party systems supports, therefore, hypothesis 1.1 that the use of simple plurality in English local government favours two-party systems. Propositions 1.2 and 1.3 hypothesised the expected nature of the party system for those authorities not classed as two-party. Proposition 1.2 stated that a single-party system – as a result of a homogenous electorate – would tend to be stable, despite the use of simple plurality. This indeed appeared to be the case as no single-party systems were classed as unstable. It appears, therefore, that simple plurality is not itself, a sufficient condition for a two-party system. Hypothsis 1.3 stated that multi-party systems would tend to be weak. In the shire counties, metropolitan boroughs and London boroughs, the majority of multi-party systems were weak, suggesting that simple plurality may push such authorities towards two-partyism. This effect appears to be much more prevalent in the metropolitan authorities. Indeed, over half of the multi-party systems in the shire districts were not classed as weak. Smaller parties appear far more able to survive in these more rural authorities.

One factor that may explain the nature of the party system, is the electoral cycle. Electors in authorities holding whole-council elections have the potential to make large and sudden changes in political composition. We tested whether this was the case in the shire districts, using the hypothesis that authorities holding partial-council elections would be more stable than those holding whole-council elections. We found a larger proportion of authorities holding partial-council elections were classed as stable compared with authorities holding whole-council elections. Whole-council elections do appear, therefore, to produce much larger changes in political composition than partial-council elections. If Duverger were correct then we would

also expect the third party to lose support after successive electoral defeats. In order to gain control of an authority, therefore, the party would have to make large gains very quickly. This phenomenon was examined by testing hypothesis 1.4 that the Liberals would tend to win strong and stable two-party systems. Comparing the observed and expected frequencies of Liberal success in such systems provided little evidence that this was the case. The party appears equally able to gain control of authorities quickly as it does over a longer period.

The chapter has provided some evidence that the electoral system does appear to affect the party system in English local government. It suggested also, however, that these effects do not completely determine the party system. Detailed analysis of local authorities found that other factors were important. National issues such as the poll-tax appear able to effect the party system at a local level (Havering), as do the actions of national parties (Liverpool). Local factors and characteristics also appear to be important in explaining the local party systems. Distinct socioeconomic divisions may contribute to the production of a two-party systems such as in Kensington and Chelsea, whereas, authorities with homogenous socioeconomic characteristics can produce single-party systems as in Rotherham.

Although we found little evidence that the Liberals were any more or less successful in the different types of party system, there is evidence that the variations in the electoral system (see Chapter 2.7) - not examined in this chapter - may have some affect upon the party. The following chapter examines the effects of such structural characteristics upon the party system.

Chapter 6 The Effect of the Electoral System upon Party Systems in English Local Government

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the effects of the electoral system upon party systems in English local government between 1973 and 1998. It begins by discussing the most important characteristics of electoral systems and highlights district magnitude as being of particular relevance to party system development. The effects of district magnitude are also shown to have repercussions for smaller parties such as the Liberals. The chapter formulates, therefore, hypotheses necessary to test the effects of district magnitude upon local party systems and, specifically, the fortunes of the Liberals. It examines each type of local authority and ascertains their suitability for testing the hypotheses. Following sections examine in turn, each hypothesis for the suitable types of local authority and highlight evidence supporting or refuting the hypothesis. The final section summarises the findings and draws conclusions regarding the effect of district magnitude upon party systems and the Liberal party in particular.

6.2 District Magnitude and Plurality Elections

According to Lijphart (1995), there is broad agreement that the two most important dimensions of electoral systems with major consequences for party systems are the electoral formula and district magnitude. Duverger's (1964) study suggested that the plurality electoral formula would favour two-party systems. This was examined in Chapter 5, which provided evidence that the use of plurality voting in English local government does indeed tend to produce two-party systems. The effects of district

magnitude (M) upon the party system were previously discussed in chapter (2), which highlighted the importance of this for proportionality. District magnitude is a key determinant of proportionality in a P.R. system. According to Lipjhart (1994: 11), the chances for small parties to gain representation increase dramatically as district magnitude rises in a P.R. system. Little research has been conducted, however, on the effect of district magnitude upon parties in plurality systems. Some authors have suggested that higher district magnitudes might exaggerate the effect of plurality elections (see Taagepera and Shugart, 1989, and Lijphart, 1995). Given that small parties are generally disadvantaged in a plurality system, we would expect increases in district magnitude to adversely affect the Liberals more than Conservative or Labour. The following discussion focuses upon both the general effects of district magnitude upon the party system and its more specific effect upon the Liberals.

Differences in district magnitude may affect the party system in several ways. Not least of these is the amount of party competition for seats. Rallings and Thrasher (1997: 92) identify a clear difference in party competition between shire districts with whole council and partial council elections, with the former being less competitive. District magnitude differs largely between these types of authority, and although suggesting a number of contributory factors for this phenomenon,[1] the effect of district magnitude upon party competition was not examined.

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[1] Rallings and Thrasher (1997: 94) suggest that higher levels of party competition in authorities holding partial council elections might be explained partly by increased party politicisation in these more urban authorities. Wards in these authorities are also more likely to be compact, making it easier for parties to find candidates. They suggest also, that the higher frequency of contests in authorities holding partial council elections may produce more efficient electoral machines for parties than in authorities holding elections every four years.

In simple plurality elections, parties have a strong incentive not to field more than one candidate. So doing will likely result in votes being split between candidates, reducing the chance of winning the seat. This is not the case in multi-member plurality elections, where voters receive an equal number of votes as vacancies and may vote for the same party more than once. The best strategy for parties contesting these elections is, therefore, to field as many candidates as vacancies. As district magnitude increases, however, parties require greater resources in order to contest all of the seats. As district magnitude increases, therefore, parties may find it more difficult to field a full slate of candidates. Accordingly, we might expect to find the following:

Hypothesis 2.1: As district magnitude decreases the proportion of full slates fielded by the main parties will decrease.

The ability to field a full slate of candidates might vary also, however, by the ability of a party to attract a sufficient number of candidates prior to the election. If Duverger (1964) were correct then smaller parties will be perceived by voters as having little chance of winning. As elections are costly for the candidate in terms of time and money, potential candidates may be dissuaded from standing for such parties if the chance of victory is low (Cox, 1997). Increases in district magnitude may, therefore, result in a particular difficulty for parties such as the Liberals to recruit sufficient candidates to contest all available seats. In addition, smaller parties with limited resources may feel it more practical to concentrate those resources on fewer candidates than the seats available. As the Liberals are the smaller party for much of the period we would expect that:

Hypothesis 2.2: As district magnitude increases, the proportion of full slates fielded by the Liberals will be disproportionately less than that for Labour and the Conservatives.

Taagepera and Shugart (1989), Duverger (1964) and Lijphart (1995) all speculated that higher district magnitudes might exaggerate the effect of plurality voting. If voters cast their vote along party lines, then each should cast all of their votes for candidates of the same party. In a multi-member plurality district, the largest voting bloc should, therefore, win all of the seats available. Rather than increasing proportionality, this might result in far greater difficulty for a third party - such as the Liberals - to succeed in districts holding multi-member elections. If this were the case then increases in district magnitude would not lead to proportional increases in the number of parties elected. We would expect, therefore, evidence supporting the following:

Hypothesis 2.3: The elected number of parties will not increase in proportion with district magnitude.

If the third party were particularly disadvantaged in a plurality system, then a disproportionately small increase in the elected number of parties as district magnitude rises, would more likely affect the Liberals than Conservatives or Labour. If this were the case then we would expect the share of seats won by the Liberals also to decrease as district magnitude increased. Accordingly we hypothesise:

Hypothesis 2.4: The seat share of the Liberals will decrease as district magnitude increases.

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Although examining the seat shares of the main parties might provide evidence indicating that district magnitude disadvantages the Liberals more than Labour or Conservatives, it might be useful also to take account of the vote share for the parties. Chapter 4.4.4 discussed how such electoral discrimination could be gauged using measures of proportionality. If increases in district magnitude exaggerate the effects of plurality elections we would expect elections with large district magnitude[2] to produce less proportionate results.

Hypothesis 2.5: Plurality elections with large district magnitude will be more disproportional than other elections.

But what of the effect of district magnitude upon the proportionality of the Liberals seat share? Smaller parties generally receive a far lesser share of seats than votes in plurality elections. If elections with large district magnitude are less proportionate, then we would expect that small parties would be disadvantaged the most. This being the case, we would expect:

Hypothesis 2.6: Disproportionality will be greater for the Liberals in authorities with a majority of large district magnitude elections.

In order to test for effects of district magnitude upon local party systems it would first be appropriate to determine the extent to which we have suitable cases for study. District magnitude varies both between and within local authority types and also over time (see Chapter 3 and Appendix 3). Ironically, the least varied are those local

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[2] Of those authorities holding multi-member elections since 1979, only a handful held elections with more than three vacancies (see appendix 3). For many authorities, elections with three vacancies are the largest they hold. We consider large district magnitude, therefore, to mean those elections with three or more vacancies.

authorities that were abolished in the 1980s. Of these, Greater London had a total of 92 seats elected by single member wards in 1973, 1977 and 1981; the metropolitan counties a total of 601 seats, 511 single member wards, 36 two member wards and 54 three member wards in 1973, 1977 and 1981. The lack of elections with large district magnitude in these authorities makes them unsuitable for this analysis.

For those authorities not abolished in the 1980s, a mixture of different district magnitudes exists. In most years, around 45% of London borough elections had district magnitudes of two or less. The remaining elections had district magnitudes considered to be large. Since 1974 when four and five vacancy elections were held, the largest district magnitudes were mainly in three vacancy elections. The London boroughs provide, therefore, an excellent opportunity to study the possible effects of district magnitude upon the party system.

If we consider M>2 to be large, then the district magnitude of elections held in shire district authorities towards the beginning of the period might be considered as very large. In 1973, 2,259 (16.7%) councillors were elected using district magnitudes of between 5 and 12 (see Appendix 3). Reorganisation throughout the 1970s resulted in a reduction of councillors in such wards. The last elections in wards using $M \geq 10$ were held in 1976 and no elections have been held in wards with more than five vacancies since 1979. Since then only a handful of shire district elections have been held where M>3 and just over half (54%) of all councillors were elected in wards that used a single member ballot system. Such variation of district magnitude within the shire districts should be ideal for testing the hypotheses.

Although elections where M>1 were held in the shire counties, only 9% of wards elected councillors using multi-member ballots in 1973 and 1977. Multi-member wards in these authorities were reduced by almost half in 1981 and abolished completely after those elections. The metropolitan boroughs also held elections where M>1. In 1973 M=3 was used in over 95% of cases. After the 1973 reorganisation, these authorities held partial council elections and contests since then were, therefore, mainly single-vacancy affairs. Exceptions to this were the whole council elections held after boundary reviews between 1979 and 1982. Some variation in district magnitude also exists where councillors retired before the end of their four-year term. The shire counties and metropolitan districts are not as suited to test the hypotheses as the London boroughs or shire districts. Those years where large district magnitudes were employed may, however, provide some scope for examining the effects of district magnitude upon the party system.

6.3 The Effect of District Magnitude upon Party Competition

The supposed effect of district magnitude upon party competition was stated in hypothesis 2.1 which asserts that the proportion of full slates fielded by the main parties will decrease as district magnitude increases. We can test this hypothesis by examining the percentage of wards where the three main parties fielded a full slate of candidates for each of the different district magnitudes. Finding a significant decrease in the percentage of full slates, as district magnitude increases, would provide evidence to support hypothesis 2.1.

The percentage of three-party full slates for shire district council elections are shown in Table 6-1 (whole council election years are shaded). Generally, since 1978, the

percentage of full party slates in single vacancy elections has exceeded those with two vacancies. In every year, therefore, the hypothesis is supported when M increases from one to two. Focussing on those years when whole council elections were held shows that this difference is quite large with less than half the number of full slates when M=2 compared with M=1. Where M>2, however, the relationship no longer appears to hold. This is particularly true of whole council election years, when there are a significant number of cases where M>2. In view of this, we could not accept the hypothesis when M increases from two to three. In addition, wards that have very large district magnitudes are so few that a single high profile ward such as the Clitheroe ward in the Ribble Valley (M=10 in 1973) can produce possibly misleading results (i.e. 20% of full slate elections for district magnitudes of 10 in 1973). Evidence from the shire districts supports hypothesis 2.1 when M increases from one to two, but not when M increases from two to three. If Rallings and Thrasher (1997) are correct then the explanation for this non-linearity may be because three vacancy wards are generally more urban and more party competitive.

Table 6-1 - Percentage of Three-Party Full Slate Elections in Shire Districts

Election Year	District Magnitude (M)											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1973	2.3	3.9	8.2	7.6	7.3	5.1	2.6	6.3	0.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
1976	3.1	9.6	12.7	7.7	7.7	10.1	13.0	25.0	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
1978	35.0	25.0	0.0									
1979	9.6	5.6	8.9	10.2	15.6	22.7	0.0	0.0	0.0			
1980	46.0	32.6	0.00									
1982	74.7	72.1										
1983	35.1	22.4	24.7	0.0	25.0							
1984	66.3	37.2	100.0									
1986	74.3	51.9	23.8									
1987	46.1	28.7	28.7	50.0	0.0							
1988	60.8	46.7	100.0									
1990	57.4	45.7	14.3									
1991	37.9	18.6	17.3	33.3	0.0							
1992	71.9	44.4	8.3									
1994	69.6	45.7	50									
1995	43.1	21.5	21.6	0.0	0.0							
1996	69.5	46.5										
1997	0.0	0.0	0.0									
1998	70.8	49.1	100									

Source: Local Elections Database

Table 6-2 shows the impact of increasing district magnitude upon party competition for London borough elections. As before, the percentage of wards in which all three main parties fielded a full slate of candidates are consistently higher for wards with single seat elections than for those with larger district magnitudes. Although the significance of this finding is somewhat weakened by the small number of elections where M=1 (n=16), the fact that the relationship is negative in every year leads us to supports the hypothesis when M increases from one to two. This relationship is not consistent, however, for the percentage of full slates as M increases from two to three. Although, from 1974 to 1986 the number of full slates fielded by the parties was lower for M=3 than M=2, the parties appeared to field more full slates in three member wards from 1990 onwards. Although this supports hypothesis 2.1 for the beginning of the period, and also for increases in M from one to two, is does not for increases in M from two to three after 1986. The argument that the parties are attracted to more urban wards, as in the shire districts, hardly applies to London borough wards, as all are urban. Why London wards with three vacancies are more party competitive than wards with two vacancies after 1986 is not clear at this point.

Table 6-2 - Percentage of Three-Party Full Slate Elections in London Boroughs

Election Year	1	District Magnitude (M) 2	3	4	5
1974	100.0	64.4	59.4	56.1	44.4
1978	50.0	47.5	46.4		
1982	93.8	89.5	87.5		
1986	93.8	90.2	87.0		
1990	68.8	49.5	52.6		
1994	100.0	72.4	76.3		
1998	80.0	70.6	74.6		

Source: Local Elections Database

With the exception of by-elections, the only years when both single and multiple vacancy elections occurred in the metropolitan boroughs were 1980 and 1982. In 1980, the percentage of full slates where M=1 (44.4%) was higher than those where

M=2 (24.1%) and M=3 (36.3%). In 1982 the percentage of full slates where M=1 (89.7%) was higher than those where M=2 (85.7%) and M=3 (51.4%). In both years less full slates were fielded for two and three vacancy elections than for those M=1. As with the shire districts and London boroughs, the proportion of full slates is higher for elections where M=3 than those where M=2. The metropolitan boroughs appear to support the earlier findings.

Although in the shire counties, M>1 wards were abolished after 1981, the earlier period offers some scope for examining the relationship between district magnitude and party competition. In 1973 the proportion of three party full slates were 14.8%, 14.7%, and 6.5% for M=1, M=2, and M=3 respectively. In 1977, the proportions were 29.9% where M=1, 32.2% where M=2 and 22.2% where M=3. In 1981 the proportions were 51.5% where M=1, 51,7% where M=2 and 28.6% where M=3. In each year, the difference between the percentage of full slates in single and two vacancy elections provides little evidence to support hypothesis 2.1. Indeed, the greatest difference was in 1977 when the percentage of full slates actually increased by 2.3% from single to two-vacancy elections. There were, however, far greater differences between the number of full slates fielded by the parties in elections where M=2 compared to those where M=3. Less than half as many three vacancy elections were fully contested in 1973 than were two vacancy elections. The percentage of three vacancy elections fully contested in 1977 was 10 points less than fully contested two vacancy elections that year. The greatest difference between fully contested three vacancy elections and fully contested single or two vacancy elections was in the last year that multi-member elections were held for the shire counties. Despite the fact that over 50% of elections where M=1 or M=2 were fully contested by all three

parties in 1981, only 28.6% of elections where M=3 were fully contested, supporting hypothesis 2.1.

For most types of authority, there was a significant decrease in the percentage of three party full slates when district magnitude increased from one to two. The only exception to this was the shire districts when the decrease occurred where M increased from two to three. Comparing the difference between single and three vacancy elections, shows that the percentage of full slates decreases in almost every case. Given this evidence, it appears that hypothesis 2.1 is correct, suggesting that some parties do have difficulty fielding full slates as district magnitude increases.

6.4   District Magnitude, Competitiveness and the Liberals

The evidence shows that not all parties field a full slate of candidates and that district magnitude may have some effect on this. But are small parties with limited resources less likely to field a full slate of candidates than larger parties? Hypothesis 2.2 stated that the Liberals would be far less likely to contest all of the seats in wards with higher district magnitudes than the Conservatives and Labour. We can test this hypothesis by comparing the percentage of full slates fielded by the Liberals with that for the Conservatives and Labour. If, as district magnitude increases, the proportion of full slates fielded by the Liberals decrease more than the other parties, this would support the hypothesis.

The shire districts provide a large number of cases where the three main parties contested multiple vacancy elections. Table 6-3 shows that in those years when very large district magnitudes were employed (1973 and 1976), the percentage of full party

slates rises for wards with two or three vacancies[3]. This indicates that all three parties were more successful in contesting these wards. As district magnitude exceeds three however, the percentage of full states tends to decrease. In both years, however, the parties fielded a lesser percentage of full slates in elections where M=1 than where M>1. We suggest that this supports hypothesis 2.2 for these two years. Examining elections since 1976 brings mixed results. In most years between 1978 and 1990, the percentage of Liberal full slates is lower in elections where M=2 and M=3 than in those where M=1. The only exception to this was in 1982 when the party fielded more candidates in two vacancy elections (presumably due to additional SDP candidates). In all cases where the percentage of Liberal full slates was lower, the decrease was more disproportionate than any decrease for the other parties, except in 1986 when the Conservatives fielded a disproportionately lower percentage of candidates.

Between 1991 and 1995, district magnitude appears to affect the Conservatives more than the Liberals. Given the general unpopularity of the Conservative government at the time, potential party candidates may have been dissuaded from standing in some two or three vacancy elections. In 1997 and 1998, however, the decrease in percentage of Liberal full slates is disproportionately greater than that for the Conservatives. For 10 of the 16 elections since 1978, the findings do not contradict hypothesis 2.2, as the proportion of full slates was lower for the Liberals. For the remaining six elections, political factors might explain the higher number of full

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[3] Because of the problems associated with the small number of cases highlighted in section 6.3, only those cells that contain over 1% of cases are shown. The only authority with elections in 1997 (Malvern Hills) is also excluded.

slates. Evidence from the shire districts, therefore, generally supports hypothesis 2.2.

It appears that increases in district magnitude generally affect the Liberal's ability,

more than the other two parties, to field a full slate of candidates.

Table 6-3 - Proportion of Available Vacancies Contested by Each Main Party in the Shire District Elections

Election Year	Party	|	|	|	| District Magnitude (M) |	|	|	|	|	|	|	|
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1973	CON	40.0	47.8	60.1	54.4	52.2	47.8						
	LAB	31.1	51.9	71.4	70.6	69.1	73.9						
	LD	9.3	11.1	16.0	13.6	13.5	10.9						
1976	CON	51.1	59.3	72.3	62.7	63.2	59.6						
	LAB	26.7	49.3	67.8	64.4	58.1	64.0						
	LD	13.1	18.5	20.6	13.7	17.1	13.5						
1978	CON	94.3	87.5										
	LAB	83.5	75.0										
	LD	42.1	31.3										
1979	CON	64.9	67.9	76.8									
	LAB	36.5	50.3	62.8									
	LD	16.1	11.8	15.6									
1980	CON	89.4	90.7										
	LAB	85.8	86.0										
	LD	53.0	39.5										
1982	CON	87.6	79.1										
	LAB	87.4	90.7										
	LD	90.0	93.0										
1983	CON	71.9	62.8	65.4									
	LAB	55.8	59.5	64.5									
	LD	50.5	35.4	40.2									
1984	CON	91.2	90.7										
	LAB	88.6	72.1										
	LD	75.3	46.5										
1986	CON	91.5	82.7	33.3									
	LAB	89.8	76.9	90.5									
	LD	85.0	82.7	42.9									
1987	CON	77.6	63.4	62.2									
	LAB	64.1	60.5	64.2									
	LD	66.3	53.0	50.9									
1988	CON	95.6	91.1										
	LAB	87.8	80.0										
	LD	68.0	53.3										
1990	CON	90.9	84.8	74.3									
	LAB	91.5	87.0	88.6									
	LD	64.6	63.0	34.3									
1991	CON	79.2	64.8	61.9									
	LAB	64.1	61.1	62.6									
	LD	53.7	36.9	38.7									
1992	CON	94.6	80.6										
	LAB	89.9	77.8										
	LD	80.0	72.2										
1994	CON	89.7	69.6										
	LAB	91.7	78.3										
	LD	80.0	76.1										
1995	CON	74.3	53.4	51.3									
	LAB	72.6	65.9	70.8									
	LD	63.8	48.5	48.2									
1996	CON	91.3	81.4										
	LAB	94.2	93.0										
	LD	77.7	58.1										
1998	CON	94.1	77.4										
	LAB	92.0	90.6										
	LD	80.9	60.4										

Source: Local Elections Database

Table 6-4 below shows the same pattern of contestation for London borough elections. The most competitive years for the London boroughs were 1982 and 1986 when all of the three main parties fielded a full slate of candidates in over 90% of elections. This contrasts with 1990 when the Liberals barely managed to contest half of all multi-member wards. The most likely explanation for the increase in candidates during the 1980s is the alliance with the SDP. In every year between 1974 and 1986, the percentage of Liberal full slates decreased as district magnitude increased – with the exception of two vacancy elections in 1982 - supporting hypothesis 2.2. Between 1990 and 1998, the percentage of Liberal full slates generally decreased disproportionately as district magnitude increased from one to two but not from two to three.

Generally, as district magnitude increases the percentage of full slates fielded by the Liberals in London is disproportionately less than those for the other parties - supporting hypothesis 2.2. It appears that not only are the Liberals less able to field a full slate of candidates than the other parties, but this is exaggerated by increases in district magnitude.

Table 6-4 - Proportion of Full Slates Fielded by Parties in London Borough Elections

Election Year	Party	District Magnitude (M)				
		1	2	3	4	5
1974	CON	100.0	88.3	91.7	80.5	88.9
	LAB	100.0	99.0	99.7	100.0	100.0
	LD	100.0	67.8	61.4	58.5	44.4
1978	CON	93.8	94.1	93.8		
	LAB	100.0	100.0	100.0		
	LD	56.3	48.4	45.6		
1982	CON	93.8	93.8	92.8		
	LAB	100.0	99.7	99.3		
	LD	93.8	94.5	93.5		
1986	CON	93.8	93.2	93.5		
	LAB	100.0	100.0	99.3		
	LD	93.8	95.1	91.8		
1990	CON	97.5	94.5	95.4		
	LAB	100.0	99.4	99.3		
	LD	68.8	51.7	55.5		
1994	CON	100.0	94.2	94.7		

	LAB	100.0	100.0	100.0
	LD	100.0	76.7	80.2
1998	CON	100.0	91.8	91.1
	LAB	100.0	100.0	100.0
	LD	80.0	73.6	77.5

Source: Local Elections Database

The effect of district magnitude can also be examined for shire county elections held before 1985, where M>1. In these elections, the Liberals appear least able to field a full slate in every election year. The percentage of Liberal full slates decreases as district magnitude increases and the decrease is greater than for the other parties. In addition these effects are more severe for the Liberals as district magnitude increases. As partial council elections are held for all the metropolitan boroughs, they provide few cases where M>1. In 1980 and 1982, however, over half of all metropolitan boroughs councillors were elected using complex ballots (see Appendix Three). On both occasions, the percentage of Liberal full slates was lower for M=3 then for M=1. In 1980 this decrease was disproportionately greater than that for the other parties, although in 1982, the decrease in the percentage of full slates was disproportionately lower for the Conservatives. Despite the few cases of large magnitude in the shire counties and metropolitan boroughs, what evidence there is shows that the decrease in full slates was generally greater for the Liberals in these authorities.

Summarising for all four types of authority, it was the Liberals that were generally least able to contest all of the seats available. This inability also appears to have been exaggerated by the effects of district magnitude. Hypothesis 2.2 was accepted for both the shire districts and London boroughs while evidence from the shire counties and metropolitan boroughs also supports this conclusion. It appears, therefore, that the ability of the Liberals to field full slates as district magnitude increases is disproportionately less than that for the other two parties.

6.5   The Effect of District Magnitude upon the Elected Number of Parties

The evidence so far shows that the Liberals are not as successful as the other two main parties at fielding a full slate of candidates in elections with larger district magnitudes. Unlike PR systems where increases in district magnitude generally produce greater proportionality (Sartori, 1997), the same may not apply in a plurality system. If this were the case then we would expect the elected number of parties (N_S) not to rise significantly as district magnitude increases.   Hypothesis 2.3 stated, therefore, that the elected number of parties would not increase in proportion with district magnitude.   We can test this hypothesis by comparing N_S for elections with different district magnitudes for each year.   If hypothesis 2.3 is correct, and we observe an increase of N_S from 1 to 2 as M rises from 1 to 2, we would expect N_S to increase disproportionately from 2 to less than 3 as M rises to 3.

Shire district elections are most varied in terms of the size and changes in district magnitude.   Table 6-5 shows that these variations also reflected the average elected number of parties, particularly where district magnitude exceeded three.   In some cases the elected number of parties was relatively high.   The highest value was in 1973 when N_S was 1.89 where M=4 (n=432), indicating that no single party completely dominated these elections during that year.   The elected parties for elections where M=9 (n=7) were over 1.4 in 1973 and 1976.   This indicates that theoretically, seats can be divided between the parties in elections with higher district magnitudes. Elections with large district magnitudes do not, however, guarantee that more than one party will be elected.   In the only two elections where M=12 candidates from only a single party were returned in both 1973 and 1976.

Table 6-5 highlights also those years when whole council elections were held. The elected number of parties for two and three vacancy wards during these years appears remarkably stable. The value of N_S for elections where M=2 ranges only from 1.11 to 1.13 and ranges only from 1.14 to 1.18 where M=3. The difference between the elected number of parties for single and two vacancy elections is generally over twice that of the difference between two and three vacancy wards. The elected number of parties does not, therefore, increase in proportion to district magnitude, indicating that elections where M=3 may be relatively more disproportional than those wards where M=2. On this evidence we would, therefore, accept hypothesis 2.3 for the shire districts.

Table 6-5 - Average Elected Number of Parties by District Magnitude in Shire District Elections.

Election Year	District Magnitude (M)											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1973	1.00	1.11	1.14	1.89	1.13	1.18	1.13	1.24	1.40	1.05	1.00	1.00
1976	1.00	1.11	1.15	1.17	1.22	1.21	1.14	1.07	1.43	1.00	1.43	1.00
1978	1.00	1.07	1.00									
1979	1.00	1.11	1.17	1.22	1.36	1.17	1.16	1.00	1.00			
1980	1.00	1.12	1.15									
1982	1.00	1.17										
1983	1.00	1.12	1.18	0.00	1.41							
1984	1.00	1.14	1.40									
1986	1.00	1.10	1.15									
1987	1.00	1.13	1.17	1.00	1.52							
1988	1.00	1.02	1.00									
1990	1.00	1.11	1.09									
1991	1.00	1.12	1.18	1.20	1.40							
1992	1.00	1.06	1.00									
1994	1.00	1.07	1.00									
1995	1.00	1.12	1.17	1.00	1.40							
1996	1.00	1.07										
1997	1.00	1.75	1.20									
1998	1.00	1.06	1.00									

Source: Local Elections Database

Table 6-6 shows that for London boroughs the average elected number of parties for two vacancy elections ranged from only 1.04 to 1.09. For three vacancy elections this value ranged from 1.03 to 1.09. Comparing the difference in N_S between two and three vacancy elections for each year reveals that the elected number of parties

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increases for less than half of the cases. In those cases where N_S does rise, the increase is not proportionate to that of single and two vacancy elections. Furthermore, the value of N_S does not increase for four vacancy (n=82) or five vacancy (n=9) elections in 1974. The smaller number of cases for these elections however, must be borne in mind. Evidence from the London boroughs supports hypothesis 2.3 that the elected number of parties increases disproportionately with district magnitude.

Table 6-6 - Average Elected Number of Parties by District Magnitude in London Borough Elections.

Election Year	District Magnitude (M)				
	1	2	3	4	5
1974	1.00	1.04	1.03	1.03	1.00
1978	1.00	1.04	1.05		
1982	1.00	1.04	1.04		
1986	1.00	1.09	1.06		
1990	1.00	1.05	1.06		
1994	1.00	1.06	1.05		
1998	1.00	1.04	1.09		

Source: Local Elections Database

Evidence from both the shire districts and London boroughs supports hypothesis 2.3. The elected number of parties in these authorities does not increase in proportion to district magnitude. Indeed in some years the elected number of parties actually decreases when district magnitude increases. It appears therefore that Taagepera and Shugart (1989) were correct in suggesting that district magnitude might exaggerate the effect of plurality elections.

6.6 The Effect of District Magnitude upon the Distribution of Seats

Increases in district magnitude appear to result in disproportionately small increases in the elected number of parties. Given that the plurality system tends to produce two-party systems (see Chapter Five), we might expect that any exaggeration of this

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effect would particularly affect third parties such as the Liberals? If this were the case then we would expect the share of seats won by the Liberals to decrease as district magnitude increases (Hypothesis 2.4).

We tested hypothesis 2.4 by examining the relationship between district magnitude and the distribution of seats between the three main parties. Table 6-7 shows the percentage of seats won by the three main parties in shire district, whole council elections. The percentage of seats won by the Liberals increases as district magnitude approaches three in every year except 1976. The Liberal's seats share in 1987, for example, was 14.1 in elections where M=1, 16.2 where M=2 and 17 where M=3. If hypothesis 2.4 were correct then we would expect a decrease in seat share. Even in wards where M>3, the proportion of seats won by the party exceeds those won in single vacancy wards for most cases.

Table 6-7 - Seat share of main parties by district magnitude for shire district whole council elections.

Election Year	Party	District Magnitude (M)											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1973	CON	27.9	30.5	35.2	33.4	36.1	31.2	34.6	36.7	46.0	36.0	0.0	58.3
	LAB	7.5	26.2	41.8	40.5	40.4	45.7	44.7	47.7	38.1	24.0	100.0	0.0
	LD	3.1	7.4	7.7	9.7	7.6	7.7	1.1	7.0	11.1	2.0	0.0	0.0
1976	CON	42.0	49.7	54.9	49.9	54.5	53.2	57.8	62.5	65.1	50.0	18.2	100.0
	LAB	5.5	17.5	27.7	28.8	23.4	23.6	25.5	20.3	20.6	0.0	81.8	0.0
	LD	2.5	5.5	4.1	5.7	6.2	7.5	0.6	1.6	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
1979	CON	48.4	48.0	48.4	51.7	58.8	68.2	57.1	0.0	100.0			
	LAB	10.7	24.3	32.3	27.5	14.4	12.9	4.8	0.0	0.0			
	LD	3.2	6.4	6.4	8.1	11.9	12.1	0.0	12.5	0.0			
1983	CON	49.2	48.0	50.5	0.0	30.0							
	LAB	16.0	24.1	27.6	0.0	35.0							
	LD	8.0	9.6	10.1	0.0	5.0							
1987	CON	49.2	46.8	47.8	50.0	20.0							
	LAB	15.7	21.8	24.4	0.0	40.0							
	LD	14.1	16.2	17.0	0.0	15.0							
1991	CON	42.3	36.8	35.6	16.7	15.0							
	LAB	19.5	28.3	31.4	0.0	45.0							
	LD	17.1	20.1	21.7	58.3	5.0							
1995	CON	25.4	18.3	15.9	0.0	15.0							
	LAB	31.2	43.9	49.0	0.0	60.0							
	LD	23.9	25.2	26.8	62.5	5.0							

Source: Local Elections Database

Table 6-8 shows that for the London boroughs the Liberals also appear to be more successful in winning seats in elections where M=3 as opposed to those where M=2. This is even the case in 1982 and 1986 when the proportion of elections in which the party fielded a full slate of candidates was lower for elections where M=3 compared to those where M=2 (see Table 6-4).

Table 6-8 - Seat Share of Main Parties by District Magnitude in London Boroughs

Election Year	Party	District Magnitude (M)				
		1	2	3	4	5
1974	CON	75.0	37.6	37.1	39.6	55.6
	LAB	25.0	56.8	59.9	57.6	44.4
	LD	0.0	2.9	1.4	0.0	0.0
1978	CON	62.5	52.3	49.1		
	LAB	37.5	44.9	47.0		
	LD	0.0	1.9	1.4		
1982	CON	62.5	51.8	50.7		
	LAB	25.0	41.8	40.3		
	LD	6.3	4.9	7.3		
1986	CON	56.3	35.8	35.4		
	LAB	25.0	51.1	49.5		
	LD	12.5	12.0	13.5		
1990	CON	56.3	38.8	37.4		
	LAB	31.3	48.6	48.2		
	LD	12.5	10.8	12.4		
1994	CON	40.0	28.8	26.0		
	LAB	40.0	56.1	53.8		
	LD	20.0	13.6	18.5		
1998	CON	33.3	28.0	28.0		
	LAB	46.7	56.2	54.1		
	LD	20.0	14.5	16.3		

Source: Local Elections Database

For those authorities holding multi-member elections, it appears that the third party is generally more successful in winning seats in elections where M=2 or M=3 than they are in wards where M=1. We did not, therefore, find evidence to support hypothesis 2.4. It appears that the Liberals seat share will not decrease as district magnitude increases. This contradicts the earlier findings that suggested the party might fare worse in these larger wards. The chapter has not yet, however, examined how these findings compare with the actual number of votes that the parties attracted.

6.7 The Effects of District Magnitude upon Proportionality

The share of seats won by the Liberals was not shown to decrease as district magnitude increased. Does this mean that district magnitude does not exaggerate the effects of the plurality system? Not necessarily! The increase in the share of seats might be due to an increase in votes received by the party. Indeed, it may be that the party actually received a far greater share of votes than seats in elections with large district magnitude (i.e. M>2). Assuming this to be true, hypothesis 2.5 stated that elections with large district magnitude would be more disproportionate.

Electoral proportionality can be measured by using the Loosemore-Hanby index (Loosemore and Hanby, 1971)[4]. Examining the correlation between this index and the proportion of councillors elected in contests with large district magnitude in each authority may shed some light on the relationship between district magnitude and proportionality. If there were no linear relationship then we would expect little or no correlation between the index and the proportion of councillors elected in elections with large district magnitude.

The Pearson correlation scores for those shire districts with whole council elections reveals that for every election year a positive relationship exists between the Loosemore-Hanby index and the proportion of elections with more than two vacancies. While this relationship is relatively weak in most cases it is statistically significant in all election years and relatively high in 1973 with a correlation

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[4] The Loosemore-Hanby index is obtained by summing the absolute values of seat-vote share differences for each party and dividing the total by two. The index produces a value of zero for authorities where the proportion of seats allocated to each party is exactly the same as the proportion of votes for that party. As the amount of disproportionality within an authority increases so too does the value of the Loosemore-Hanby index.

coefficient of 0.469. As the proportion of seats contested in large district magnitude electoral areas increases, the Loosemore-Hanby index increases, and hence electoral proportionality decreases[5] - supporting hypothesis 2.5.

We can try to confirm these findings by comparing the average Loosemore-Hanby index in authorities that elected half or more of their seats in one or two member wards with authorities that predominantly used larger district magnitudes[6]. It can be seen from Table 6-9 that the mean Loosemore-Hanby scores for authorities using large district magnitudes are consistently higher than for those where half or more of the seats were contested in single or two vacancy wards. The standard deviations of the scores are fairly consistent which indicates that there is little evidence that these averages are affected by extreme values. This evidence supports the previous findings. Elections with large district magnitude will be more disproportionate in the shire districts.

Table 6-9 - Average Loosemore-Hanby indexes for Shire District Elections.

Election Year	Authorities where 50% or more of wards are M=1 or M=2			Authorities where more than 50% of wards are M≥3		
	N	Mean LH	StdDev	N	Mean LH	StdDev
1973	78	10.5	5.3	104	16.7	9.2
1976	79	17.2	8.0	103	20.2	9.2
1979	95	14.8	7.5	87	19.9	9.1
1983	120	19.0	8.2	62	21.4	9.2
1987	127	18.7	8.1	55	20.6	8.3
1991	125	16.1	6.4	57	17.4	8.2
1995	119	15.8	7.0	48	19.3	9.2

Source: Local Elections Database

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[5] The small number of cases for London borough councils (32) precludes us from conducting a similar analysis of these authorities.

[6] Although the correlation scores provide an accurate measure of the strength of the relationship, dichotomising the authorities in terms of small or large district magnitude allows us to gauge the net difference in proportionality between the two types of election.

A similar phenomenon can be observed for the London boroughs (see Table 6-10). With the exception of 1982, the average Loosemore-Hanby index is higher in every year for those authorities where more than half of the seats are contested in elections with large district magnitudes. One possible explanation for the deviation from this pattern in 1982, might lie with the alliance between the Liberals and the Social Democrats. The Alliance appeared to have resulted in an increase in Liberal candidates for this year, with the number of Liberal full slates exceeding that of the Conservatives (see Table 6-4). This may have resulted in a lower index for 1982. Despite the slight decrease in 1982, however, the evidence provided by the London boroughs supports hypothesis 2.5.

Table 6-10 - Average Loosemore-Hanby Indexes for London Borough Elections.

Election Year	Authorities where 50% or More of wards are M=1 or M=2			Authorities where more than 50% of wards are M≥3		
	N	Mean LH	StdDev	N	Mean LH	StdDev
1974	5	17.1	5.7	27	22.7	6.4
1978	8	15.0	6.8	24	22.4	9.7
1982	8	26.0	5.6	24	25.2	7.9
1986	8	20.4	6.8	24	22.0	8.4
1990	8	17.9	7.8	24	22.9	9.7
1994	8	20.0	7.7	24	21.8	10.7
1998	8	20.6	8.4	24	21.2	10.0

Source: Local Elections Database

Evidence to support hypothesis 2.5 was provided by both the shire districts and London boroughs. We conclude, therefore, that elections with large district magnitude will be more disproportionate than other elections. It appears that in terms of proportionality, Taagepera and Schugart and others were correct in speculating that district magnitude will exaggerate the effect in terms of seat/vote ratios of plurality elections.

6.8 District Magnitude, Proportionality and the Third Party

An increase in an authority's proportion of multimember elections adversely affects the proportionality of its party system. It is not possible, however, to infer directly from this evidence that this disproportionality adversely affects the third party as was stated in hypothesis 2.6. We can test this hypothesis by examining the difference between Liberal vote and seat share against the proportion of an authority's seats elected in multimember wards. If the hypothesis were correct then we would expect this difference to be greater in authorities where the majority of elections have large district magnitude. In other words, the seat-vote share difference for the Liberals would be higher in authorities with large district magnitudes.

This relationship can be examined in terms of those authorities with more than 50% of seats elected in wards where $M=1$ and $M=2$ against those with 50% or more seats elected in wards where $M>2$. Table 6-11 shows the difference in vote and seat share for the two categories of shire district authorities. Negative values indicate that a party's share of seats is less than its vote share. The mean difference in vote share for the third party is consistently higher for those authorities where the majority of seats are contested in wards with three or more vacancies. By contrast, the figures for the two main parties vary in different ways for the various election years. In view of this evidence, we accept hypothesis 2.6 and conclude that, for the shire districts, disproportionality will be greater for the Liberals in shire district elections with large district magnitude.

Table 6-11 - Difference between Seat and Vote Share Percentage for Shire District Whole Council Elections

	Authorities where 50% or more of wards are M=1 or M=2				Authorities where more than 50% of wards are M≥3			
Election Year	N	CON	LAB	LD	N	CON	LAB	LD

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1973	52	3.5	-1.8	-2.6	68	6.5	1.6	-4.6
1976	65	11.8	-5.1	-6.2	91	14.0	-4.2	-7.8
1979	81	6.9	-2.7	-2.8	75	12.1	-4.5	-5.3
1983	116	12.1	-2.9	-9.4	60	12.9	-0.9	-10.1
1987	124	11.5	-2.2	-9.2	54	11.3	-0.2	-9.6
1991	122	4.5	-2.4	-1.0	55	3.3	2.0	-2.2
1995	115	-4.2	2.5	2.8	47	-4.3	8.2	-0.4

Source: Local Elections Database

A different picture emerges for the London boroughs. Table 6-12 shows little evidence of such a clear pattern for these authorities. The mean differences in Liberal seat and vote shares do not appear to be better or worse according to district magnitude. In most election years the party performs better in authorities where the majority of elections are large (i.e. between 1978 and 1994). In 1974 and 1998 however, the reverse is true. For the London boroughs, therefore, we would not be able to accept hypothesis 2.6. Disproportionality is not greater for the Liberals in those London boroughs with a majority of large district magnitude elections.

Table 6-12 - Difference between Seat and Vote Share for London Borough Elections.

Election Year	Authorities where 50% or More of wards are M=1 or M=2				Authorities where more than 50% of wards are M≥3			
	N	CON	LAB	LD	N	CON	LAB	LD
1974	5	2.0	9.3	-10.2	27	0.0	14.1	-10.8
1978	8	6.8	1.9	-6.0	24	2.5	6.6	-5.3
1982	8	16.1	6.9	-21.8	24	8.5	9.9	-15.8
1986	8	0.0	13.9	-12.4	24	1.5	10.4	-9.5
1990	8	3.8	9.9	-4.3	24	0.8	7.7	-1.2
1994	8	-3.3	11.8	-5.4	24	-3.3	12.0	-4.6
1998	8	-6.7	13.3	-3.5	24	-1.5	12.8	-5.2

Source: Local Elections Database

While the hypothesis was accepted for the shire districts, it was rejected for the London boroughs. Do we therefore conclude that hypothesis 2.6 is correct or incorrect? The evidence from the shire districts consists of far more authorities than that for the London boroughs. It is therefore more likely that, purely by chance, the geographical distribution of support for the Liberals in the London boroughs corresponds to authorities with large district magnitudes. Far greater significance

should be placed, therefore, upon the findings from the shire districts, which supported the hypothesis for every year.

6.9 Conclusion

District magnitude varies considerably both between and within local government authorities in England. Although most of the larger wards (M>3) have been abolished, there still remain a significant number of two and three vacancy elections within the shire districts and London boroughs. An examination of the relationship between different district magnitudes and party competition at the ward level reveals that the proportion of elections in which all three parties fielded a full slate of candidates was consistently higher in single member elections than those with a larger district magnitude. For the London boroughs this relationship was also the case for two and three member elections until 1990. Until then the main parties fielded fewer full slates of candidates for three member elections than for those with two vacancies. Focusing upon the proportion of full slates fielded by the individual parties reveals that the Liberals are the least successful party in these terms, with the exception of the London boroughs in 1982. In terms of party competition, district magnitude does matter, particularly in terms of the competitiveness of the third party. It appears, therefore, that the Liberals are less able than Labour and the Conservatives, to contest fully elections with higher district magnitude.

Analysing the effect of district magnitude upon the elected number of parties revealed that this generally increases with district magnitude. Voters, therefore, do not always cast all of their votes for the same party in elections where M>1. The amount of the increase was not proportional, however. The difference in the elected number of

parties between single and two vacancy elections was generally higher than the difference between two and three vacancy elections. On some occasions in the London boroughs the average elected number of parties was actually lower in three vacancy than in two vacancy elections. This indicates that the electorate in London votes more homogeneously in elections with larger district magnitude. This implies that even when district magnitude varies, Duverger's view that plurality elections help to foster a two-party system remains valid. It implies, also, that increased district magnitude may exaggerate the effect of plurality elections. Contrary to expectation, however, the Liberals generally increased their share of the seats as district magnitude increased, prompting further analysis of the difference in vote and seat shares for the third party.

Correlating the Loosemore-Hanby index with the proportion of seats contested in elections with large district magnitude provides some evidence of a positive relationship between authorities with large wards and disproportionality. In order to investigate this phenomenon further, those authorities where the larger proportion of seats were contested in wards where M<3 were compared with those where M>2. The results reveal that with the exception of one year, the index of proportionality was lower for those authorities with a majority of elections of small magnitude compared to authorities that use larger district magnitudes. These findings support the view of Taagepera and Shugart, that large district magnitude in plurality elections lead to higher levels of disproportionality.

Finally, we focused upon the effect of this disproportionality upon the third party by examining the difference in vote and seats shares for the main parties when

controlling for different district magnitudes. This produced mixed results. Although there is no evidence of a relationship between district magnitude and third party disproportionality in the London boroughs, there is evidence of a relationship in the shire districts. In every year the penalty incurred by the Liberals in terms of the difference between seat and vote shares was higher in shire district authorities that used larger district magnitudes. This finding provides further evidence that larger district magnitude adversely affects third party success. Although plurality elections are generally known to discriminate against smaller parties we have shown that the level of discrimination can be much higher in those systems where large district magnitudes are used.

Although structural determinants of party system development, such as district magnitude, are important, we should not forget that it is the electorate that chooses the parties, and the characteristics of voters to some extent determine their vote. The following Chapter conducts, therefore, a preliminary examination of socioeconomic characteristics that are theoretically linked to voting.

Chapter 7 Socioeconomic Determinants of Vote Choice in English Local Government

7.1 Introduction

The typology of party systems in Chapter 5 identified two-party systems as being the most common in English local authorities. Although Chapter 6 provided some evidence that the electoral system discriminated against the third party, it does not offer a full explanation for the propensity towards two-party dominance. This chapter extends the analysis by conducting a preliminary examination of socioeconomic explanations of voting. The purpose of the chapter is to identify those socioeconomic characteristics that may be included in a theoretical model of voting. We begin by briefly discussing the theoretical relationships between voting and different socioeconomic characteristics, highlighting the suitability of local elections for examining such relationships. Subsequent sections expand upon this discussion for distinct groups of socioeconomic characteristics and in so doing formulate hypotheses which can test the theoretical relationships. Each hypothesis is examined in terms of its validity and evaluated prior to its inclusion, or not, in a theoretical model of voting that will be the subject of Chapter 8.

7.2 Socioeconomic Characteristics and Voting

The relationship between socioeconomic characteristics and voting in England has been examined by many authors. Chapter 2 discussed Duverger's view of the importance of socioeconomic factors upon the national party system at the beginning of the 20th century, which resulted in the formation of the Labour party to represent the newly enfranchised working class (Duverger, 1964: 204). Lipset and Rokkan

noted that the industrial revolution forced the enfranchised citizenry to choose sides in terms of their economic interests (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967: 19). For national elections the choice appeared to be clear. Persons employed in professional or business occupations or those with high levels of income or education are more likely to vote for a party that stands for protection of business interests and little welfare education than other persons (Alford, 1967:68). Survey data appear to show that the effect of socioeconomic characteristics upon voting in English local government elections reflects that of national elections. Miller (1988), for example, found not only that four fifths of respondents voted for the same party in national elections as local elections, but also that the determinants of vote choice are also similar for both. Surveys of local voting are rare, however, and capture behavioural patterns for relatively few elections.

Local elections are ideally suited to study the relationship between class and voting. Not only are a large number of elections held, but ward-level socioeconomic data is also available for 1981 and 1991 in the form of the British censuses. Aggregate data analysis can, therefore, be conducted at a much higher resolution than is the case for parliamentary elections. Unlike small-scale surveys, such as those conducted by Miller, the census includes detailed socioeconomic data covering almost the entire country. The combination of a large number of cases and high resolution can produce results with higher levels of significance than survey data. We can be extremely confident, therefore, in any evidence produced from the analysis in 1981 and 1991. Unfortunately, no data is available for the years a census was not conducted. Chapter 4.6 discussed this problem and concluded that extrapolating the missing values was not a reliable method. The following analysis assumes, therefore, that the

socioeconomic characteristics of individual wards changed little around the census years. Analysis of elections between 1977 and 1986 use the 1981 census, while elections between 1987 and 1996 use the 1991 census. While there is no doubt that the socioeconomic characteristics of wards did change, we show that the possible effect of these changes upon the analysis is small.

7.3   Social Class and Partisan Voting in English Local Government

Duverger (1964) believed that social conflict within a society would naturally result in a division into two opposing groups. In twentieth century England this dualism was primarily manifest by inequalities within the labour market. On one side were those employed in low paid manual occupations, with a low level of education and reliant upon the state for social protection in the form of employee rights and public services such as housing or transport. Those on the other side were mainly employed in professional or business occupations. They were generally better educated and more highly paid and as such more able to provide for their own welfare needs. The historical view of this division, posits that the former group identify themselves as working-class and as such more likely to vote for the Labour party. The latter group identify themselves as middle class, and as such more likely to vote for the Conservatives (Rose & McAllister, 1986: 11).

The deterministic view of partisan choice is clear about the relationship for class and voting for Labour and the Conservatives. But what relationship, if any, exists between class and Liberal voting? Miller (1988) found that although there were no strong relationships between any of his panel survey predictors and Liberal voting, there was evidence that the party had more support amongst the middle class (Miller,

1998: 160). Previous research, therefore, scant though it is, suggests, that social class is related to local voting for not only the Conservatives and Labour, but for the Liberals also. The relationship between the main parties and voting can be summarised by the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3.1: Voting for the main parties in local elections is related to social class

Previous research suggests that the direction of the relationship between social class and partisan voting is also pre-determined. The directions of these relationships can be specified accordingly:

Hypothesis 3.2: Conservative voting in local elections is positively related to the proportion of middle class residents.

Hypothesis 3.3: Labour voting in local elections is positively related to the proportion of working class residents

Hypothesis 3.4: Liberal voting in local elections is positively related to the proportion of middle class residents

If a relationship between class and voting did exist between 1976 and 1996 then to what extent did the relationship remain static over the period? Chapter 2 suggested that the relationship might have declined over recent years. The changing nature of the workplace has certainly resulted in a reduction of traditional manual occupations, while government policies have helped to create more home-owners, car-owners and share-holders. Many authors have argued that this has resulted in an electorate that is less aligned with any one class or party (Crewe, 1984; Crewe, 1986; Rose & McAllister, 1986). If the same were true of local elections then we would expect to find evidence to support hypothesis 3.5:

The validity of these hypotheses are determined in the following two sections. The first section examines the relationship between the class composition of wards won by the parties while the second looks more specifically at the relationship between voting and each of the social class groups.

7.3.1 Social Class and Party Success in Local Government Wards

One simple method of examining the relationship between class and partisan voting is to compare the class composition of wards won and not won by each party. If no relationship existed between social class and party success then we would expect to find no significant difference in class composition between the two types of ward.

Table 7-1 shows the mean percentage of residents within each social class group variables for all second-tier local government wards contested by the main parties[1]. Wards are divided according to whether or not they were won by the party before 1987, or after 1986. A ward is classed as won if the party came top of the ballot at any time during the period. The average percentage of residents in each social class is shown for wards won or not won by each party. The total net difference in social class between wards won or not is also shown for each party.

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[1] As the census data small area statistics are collected for second tier local government wards, the socioeconomic analysis focuses only upon these types of authority.

If hypothesis 3.1 were not correct then we would expect to see no significant difference in the average proportion of residents for each social class between wards won or not won by the parties[2]. This is not the case. There is a significant difference (t-sig. < 0.01) in the proportion of residents from each social class between wards won or not won by the parties. The only exception is that for the proportion of residents employed in unskilled (PCLASS5) and professional (PCLASS1) occupations in Liberal wards.

The hypothesis that Conservative voting is positively related to the proportion of middle class residents (3.2) is supported by Table 7-1. Both before and after 1987, there were, in Conservative won wards, higher proportions of residents from professional (PCLASS1), managerial and technical (PCLASS2) and skilled non-manual (PCLASS3N) occupations. In Labour won wards, there were a higher proportion of skilled-manual (PCLASS3N), partly skilled (PCLASS4) and unskilled (PCLASS5) occupations. This supports the hypothesis that Labour voting is positively related to the proportion of working class residents (3.3). The evidence supporting the hypothesis that voting for the Liberals is positively related to the proportion of middle class residents is not as strong. After 1986 the relationship appears to be positive. Before 1987, however, there was a lesser proportion of residents in PCLASS2 than we expected in wards won by the party compared to those not won and a higher proportion of residents in PCLASS3M. The higher proportion of manual workers in Liberal won wards may be because of the alliance with the SDP

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[2] The significance level reports the likelihood of the results occurring by chance. A significance of 0.01 indicates that the result would normally occur by chance, only once in a hundred.

during the 1980s. Having splintered from the Labour party, the "class-left" SDP should have appealed more to skilled manual residents (PCLASS3M) than managerial or technical (PCLASS2) (Webb, 2001: 49). As the proportion of residents in the other class groups are as we expected – especially after 1986 – we would suggest that the evidence does support hypothesis 3.4. A more detailed analysis might shed more light on this, however.

Hypothesis 3.5 stated that class voting declined between 1976 and 1996. Table 7-1 shows for each party, the net difference in class voting between wards won or not won. Class voting appears to be strongest for Labour (35.3 before 1987, 25.7 after 1986), next strongest for the Conservatives (21.2 and 18.5) and weakest for the Liberals (5.3 and 4.8). Previous research suggested that the relationship between class and voting is stronger for Labour supporters (Heath et al, 1985). Comparing the net difference in class voting between the parties appears to support this argument. For all three parties the net difference in class voting was lower in the period after 1986, supporting the hypothesis that class voting did decline between 1976 and 1996.

Table 7-1 – Social Class and Party Success in Wards Won by Main Parties.

Conservative

Mean of Variable	Wards Won After 1976 and Before 1987				Wards Won After 1986 and Before 1997			
	Non-Con Won N=2297	Con Won N=3106	Difference Actual	t-sig.	Non-Con Won N=3070	Con Won N=3924	Difference Actual	t-sig.
PCLASS1	3.7	6.4	+2.7	0.00	4.1	6.5	+2.4	0.00
PCLASS2	19.0	26.0	+7.0	0.00	20.9	28.7	+7.8	0.00
PCLASS3N	7.2	9.2	+2.0	0.00	7.4	8.2	+0.8	0.00
PCLASS3M	27.2	22.6	-4.7	0.00	21.8	18.2	-3.6	0.00
PCLASS4	13.4	10.1	-3.3	0.00	11.0	8.3	-2.7	0.00
PCLASS5	4.0	2.5	-1.5	0.00	3.6	2.3	-1.2	0.00
		Net Difference	21.2			Net Difference	18.5	

Labour

Mean of Variable	Wards Won After 1976 and Before 1987				Wards Won After 1986 and Before 1997			
	Non-Lab Won N=4004	Lab Won N=1399	Difference Actual	t-sig.	Non-Lab Won N=4359	Lab Won N=2635	Difference Actual	t-sig.
PCLASS1	6.1	2.8	-3.3	0.00	6.5	3.6	-2.9	0.00
PCLASS2	26.5	12.9	-13.6	0.00	29.6	18.2	-11.3	0.00
PCLASS3N	8.6	7.6	-1.0	0.00	7.7	8.1	+0.3	0.00
PCLASS3M	21.9	32.2	+10.4	0.00	17.4	23.7	+6.3	0.00
PCLASS4	10.4	14.6	+4.2	0.00	8.2	11.5	+3.3	0.00
PCLASS5	2.4	5.2	+2.8	0.00	2.3	3.8	+1.6	0.00
		Net Difference	35.3			Net Difference	25.7	

Liberal

Mean of Variable	Wards Won After 1976 and Before 1987				Wards Won After 1986 and Before 1997			
	Non-Lib Won N=4563	Lib Won N=840	Difference Actual	t-sig.	Non-Lib Won N=4714	Lib Won N=2280	Difference Actual	t-sig.
PCLASS1	5.2	5.5	0.3	0.06	5.2	5.9	0.7	0.00
PCLASS2	23.3	21.6	-1.7	0.00	24.9	26.1	1.3	0.00
PCLASS3N	8.1	9.6	1.4	0.00	7.6	8.5	1.0	0.00
PCLASS3M	24.4	25.6	1.2	0.00	20.0	19.4	-0.6	0.00
PCLASS4	11.6	11.0	-0.7	0.00	9.8	8.8	-1.0	0.00
PCLASS5	3.1	3.1	0.0	0.64	2.9	2.7	-0.2	0.00
		Net Difference	5.3			Net Difference	4.8	

7.3.2 Social Class and Partisan Voting in Local Government Elections

Although evidence from party successes in the shire districts supports hypotheses 3.1
to 3.5, the analysis is problematic for a number of reasons. The period from 1976 to
1996 is divided into two 10-year periods. Any fluctuation in party success during
each 10-year period would not, therefore, be highlighted. This makes it difficult to
ascertain if the relationship between class and voting was consistent throughout the
period. In addition, by comparing wards won (or not) by the parties, the analysis is

also including the mechanical effects of the electoral system (see Chapter 6). This section addresses these problems by examining the relationship between the proportion of residents in each ward and the percentage of votes received by the parties for *individual* election years.

The relationship between voting and class can be assessed by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient between vote share and each of the class categories. The statistical significance of correlation coefficients will be greater as the number of cases increases.[3] The following sections focus mainly, therefore, upon shire districts with partial council elections, as these have the greatest number of elections in most years. It will be shown, however, that many of the conclusions drawn from this particular type of authority apply also to other types.

The Pearson correlation scores for the five different social classes and the share of votes received by the main parties in shire district partial council elections held between 1978 and 1996 are shown in Table 7-2. The fewer number of cases in 1979 and 1979 is a function of wards not matched to the 1981 census and elections not contested by the parties. The large number of cases in which the parties contested elections produces significant ($\alpha > 0.01$) correlation scores for every variable in almost every year during the period. Exceptions to this are mainly those for the Liberal vote in 1978 and 1979 when the number of cases are just 251 and 581. In order for the hypothesis to be rejected we would expect to find few significant correlation scores. As this is not the case, we accept the hypothesis for shire district

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[3] Increases in N reduce the likelihood of any relationship occurring by chance.

partial council elections. Social class does appear to be related to voting for the three

main parties in these elections.

Table 7-2 - Correlation Scores of Party Vote Share and Social Class in Shire District Partial Council Elections.

		Conservative														
Variable	Election Year N	1978 514	1979 1319	1980 1190	1982 1193	1983 1222	1984 1227	1986 1241	1987 1240	1988 1218	1990 1208	1991 1262	1992 1214	1994 1182	1995 1071	1996 1025
PCLASS1	Score	0.47	0.38	0.49	0.45	0.50	0.42	0.43	0.45	0.48	0.48	0.43	0.37	0.42	0.42	0.40
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS2	Score	0.62	0.57	0.65	0.68	0.65	0.61	0.62	0.61	0.64	0.63	0.59	0.55	0.57	0.57	0.57
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS3N	Score	0.23	0.22	0.17	0.21	0.18	0.17	0.15	0.09	0.14	0.06	0.07	0.11	-0.01	-0.04	-0.02
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.73	0.24	0.46
PCLASS3M	Score	-0.52	-0.43	-0.53	-0.58	-0.52	-0.49	-0.53	-0.37	-0.39	-0.39	-0.34	-0.29	-0.37	-0.41	-0.39
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS4	Score	-0.50	-0.42	-0.50	-0.52	-0.50	-0.49	-0.48	-0.48	-0.56	-0.53	-0.45	-0.48	-0.46	-0.47	-0.48
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS5	Score	-0.50	-0.43	-0.49	-0.55	-0.53	-0.49	-0.49	-0.46	-0.50	-0.52	-0.47	-0.45	-0.44	-0.43	-0.42
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

		Labour														
Variable	Election Year N	1978 470	1979 1218	1980 1173	1982 1201	1983 1187	1984 1220	1986 1231	1987 1208	1988 1168	1990 1225	1991 1232	1992 1181	1994 1199	1995 1114	1996 1054
PCLASS1	Score	-0.52	-0.53	-0.56	-0.54	-0.55	-0.54	-0.54	-0.53	-0.54	-0.56	-0.54	-0.52	-0.53	-0.50	-0.50
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS2	Score	-0.72	-0.67	-0.72	-0.73	-0.71	-0.71	-0.73	-0.71	-0.71	-0.69	-0.70	-0.69	-0.67	-0.66	-0.63
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS3N	Score	-0.30	-0.34	-0.33	-0.39	-0.35	-0.35	-0.37	-0.25	-0.28	-0.22	-0.23	-0.28	-0.26	-0.16	-0.18
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS3M	Score	0.62	0.57	0.62	0.61	0.57	0.60	0.60	0.43	0.43	0.47	0.44	0.43	0.47	0.48	0.47
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS4	Score	0.61	0.57	0.63	0.63	0.59	0.62	0.63	0.59	0.62	0.62	0.58	0.61	0.59	0.55	0.58
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS5	Score	0.56	0.56	0.54	0.60	0.59	0.55	0.60	0.52	0.52	0.53	0.53	0.52	0.49	0.47	0.47
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

		Liberal														
Variable	Election Year N	1978 251	1979 581	1980 720	1982 1231	1983 1088	1984 1001	1986 1136	1987 1333	1988 1018	1990 1004	1991 1144	1992 1209	1994 1226	1995 1111	1996 1015
PCLASS1	Score	0.07	0.02	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.16	0.21	0.12	0.10	0.14	0.11	0.15	0.20	0.18	0.14
	Sig.	0.29	0.62	0.09	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS2	Score	0.17	0.14	0.20	0.07	0.18	0.19	0.27	0.17	0.20	0.21	0.18	0.21	0.31	0.28	0.19
	Sig.	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS3N	Score	0.09	-0.01	0.01	0.09	0.12	0.12	0.21	0.11	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.06	0.12	0.11	0.06
	Sig.	0.15	0.87	0.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.05
PCLASS3M	Score	-0.12	-0.10	-0.15	-0.01	-0.13	-0.18	-0.21	-0.09	-0.09	-0.11	-0.12	-0.16	-0.21	-0.21	-0.14
	Sig.	0.07	0.02	0.00	0.86	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS4	Score	-0.20	-0.18	-0.19	-0.10	-0.19	-0.20	-0.28	-0.15	-0.19	-0.20	-0.20	-0.23	-0.28	-0.26	-0.22
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS5	Score	-0.23	-0.22	-0.22	-0.11	-0.18	-0.20	-0.28	-0.17	-0.18	-0.20	-0.14	-0.16	-0.23	-0.19	-0.15
	Sig.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

The relationships between class and partisan voting (see Table 7-2) can be seen more

clearly if the correlation scores over time are plotted on a line graph. Figure 7-1 plots

the correlation between vote share for each party and the social class variables. Not only are the correlation coefficients significant, the directions of the relationships are also consistent for much of the period. The hypothesis concerning class and voting for the individual parties specified that a positive relationship would exist between working class social groups and Labour voting while the inverse would be true for the Conservatives and Liberals. For each of the parties, such a class division appears to exist. The working class groups (PCLASS3M, PCLASS4 and PCLASS5) are all positively related to the Labour vote share. The middle class groups (PCLASS1, PCLASS2 and PCLASS3N) are positively related to the Conservatives' and Liberals' vote share. The only exception to the pattern is the relationship between Conservative voting and the proportion of skilled non-manual workers (PCLASS3N) from 1994 to 1998. The direction of this relationship changed from positive to negative after 1994. If the hypothesis were incorrect then we would not expect to find such a pattern of coefficients. We might instead find that the directions of the relationships fluctuated during the period or that they were consistently different to what we expected. Evidence from the shire district council elections supports hypothesis 3.3, that Labour voting is positively related to the proportion of working class and hypothesis 3.2 and 3.4, that voting for the Conservatives and Liberals negatively related to the proportion of residents in this social group.

Hypothesis 3.5 stated that the relationship between social class and partisan voting declined between 1976 and 1996. If the hypothesis were correct then we would expect to find a decrease in the strength of the relationships. The correlation scores would, therefore, tend towards zero over time. There is only little evidence that this is actually the case. The values of the coefficients tend to rise and fall over the period

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and for the Conservatives and Labour, although there appears to be a slight downward trend. The fluctuations are particularly dramatic for the Liberals, however. The peaks in the strength of the relationships between class and Liberal voting also appear higher towards the end of the period than earlier. We could not reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the relationship between class and local voting did not decline over the period.

The graphs shown in Figure 7-1 plot the correlation scores between 1977 and 1986 against the 1981 census and that received between 1987 and 1996 against the 1991 census. The socioeconomic composition of wards would no doubt have changed during the years between the census. Using the data as of 1981 and 1991 instead of extrapolating corrected values between the census years appears, however, to make little difference to the analysis. The line graphs in Figure 7-1 are similar to those plotted with the extrapolated data (see Chapter 4.6). Unlike the extrapolations, however, using static values produces more realistic results for those years before 1981 and after 1991. The correlation coefficients calculated using extrapolated values tended to zero after 1991 and especially before 1981.

Figure 7-1 – Party Vote Share and Social Class in Shire District Partial Council Elections 1978-1996.
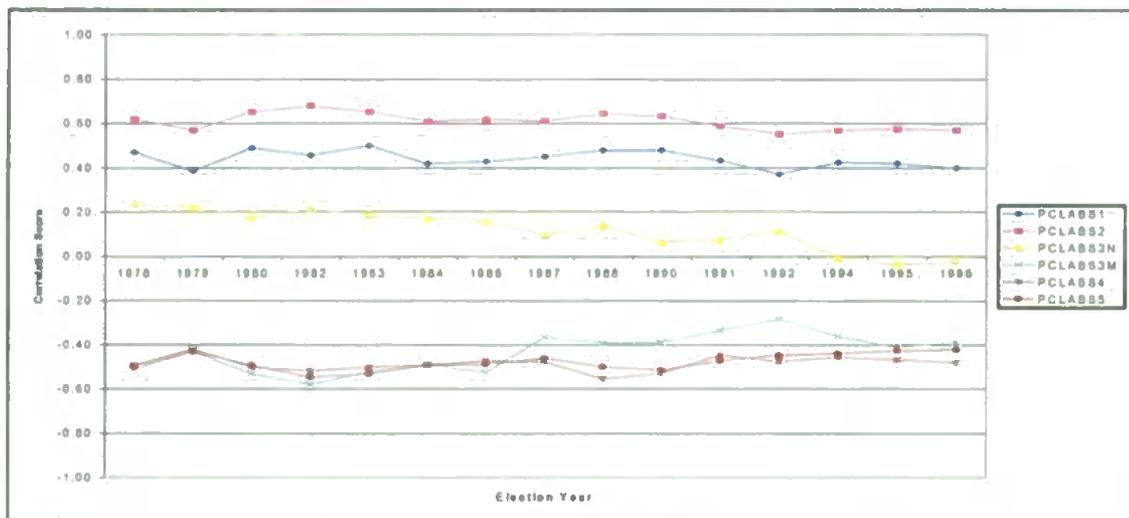
Conservative

Labour
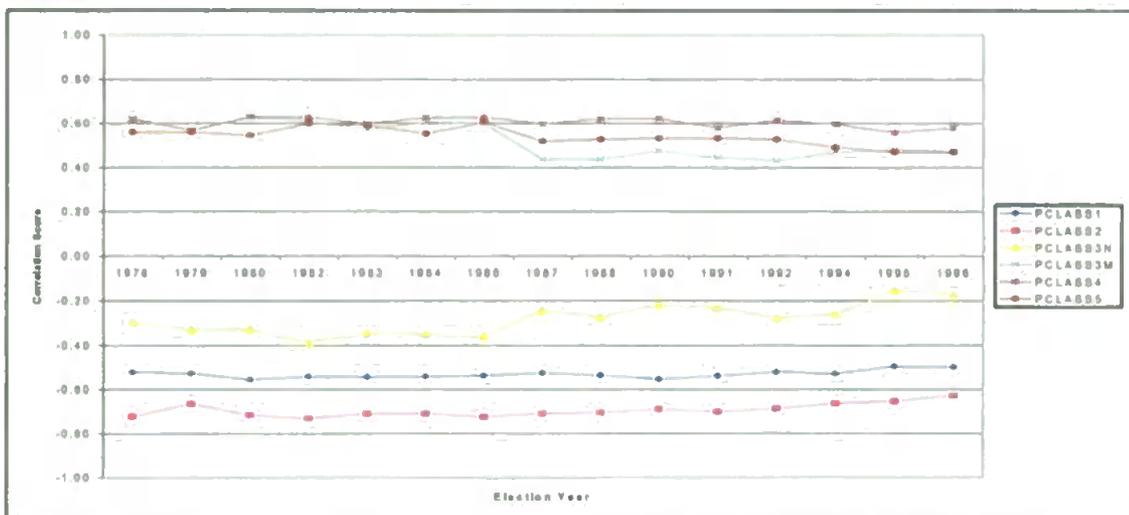
Liberal
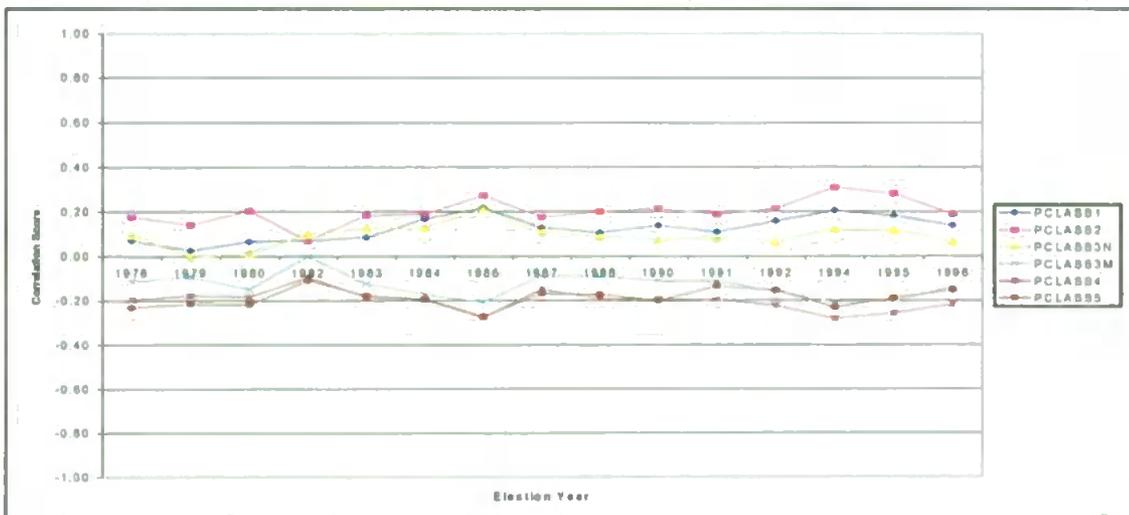
A similar analysis of social class and voting was conducted for other types of local authority. Shire district whole council elections produced similar results to partial council elections. For the Conservatives and Labour, the significance of the correlation coefficients were less than 0.01, indicating that it is unlikely that the results could occur by chance, while most of the coefficients for the Liberals are significant at 0.1. Although the significance of the Liberal coefficients are not as strong as those for Conservative and Labour they are strong enough not to discount the hypothesis that class relationships exist for the Liberals. A class division appears for all three main parties with the strongest relationship being that between the proportion of technical and managerial residents (PCLASS2) and voting. For the Conservatives, the correlation scores for this variable ranged from 0.56 in 1983 to 0.47 in 1979. The relationship was stronger for Labour, ranging from -0.52 to -0.61, while for the Liberals this relationship is much weaker. The Liberal correlation coefficient in 1979 in not significant (sig=0.22) and ranges only from 0.06 in 1983 to 0.18 in 1995. The weakest relationship for all parties is that for social class 3N. While the relationship reflects the pattern for shire districts with partial council elections, the significance of these scores for the Liberals was greater than 0.1 from 1979 to 1991. Presented with this evidence, we would have to reject the null hypothesis for shire district whole council elections. Class is related to voting for the main three parties.

Turning our attention to the Metropolitan borough councils we find that not only does class voting appear to exist, the relationships are stronger than for the shire districts. This indicates the electorate in these wards is more homogenous than in the shires. The significance of correlation scores for all of the variables are less than 0.01 in

every year for Labour and Conservatives and almost all years for the Liberals. The correlation coefficient for Labour voting and social class 2 ranges from -0.83 to -0.64, for the Conservatives it ranged from 0.79 to 0.63, while for the Liberals, after 1979 it ranged from 0.11 to 0.35.

For the London boroughs, all of the correlation scores for Labour and Conservative are significantly different (sig.>0.01) for every election year during the period. The strongest relationship with Labour and Conservative voting is that for PCLASS2 which ranged from 0.85 in 1978 to 0.65 in 1994, for Labour and from 0.80 in 1978 to 0.61 in 1994 for the Conservatives. Far fewer significant correlation scores are produced for Liberals in the London boroughs. In fact, the level of significance for over half of the correlation scores was above 0.1 while PCLASS3N produced no significant correlation scores whatsoever. There was also little consistency in the sign of the coefficients. Social class 2 was positively correlated (r=0.2) in 1978 but negatively correlated (r=-0.13) in 1990. This indicates that in London, this social base of voter support for the party was far weaker than for the other parties over the period.

Our examination of class and partisan voting reveals that class relationships do exist in local government elections. For the shire districts and metropolitan boroughs, class is consistently related to voting for all three main parties, with the strongest relationships appearing in the metropolitan areas. The directions of the relationships confirm the existence of the traditional class voting model for Labour and the Conservatives. The consistent relationships between class and Liberal voting support Miller's findings that the party may have a slightly better voter base among the

middle class. Evidence supporting the hypothesis that class voting has weakened during the period is not as strong, however. An examination of social composition of wards won by the parties before and after 1986 provided only little evidence that class voting has declined. Plotting the correlation scores for the shire districts reveals that class voting for the parties appeared to fluctuate throughout the period, while for the Liberals it increased as the party became more successful in the 1990s.

7.4 Housing Tenure and Partisan Voting in English Local Government

Many authors have identified a relationship between housing tenure and partisan voting (see Butler & Stokes, 1974; Rose & MacAllister, 1985; Webb & Fisher, 1999). Heath et al (1991) argued that after controlling for social class, housing produces the strongest influence of all socioeconomic characteristics upon the voting decision. The following section, therefore, focuses upon the bivariate relationship between the different types of housing tenure and partisan support.

Most authors agree that the primary housing cleavage is that between the public and private sector. Public sector housing was provided specifically for the working class and previous research has shown that it is the working class that mainly occupy this type of housing (Butler and Stoker, 1974: 109). As the previous section suggested that working class voters were more likely to support Labour in local elections, we would expect, therefore, that a positive relationship existed between public sector housing and local Labour voting.

Hypothesis 3.6: Public sector housing is positively related to Labour voting.

If such a relationship exists then we would expect the antithesis of 3.6 to reflect the relationship for the Conservatives. Given that the direction of the relationships between Liberal voting and class are similar to that for the Conservatives we would expect also that private sector housing[4] would be positively related to Liberal voting. Survey research on local voting provides some evidence that this appears to be the case (Miller, 1988: 160), giving rise to the following:

Hypothesis 3.7: Private sector housing is positively related to Liberal voting.

Figure 7-2 plots the significant (p<0.01) correlation scores between the proportion of residents from each type of housing tenure and voting for Labour and the Liberals[5]. The graph shows a clear division between Labour voting and public sector (PCOUNCIL) and voluntary sector (PHASSOC) housing compared to the other types of housing tenure. The strongest relationship is that between council tenants and Labour voting with correlation scores around 0.6 for most of the period. Figure 7-2 also shows consistent relationships between housing tenure and Liberal voting, although much smaller than those for Labour. The strongest relationships with Liberal voting are those between council tenants (PCOUNCIL) and owner-occupiers (POWNEROCC) which almost exactly mirror themselves throughout the period. For two of the private sector groups POWNEROCC and POTHTENUR (residents in other tenures such as housing included with employment), the relationship with Liberal

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[4] We classify private sector residents as owner-occupiers, privately renting tenants and residents whose housing is included with employment. Council and housing association dwellings are classed as public sector housing for both 1981 and 1991 censuses. So doing reduces the net effect of increases in housing association and decreases in council housing

voting is consistently positive. The remaining category of private sector housing is the proportion of residents in privately rented accommodation (PPRIVATE). Although the correlation coefficient is not significant (sig>0.1) in some years, those where it is produce coefficients consistent with hypothesis 6.7.

Figure 7-2 - Housing Tenure and Voting in Shire District Partial Council Elections 1978-1996.

Labour
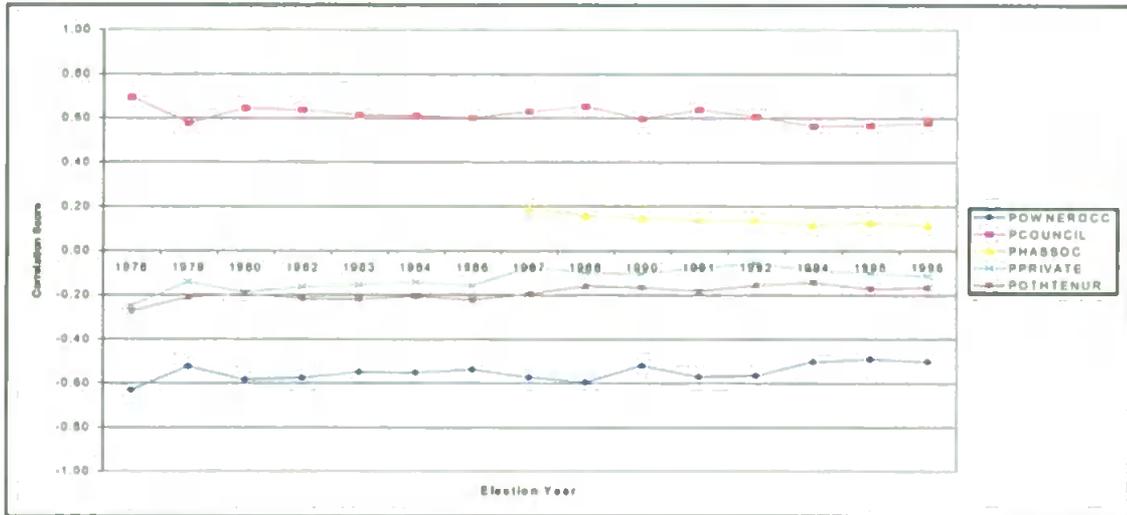
Liberal

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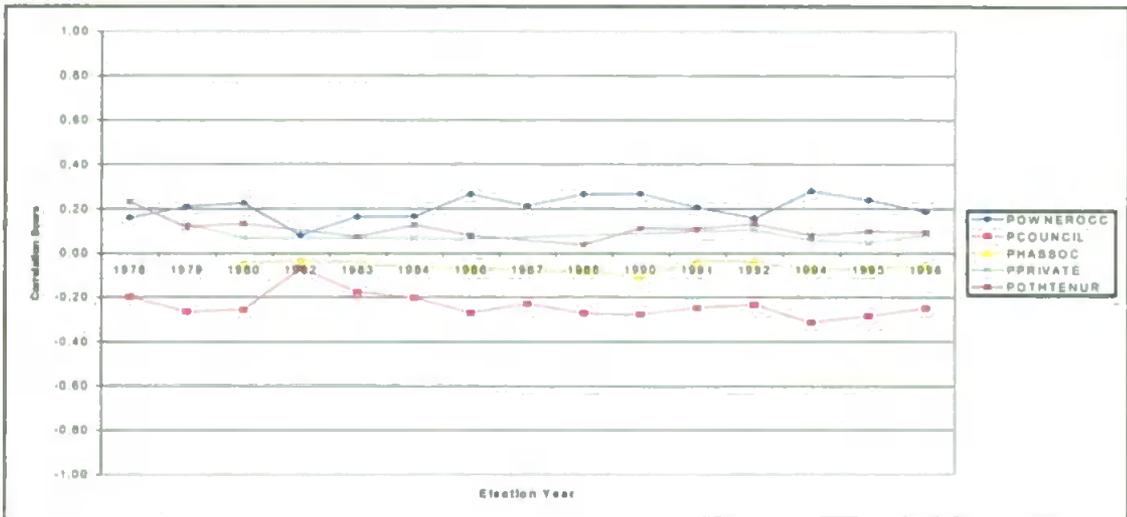
[5] The correlation scores for the Conservatives generally mirror those for Labour. Following sections compare either Conservative or Labour correlation scores with those for the Liberals.

The examination of housing and voting supports hypotheses 3.6. There appears to be a clear division between public and private sector housing and Labour voting. As the proportion of council tenants in wards increases so too does the share of the Labour vote. For the Liberals the opposite appears to be the case. The share of the Liberal's vote generally increased as the proportion residents in private sector housing increased, supporting hypothesis 3.7.

7.5 Employment and Partisan Voting in English Local Government

Employment status has been shown to be related to voter turnout (Miller, 1988: 95; Rallings & Thrasher, 1997: 55) but what of its effect upon voting? Alford (1967) suggested that those employed in professional or business occupations would be more likely to vote for a party, such as the Conservatives, that stands for the protection of business interests. Research for national elections has shown that even manual workers that are self-employed are more likely to vote for the Conservatives (Sarlvik & Crewe, 1983). We would expect, therefore, that local voting for the Conservatives would be positively related to the proportion of self-employed residents. As the relationships for Liberal voting, examined so far, appear to reflect that of the Conservatives we would expect the same to be true for the Liberals:

Hypothesis 3.8: Self-employment is positively related to local Conservative and Liberal voting.

Unemployment may also have a substantial effect upon voting. In the 1979 parliamentary elections unemployment was a particularly contentious issue. The Conservative slogan at the time, 'Labour isn't working', was set alongside a picture of a dole queue. Evidence from survey data suggest, however, that despite the Conservative campaign, the electorate still viewed the Labour party as being more

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likely to reduce unemployment than either the Conservatives or Labour (Johnston et al, 1988: 234). If this were also the case in local elections then we would expect:

Hypothesis 3.9: Unemployment is negatively related to local Conservative and Liberal voting.

Figure 7-3 plots the significant (p<0.01) correlation scores for all categories of employment status and Conservative and Liberal voting. The strongest relationship between employment and Conservative voting is that for the proportion of self-employed with employees (PSELFWITH). This relationship was quite strong (over 0.6) for most of the period. The proportion of self-employed residents without employees (PSELFWOUT) is also positively correlated with Conservative voting, although not as strongly as for those with employees. It appears that self-employed with employees might favour the more 'employer-friendly' policies of the Conservatives than those of Labour. Although not as strong as the Conservatives, the relationship between self-employed residents and Liberal voting is also consistently positive during the period. Hypothesis 3.8 appears therefore to be correct for both parties.

Figure 7-3 also supports the argument that the unemployed are less likely to vote for the Conservatives or Liberals. The correlation score for the proportion of unemployed (PWORKSEEK) is consistently and negatively related to voting for both parties, thus supporting hypothesis 3.9.

Figure 7-3 – Employment Status and Voting in Shire District Partial Council Elections 1978-1996.

Conservative
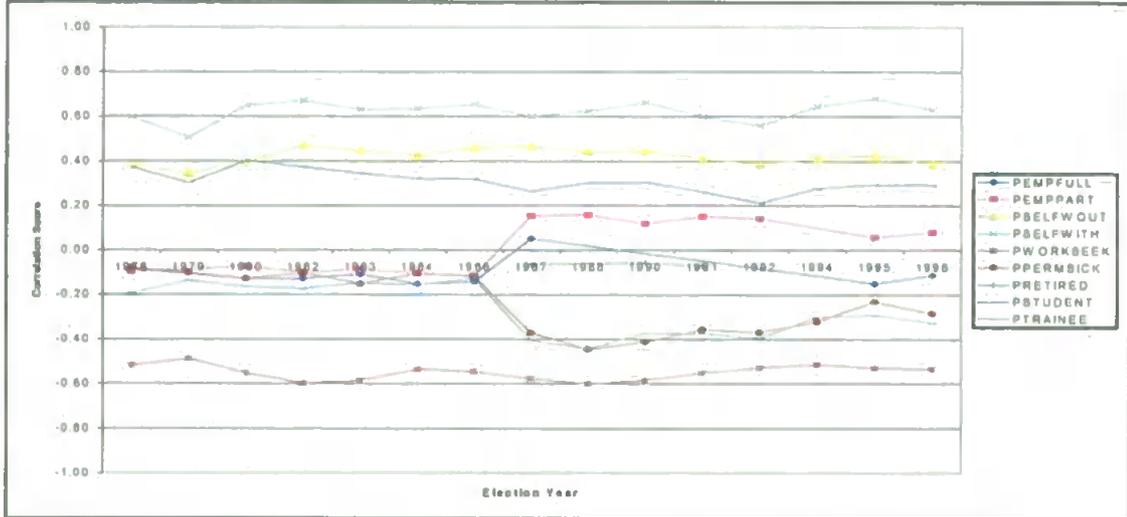
Liberal
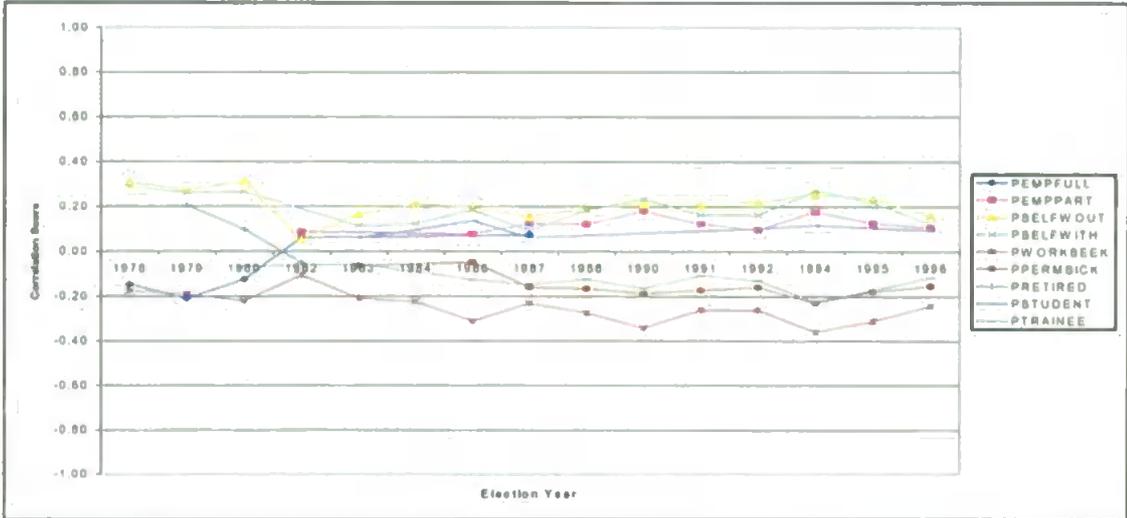
7.6 A Consideration of Other Demographic Factors and Partisan Voting in English Local Government.

The previous sections have examined the theoretical relationship between those socioeconomic characteristics considered as important determinants of vote choice. This final section briefly examines a range of additional socioeconomic characteristics that may also be related to voting. The section assumes that the similarities between

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the Conservatives and Liberals will also be manifest in the analysis of these characteristics and focuses therefore upon only the Liberals.

The first group of characteristics examined relates to the occupation of employed residents. The relationship between occupation and class, however, can be fairly well predefined. Those residents categorised as working in manual or unskilled occupations would fall also into the previously examined working class category. We would assume, therefore, such occupations to be negatively correlated with Liberal voting. Figure 7-4 shows that this assumption appears to be correct. The relationship between residents employed in the transport (PTRANS) and manufacturing (PMANUF) sectors and Liberal voting is consistently negative, while the relationship is positive for those employed in banking and other service industries (POTHSERV). One manual occupation that is clearly at odds with the assumption is the agricultural sector (PAGRICULT). Despite being a mainly manual occupation, the proportion of residents employed in this sector is positively related to Liberal voting.

Figure 7-4 – Occupation of Employed Residents and Liberal Voting in Shire District Partial Council Elections 1978-1996.
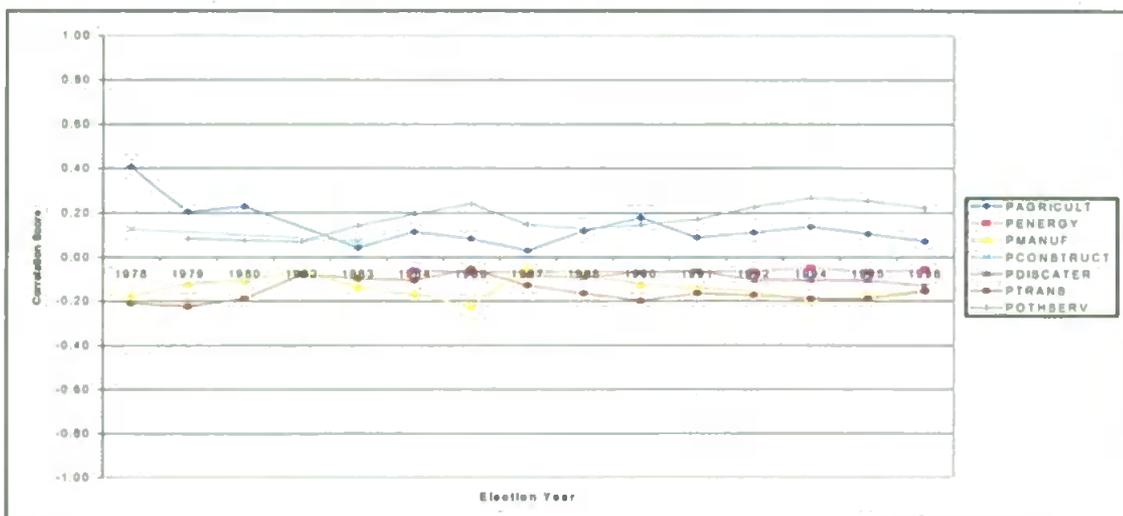
The relationship between several other ward-level characteristics and Liberal voting might also be worthy of an examination. Several authors have noted a small but positive relationship between higher education and support for the Liberals (Butler & Stokes, 1974; Heath et al, 1985). Voting behaviour has also been claimed by some authors to be related to the voter's sex. Despite the fact that there are important socioeconomic differences between men and women (such as age and religion), women are generally more likely to vote Conservative than men. According to Pugh (1994), the "comparison of men and women of similar age and similar religious affiliation still suggest that the latter lean somewhat to the Conservatives" (Pugh, 1994: 21).

The effect of marriage upon voting might also be worthy of consideration. Married residents might be more likely to support a party that campaigns on local issues such as road safety and housing than single residents. According to Jones, the Liberals emphasis on community politics, in practice, meant building a more participatory society and democracy through local community structures, such as neighbourhood councils and various co-operative ventures, designed to give people in local communities a greater influence over decisions affecting their lives (Jones, 1996: 69). If then were the case then we might expect that voting for the Liberals would be positively related to the proportion of married residents. Among the geographic characteristics are population density and the Northerly position of the ward. Do the Liberals perform better in densely populated areas where they can campaign more effectively? Is the party subjected to a similar North/South divide as the Conservatives?

The correlation scores for these characteristics and Liberal voting are shown in Figure 7-5. There is a great deal of fluctuation in the scores during the period. The party appears to perform consistently better in wards with a higher proportion of qualified or male residents and worse in more northern wards or those with higher population densities. There was however, little evidence of a relationship between sex and Liberal voting. The correlation coefficient was significant only in five of the 14 years that elections were held. On these five occasions the correlation score was also lower than the other variables. One explanation for this might be the lack of variance in the proportion of males in wards (mean=48.6, s.d.=1.45). Such a small deviation is unlikely to explain large differences in Liberal voting.

Figure 7-5 - Liberal Vote Share and Other Demographic Variables in Shire District Partial Council Elections 1978-1996.
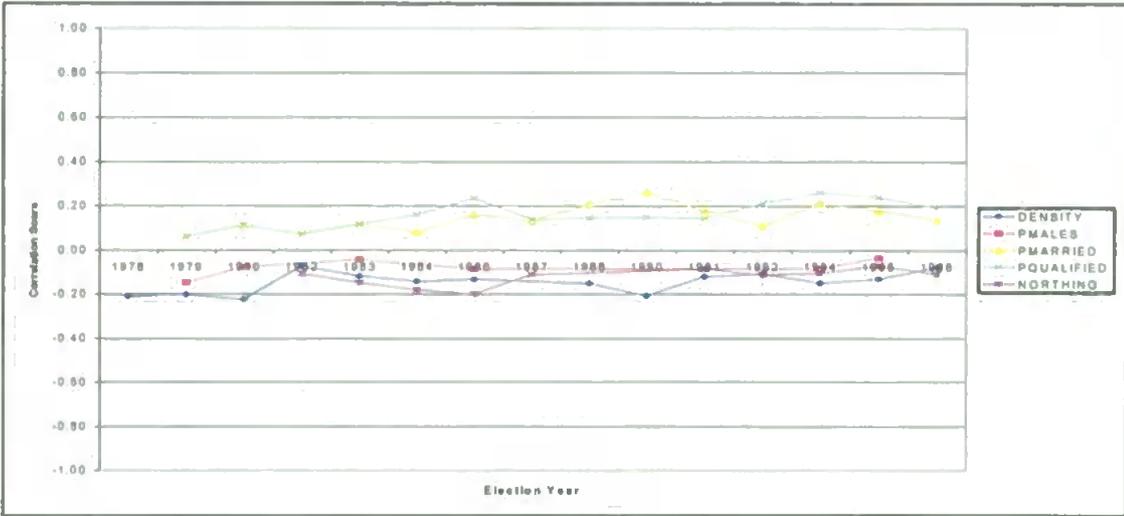
7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has conducted a preliminary examination of the relationship between certain ward socioeconomic characteristics and support for the main parties. In Duverger's (1964) theory, these characteristics - and particularly class - might produce the sources of conflict that are the main driving force behind the party

system. For Lipset and Rokkan (1967), and others, these characteristics might provide bases around which societal cleavages might form and be represented.

We found that several of theoretical relationships do appear to exist for local government elections. The strongest socioeconomic relationship appears to be that between class and voting. For the Conservatives and Labour, this relationship was significantly different to zero. The proportion of residents in working class groups was positively related to Labour voting and negatively related to Conservative voting. The opposite relationship exists for middle class groups. A class relationship also exists for Liberal voting. The direction of these relationships matches that of the Conservatives although they are much weaker. A positive relationship existed between middle class groups and a negative relationship existed for working class groups.

Several other ward socioeconomic characteristics were found also to be related to voting for all three parties. Variables such as housing tenure; employment status; industry of occupation; age; marriage; higher education; geographical location and population density have also been shown to be related to voting for the three main parties in national elections. The bivariate relationships for the Liberals were, however, consistently weaker than those of the other two parties.

We can not tell from this analysis however, the extent to which the different variables are inter-related or the extent to which a combination of these factors can explain voting for the parties. The following Chapter examines the combined effect of these characteristics using multiple regression analysis.

Chapter 8 Combined Effect of Ward Characteristics upon Local Party Systems

8.1 Introduction

This chapter draws upon findings from previous chapters in order to identify ward level characteristics that may have an independent effect upon the party systems in English local government. In so doing, it develops a single model of local voting which attempts to maximise the explanatory power of such characteristics for the main parties. Applying such a model to elections held between 1976 and 1996 not only allows us to test previous assumptions, but helps to identify similarities and differences in voting patterns between different types of authority.

The chapter begins by explaining why such a model is necessary for understanding English local party systems. It describes the methods used and summarises the relationships between local voting and ward level characteristics identified as relevant by the previous chapters. As shire district partial council elections cover almost the entire country, subsequent sections examine the effects of these characteristics upon voting in these authorities, to determine whether the previously identified relationships exist independently of one another. Those characteristics found to exhibit an independent relationship are then included into the model in order of their theoretical and statistical importance. The model is then applied to the other types of local authority allowing us to identify similarities and differences in the relationships both over time and also between the different types of authority.

8.2 Modelling the Independent Effects of Ward Level Characteristics upon Party Systems

Previous research has suggested that certain relationships appear to exist between ward level characteristics and local party systems (Widdecombe, 1986; Miller, 1998; Rallings & Thrasher, 1994). The bivariate analysis conducted in Chapters six and seven provided further evidence that such relationships exist at the local election level. Chapter six demonstrated that the effect of district magnitude may well have discriminated against the Liberals in some authorities while Chapter seven highlighted a division between certain socioeconomic characteristics and partisan voting. Bivariate analysis, however, measures the relationship between each pair of variables separately. Our analysis of district magnitude did not, therefore, take into account any effect of the socioeconomic characteristics of wards and visa versa. If wards with large district magnitude have similar socioeconomic characteristics we may have been measuring the effect of the socioeconomic characteristics and not district magnitude.

This situation is particularly likely to occur when conducting a bivariate analysis of the relationship between socioeconomic characteristics and voting. For example, the proportion of residents in receipt of higher education is likely to be positively related to the proportion of residents employed in professional and technical occupations. If a positive correlation coefficient between the Conservative vote and professional occupations were produced, we would likely find such a relationship for residents with a higher education.

Measuring the individual effect of each socioeconomic characteristic is important. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) suggested that social cleavages were responsible for the formation and development of party systems. What was important for these authors

was the identification of relevant cleavages and how they reinforced or cut across each other. While chapter seven identified that such social cleavages appear to be related to local voting, the limitations of bivariate analysis does not allow us to ascertain which were independently reinforcing voting patterns.

In order to address these problems, this chapter employs the widely used method of single-equation linear regression analysis. The technique attempts to explain movements in a dependent variable - in this case vote share - as a function of movements in a set of explanatory or independent variables (Studenmund, 1997: 6). The independent variables included in the model are those ward-level socioeconomic and electoral system characteristics identified and discussed in previous chapters. Not only does this method allow us to gauge the independent effect of each variable[1], it also allows us to estimate the total contribution of all included variables upon the variance of vote share. This, in turn, provides us with an indication of the extent to which voting in local elections is pre-determined by the characteristics of the ward.

8.3 A Class Based Model of Vote Choice

Bivariate analysis demonstrated that social class was related to the Conservative and Labour vote in English local elections. The proportion of residents in skilled manual; technical and managerial; and business and professional occupations were consistently positively related to the Conservative vote and negatively related to the Labour vote. Although weaker, a similar class/vote relationship to that of the Conservatives appeared to exist for the Liberals (see section 7.3). This section uses

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[1] When we use the term "independent effect" we mean the effect of the explanatory variable when holding all other variables are held constant.

regression analysis to estimate the independent contribution of each class group and the extent to which class characteristics explains voting in local elections.

In section 7.3, hypotheses 3.2 and 3.4 proposed that the Conservative and Liberal vote would be positively related to the proportion of middle class residents, while hypothesis 3.3 stated the reverse would be the case for Labour. The results of the bivariate analysis confirmed that this appeared to be the case. If our theoretical justification of hypotheses 3.2-3.4 were correct then we would expect each of the class groups to be independently related to partisan voting in a similar manner. The following hypotheses can be used to test these propositions:

Hypothesis 4.1: Conservative voting in local elections is independently positively related to the proportion of residents in middle class groups.

Hypothesis 4.2: Labour voting in local elections is independently positively related to the proportion of residents in working class groups.

Hypothesis 4.3: Liberal voting in local elections is independently positively related to the proportion of residents in middle class groups.

If these hypotheses are proven then we would expect to find positive regression coefficients between Conservative and Liberal vote share and the proportion of residents employed in professional; technical and managerial; and skilled non-manual occupations. We would expect also, positive coefficients between Labour vote share and skilled; semi-skilled; and unskilled manual occupations.

Hypothesis 3.5 stated that class voting in local elections declined between 1978 and 1996. Although the bivariate analysis provides some evidence that the relationship between partisan voting and certain class groups may have declined, a reduction in the

combined effect of class voting was not tested. Such a decline can be tested using the hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4.4: The combined effect of class voting in local elections declined between 1976 and 1996.

If hypothesis 4.4 were correct then we would expect to find that the amount of variance in the vote share of the parties, explained solely by class, decreased during the period.

8.3.1 Class and Voting in Shire District Partial Council Elections

Table 8-1 shows the results of a regression of the three main parties' vote share on the proportion of residents from each social class for shire district partial council elections held between 1978 and 1996. Only significant (α=0.1) coefficients for the class variables are shown. Setting the level of alpha to 0.1 increases the chance of us accepting a coefficient as being different to zero, when it is actually zero, to 1 coefficient in 10 times. The similarity between the values of the coefficients from year to year, however, increases the likelihood that they are accurate. The table shows also the total amount of variability in vote share explained by the model (R^2) and a constant term.

The values of R^2 range between 0.34 and 0.52 for the Conservatives, 0.50 and 0.63 for Labour and 0.02 to 0.12 for the Liberals. Class voting appears, therefore, to be strongest for Labour. In every election, class alone explains over half of the variance in the party's vote share. Class voting does not appear as strong for the Conservatives during the period, suggesting that the Labour party drew more (or less) support from

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specific class groups than the Conservatives. The Conservative vote appears to be drawn slightly more evenly across the different classes. Voting for the Liberals appears largely to transcend the different class groups. At most, class alone can explain only 12% of the variance in the Liberal's vote share.

Table 8-1 - Regression of Vote on Class in Shire District Partial Council Elections

Year	1978	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988	1990	1991	1992	1994	1995	1996
Conservative															
N	511	1318	1190	1193	1222	1221	1240	1564	1545	1534	1595	1544	1498	1391	1314
R^2	0.42	0.35	0.46	0.52	0.48	0.43	0.44	0.41	0.46	0.47	0.37	0.34	0.38	0.40	0.39
Constant	53.29	45.31	51.88	56.36	51.49	55.15	54.03	38.27	41.06	34.53	32.29	42.74	31.79	37.52	39.81
PCLASS1				-0.33		-0.22	-0.30					-0.26		-0.19	-0.30
PCLASS2	0.58	0.53	0.61	0.56	0.53	0.53	0.46	0.66	0.68	0.59	0.62	0.62	0.55	0.49	0.56
PCLASS3N			-0.30	-0.21		-0.35	-0.43			-0.29			-0.48	-0.51	-0.56
PCLASS3M	-0.27	-0.17	-0.36	-0.47	-0.30	-0.32	-0.42			-0.13			-0.14	-0.30	-0.25
PCLASS4		-0.25	-0.42	-0.38	-0.38	-0.57	-0.46	-0.53	-0.74	-0.55	-0.40	-0.57	-0.46	-0.61	-0.66
PCLASS5	-1.14	-0.69	-1.08	-1.38	-1.35	-1.32	-1.28	-1.13	-1.39	-1.44	-1.35	-1.49	-1.18	-1.25	-1.42
Labour															
N	470	1218	1171	1200	1186	1219	1231	1519	1458	1531	1544	1480	1516	1441	1348
R^2	0.59	0.54	0.61	0.63	0.60	0.60	0.62	0.57	0.56	0.57	0.56	0.54	0.53	0.51	0.50
Constant	16.92	20.55	19.17	19.60	23.64	21.54	21.53	41.27	50.10	42.29	41.85	38.90	42.73	41.17	36.69
PCLASS1									-0.25	-0.33	-0.28	-0.28	-0.38		-0.28
PCLASS2	-0.59	-0.35	-0.57	-0.56	-0.59	-0.61	-0.65	-0.88	-0.99	-0.72	-0.81	-0.77	-0.76	-0.77	-0.67
PCLASS3N				-0.44	-0.46	-0.38	-0.37	-0.61	-0.64	-0.47	-0.51	-0.64	-0.74	-0.33	-0.40
PCLASS3M	0.55	0.49	0.71	0.44	0.45	0.56	0.51	0.12		0.39	0.22	0.12	0.46	0.54	0.54
PCLASS4	0.73	0.66	1.03	0.75	0.70	0.94	0.92	0.85	0.99	1.13	0.94	1.04	1.06	1.15	1.22
PCLASS5	1.41	1.34	1.25	1.31	1.56	1.20	1.68	1.29	1.44	1.68	1.44	1.39	1.29	1.39	1.54
Liberal															
N	251	581	720	1231	1088	1001	1136	1456	1119	1096	1247	1326	1332	1211	1107
R^2	0.07	0.10	0.09	0.02	0.05	0.06	0.11	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.12	0.10	0.06
Constant	31.87	53.53	45.19	27.29	33.26	37.68	35.05	28.69	29.38	28.13	35.40	34.06	39.08	33.29	40.19
PCLASS1		-0.68	-0.69		-0.33						-0.30				
PCLASS2											0.21	0.15		0.27	0.24
PCLASS3N		-0.54	-0.54	0.21				0.39	0.30						0.36
PCLASS3M			-0.19	0.14									-0.16	-0.19	
PCLASS4	-0.47	-0.62	-0.45			-0.32	-0.31	-0.38	-0.56	-0.45	-0.63	-0.67	-0.69	-0.63	-0.76
PCLASS5	-1.30	-1.45	-1.27	-0.31	-0.56	-0.62	-0.73	-0.62	-0.84	-0.91			-0.58		

All coefficients are significant at P<0.1

The independent relationships between each of the class groups and voting can be more clearly seen in Figure 8-1. For Labour, we see a similar class cleavage to that found in chapter 7.3. The coefficients for the working class groups (PCLASS3M, PCLASS4 and PCLASS5) are consistently positive and, where significant, the middle-class groups are negative. The directions of each class coefficient are as we would expect if hypothesis 4.2 were correct. The weaker class relationship for the Liberals is reflected also by the coefficients. Only PCLASS4 (proportion of semi-

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skilled manual workers) and PCLASS5 (proportion of unskilled workers) are significant for the Liberals during most of the period. Of the other Liberal coefficients that are significant, some display unusual changes in direction from one year to the next (e.g. PCLASS3M in 1982). Such unexpected results may be due to accepting a 1 in 10 chance of error. As such we would be unwise to draw conclusions from these coefficients. We can only be confident, therefore, that PCLASS4 and PCLASS5 are consistently related negatively to the Liberal's vote share. As such the model provides only little evidence to support the hypothesis that Liberal voting is independently positively related to the proportion of residents in each middle class group. Instead it suggests, that the negative relationship between Liberal voting and the working class groups might be more important.

Perhaps the most surprising feature of Figure 8-1 is the pattern of coefficients for the Conservatives. If hypothesis 4.1 was correct, we would expect to see the opposite class division to that displayed by Labour. This is not the case. Holding all other variables constant, only the proportion of residents in managerial or technical occupations (PCLASS2) is positively related to the Conservative vote. While the direction of the working class coefficients are the same as the analysis in Chapter 7.3, those for the proportion of residents employed in professional or skilled non-manual occupations are the opposite. Before speculating about the reasons for such a finding it would be wise to check the regression model in order to ascertain whether the assumptions for using the technique have been met (see chapter 4). The following section checks, therefore, the validity of these assumptions for our model.

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Figure 8-1 - Class Coefficients in Shire District Partial Council Elections

Conservative

Labour

Liberal

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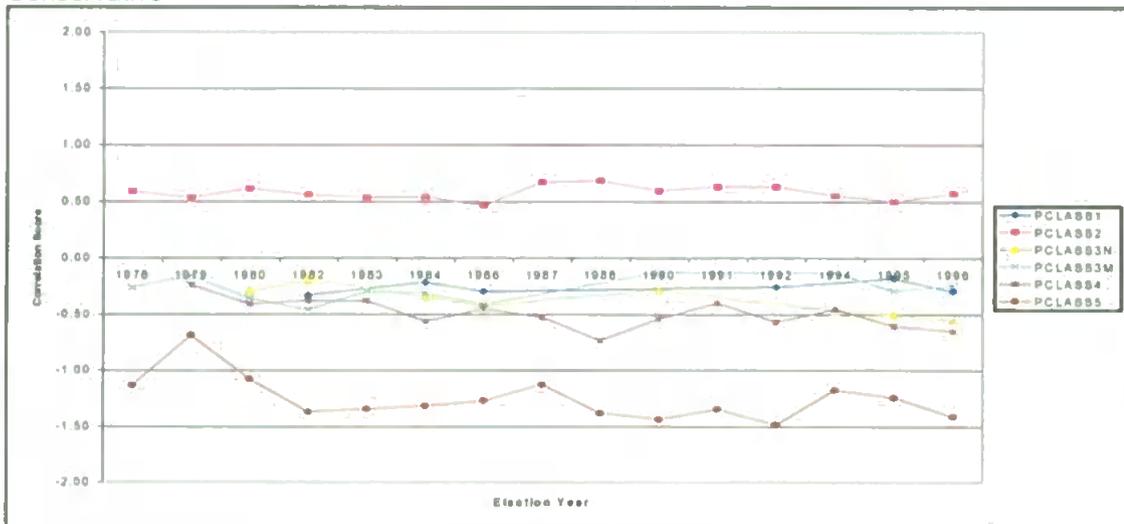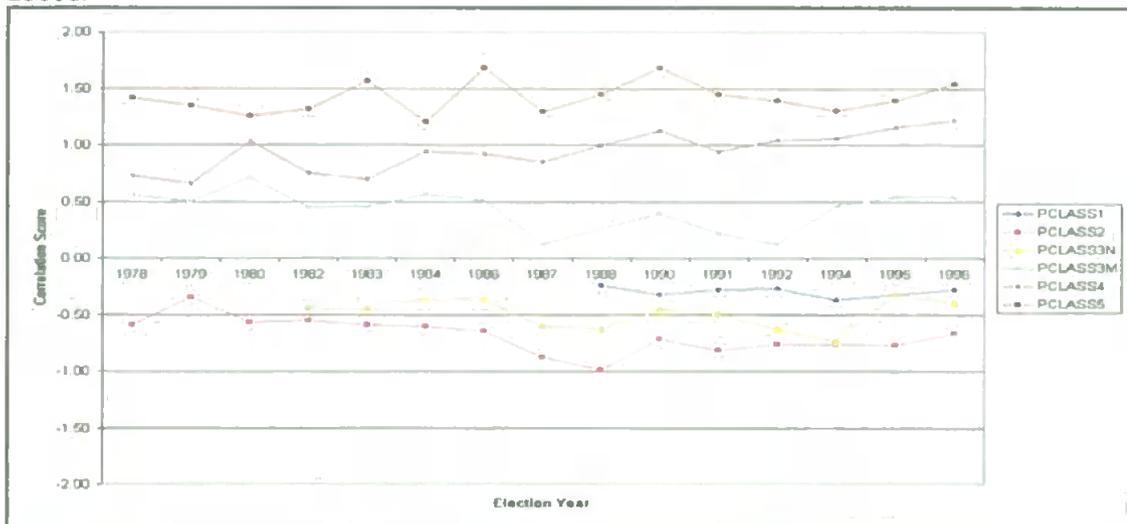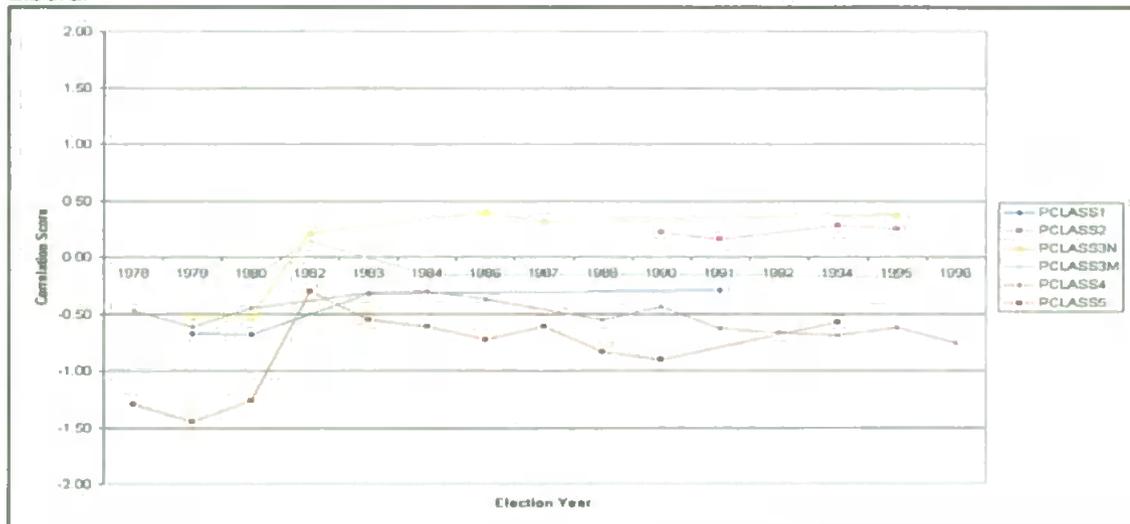
8.3.2 Assumptions of a Class Based Regression Model

This section lists and checks the assumptions of the class based regression model. Rather than report all of the assumptions of the regressions, for each party in all years, this section will concentrate upon 1982 when the model produced the strongest explanations of class voting. Although this might appear as though we are "cheating" by picking the best year, the regression coefficients in 1982 are similar to those for the other years - certainly in terms of their direction. The conclusions about most of the assumptions were found to be similar for the other years also. The only exception to this concerns the phenomenon of heteroskedasticity, which will be discussed in more detail later. As it was the model when applied to the Conservatives, that produced the most unexpected findings, the section focuses mainly upon this party. Fortunately, significant coefficients are produced for Conservative vote share and all of the class groups in 1982.

The regression analysis was conducted using SPSS. The first output provided by the software is a summary of the regression model (Table 8-2). The model summary shows the total amount of variance in Conservative voting (R^2) explained by the model (also shown in Table 8-1). The adjusted R^2 is an estimate of how the model would perform for the entire population. The difference between R^2 (0.521) and the adjusted R^2 (0.519) is very small, indicating that the model is suitable for generalising to the population from which the sample was taken (Field, 2001:146). This gives us more confidence that the model estimates are accurate.

Table 8-2 also shows the Durbin-Watson statistic. This allows us to test the assumption that observations of the error term are uncorrelated with each other - no

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serial correlation or autocorrelation (see Assumption two chapter 4). The value of the statistic can range between 0 (positive correlation) and 4 (negative correlation) with a value of 2 indicating no correlation whatsoever. The value of the Durbin-Watson statistic for the Conservative regression in 1982 is 1.04. Although this value lies almost midway between perfect positive correlation and no correlation, it is arguable whether this is greatly affecting the model. Field (2001: 138) suggests, that a value of less than 1 or greater than 3 should give cause for concern. In this case the value of the Durbin-Watson statistic is just within this threshold. Autocorrelation, according to Dougherty (1992), normally occurs only in regression analysis using time series. This is because the disturbance term in a regression equation picks up the influence of those variables that have not been included in the regression equation. Autocorrelation occurs when the effect of such a variable increases over time (Dougherty, 1992: 217). This cannot be the case in our regression, however, as it includes only the 1982 elections. We assume, therefore, that the regression model meets the assumption of independent error terms.

Table 8-2 – Conservative Vote 1982 on Class (Model Summary)

Model Summary[b]					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.722[a]	.521	.519	11.2472	1.039

a. Predictors: (Constant), PCLASS5, PCLASS3N, PCLASS3M, PCLASS4, PCLASS1, PCLASS2

b. Dependent Variable: CONSHARE

The SPSS output also provides an overall measure of the coefficients calculated in the model (see Table 8-3). The F-Test provides an indication of the model's success in predicting values better than simply using the average of the sample. The value of F

= 215.12 (sig.<0.001), which indicates that the slope of at least one of the regression coefficients is significantly different than zero. The model provides, therefore, better estimates of the Conservative vote share than simply using the mean value.

Table 8-3 - Conservative Vote 1982 on Class (ANOVA)

ANOVA[b]					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	163274.6	6	27212.429	215.121	.000[a]
Residual	150027.2	1186	126.498		
Total	313301.8	1192			

a. Predictors: (Constant), PCLASS5, PCLASS3N, PCLASS3M, PCLASS4, PCLASS1, PCLASS2

b. Dependent Variable: CONSHARE

A breakdown of the values of each coefficient is shown in Table 8-4. The t-test provides a measure of confidence that the individual coefficients are different than zero. Although the level of α was set to 0.1 for Table 8-1, the significance level of the t-test for most coefficients are less than 0.005. This increases our confidence that the coefficients do indeed differ from zero for 1982. The value of the unstandardised coefficient (B) indicates the unit change in the Conservative vote share for every unit change in the independent variables. The constant term indicates the value of the Conservative vote if the values of all independent variables were zero. Holding all other variables constant, the model estimates that the Conservatives could expect to receive 56.36% of the vote plus an additional 0.55% for every percentage increase in PCLASS2 (managerial and technical occupations).

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Table 8-4 - Conservative Vote 1982 on Class (Coefficients)

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	56.359	3.406		16.546	.000		
	PCLASS1	-.334	.100	-.095	-3.327	.001	.492	2.030
	PCLASS2	.555	.057	.354	9.713	.000	.303	3.298
	PCLASS3N	-.207	.102	-.046	-2.032	.042	.792	1.263
	PCLASS3M	-.467	.055	-.252	-8.412	.000	.450	2.221
	PCLASS4	-.383	.091	-.120	-4.211	.000	.495	2.019
	PCLASS5	-1.376	.164	-.227	-8.367	.000	.547	1.829

a. Dependent Variable: CONSHARE

Although the value of B provides an estimate of how a unit change in the proportion of residents in each class group affects the vote share, the proportion of residents in each class group varies dramatically. In Conservative contested wards, there was an average of 21.5% residents in PCLASS2 while only 3.5% in PCLASS5 (unskilled workers). PCLASS2 has the potential, therefore, to produce much greater changes in the Conservative vote. The standardised coefficients (Beta) are estimates of the effect of each class group expressed in terms of standard deviations. Beta allows us, therefore, to assess the contribution of each independent variable to the variance in vote share. Although the unstandardised coefficient (B) for PCLASS5 was -1.38, the smaller average number of residents in this group produces a standardised coefficient of only -0.23. An examination of the other standardised coefficients reveals that PCLASS2 (Beta=0.35) exerts the greatest influence upon the variance in vote share, while PCLASS3N (Beta=0.05) exerts the least.

Assumption Five is that the variance of the error term is constant (homoskedastic). Heteroskedasticity would occur in our data if the Conservative vote share in wards with a high proportion of residents in one class group varied more than in wards with

a low proportion of these residents. That this may occur is not an unreasonable expectation. In fact, heteroskedasticity is quite common in socioeconomic data (Pindyck & Runbinfield, 1997: 146). Heteroskedasticity can be detected by examining a scatter plot of the standardised residuals (error terms) by the standardised predicted values (Figure 8-2). A distribution of points resembling a funnel shape lying along the red horizontal regression line would indicate that the variance in the errors of the predicted values was not constant. There is little evidence of such a pattern for our regression. The points appear to be fairly evenly distributed and the regression line appears to fit the data points quite well.

Figure 8-2 - Conservative Vote 1982 on Class (Scatterplot of Residuals by Predicted Values)
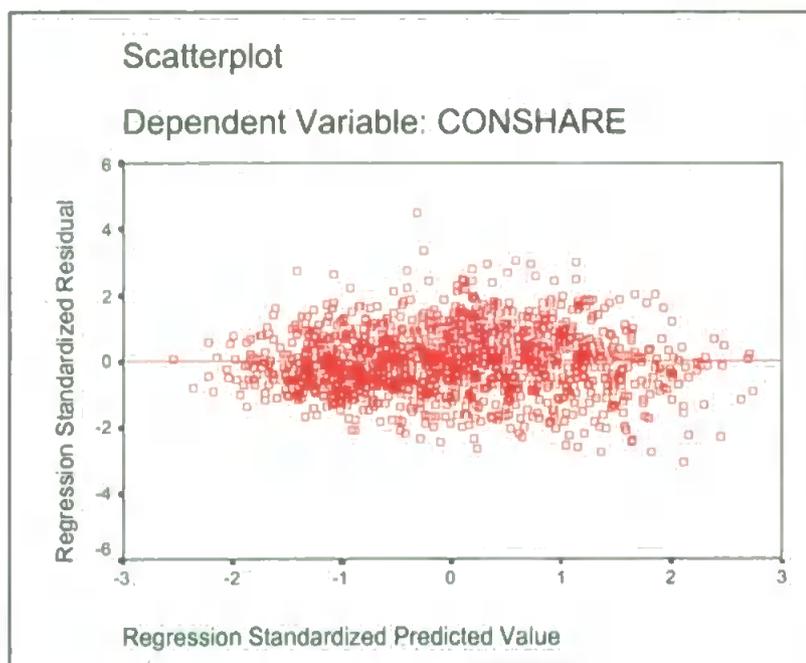
The value of VIF (variance inflation factor) in Table 8-4 allows us to test the assumption of no perfect multicollinearity amongst the class groups (Assumption Six). According to Bowerman and O'Connell (1990), there would be cause for concern if the largest VIF was greater than 10 or the average for all coefficients was substantially greater than 1. The VIF ranges between 1.3 and 3.3 with an average

value for the six independent variables of 2.12. We can therefore be confident that there is little collinearity between the independent variables. This can be checked, however, by examining the variance proportions shown in Table 8-5. Finding the variance proportion of more than one independent variables loaded onto the same dimension would provide evidence that those variable were collinear. PCLASS2 has 58% of its variance loading onto dimension seven, while 50% of the variance in PCLASS3M loads onto the same dimension. These values are not that great, however. As we are looking for perfect multicollinearity, we would only have cause for concern if around 90% of the variance of both variables loaded onto the same dimension.

Table 8-5 - Conservative Vote 1982 on Class (Collinearity Diagnostics)

				Collinearity Diagnostics						
						Variance Proportions				
Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	(Constant)	PCLASS1	PCLASS2	PCLASS3 N	PCLASS3 M	PCLASS4	PCLASS5
1	1	5.696	1.000	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	2	.832	2.617	.00	.08	.01	.00	.00	.01	.07
	3	.201	5.322	.00	.29	.00	.10	.02	.00	.39
	4	.118	6.957	.00	.14	.02	.18	.01	.34	.33
	5	8.403E-02	8.234	.00	.34	.39	.29	.01	.01	.00
	6	6.187E-02	9.595	.00	.04	.00	.21	.47	.34	.02
	7	7.312E-03	27.912	1.00	.11	.58	.23	.50	.30	.18

a. Dependent Variable: CONSHARE

Assumption Seven is that the error term is normally distributed. Figure 8-3 shows a histogram of the residuals (with normal distribution curve superimposed). The distribution of the residuals resembles closely the normal distribution curve, suggesting that the error term is indeed normally distributed and the assumption has been met.

Figure 8-3 - Conservative Vote 1982 on Class (Histogram of Residuals)

Histogram

Dependent Variable: CONSHARE

Std. Dev = 1.00
Mean = 0.00
N = 1193.00

Regression Standardized Residual
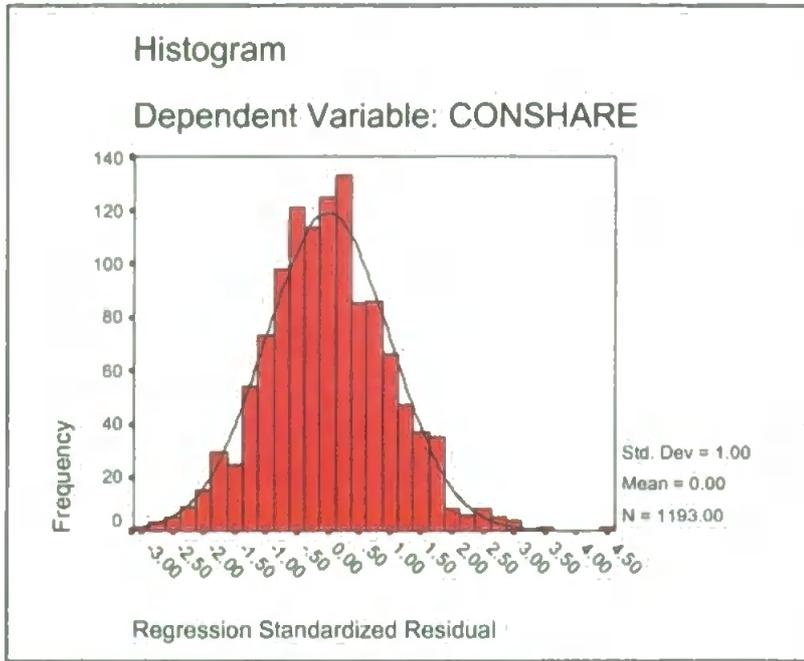
8.3.3 What No Heteroskedasticity?

If heteroskedasticity is so common then why do we have little evidence of it in the Conservative model? When applied to Labour in the same year, we found that the regression model meets all assumptions except that of constant variance. A scatter plot of standardised residuals by predicted values of Labour vote share is shown in Figure 8-4. Heteroskedasticity and its effect on the regression line are clearly evident. The variance in the errors in wards with small predicted Labour vote shares is far less than the variance in the wards where predicted vote shares are higher. As the regression line minimises the sum of the squared errors, it will give far more weight to the cases with higher variance (Pindyck & Rubinfield, 1997: 147). As a result, the regression line does not fit the data points as well as for the Conservatives. Although not affecting the value of the coefficients, heteroskedasticity can result in an underestimation of their standard error. This would produce lower values for the

significance of our t-test, which in turn may lead us to believe that the coefficient is significantly different from zero when in fact it is not (Dougherty, 1992: 204).

Figure 8-4 - Labour Vote 1982 on Class (Scatterplot of Residuals by Predicted Values)

Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: LABSHARE
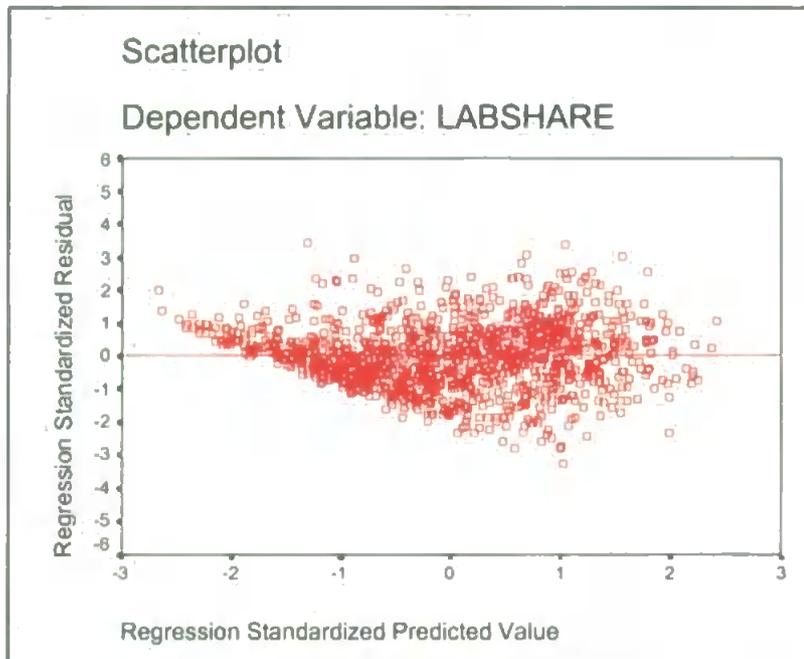
Why would heteroskedasticity be present for Labour but absent for the Conservatives? If, for each ward, we plot the actual Labour vote share against PCLASS2 (the largest class group), we see that the Labour vote share varies less as the proportion of such residents increases (see Figure 8-5). This results in the familiar funnel shape. In wards with over 40% of these residents the Labour vote share ranges between 2.6% and 28.5% with a standard deviation of 4.8. For wards with less than 20% of residents in PCLASS2 the variance in Labour vote is much higher ranging from 2% to 85.2% (s.d.=16.2). Figure 8-5 shows that for the Conservatives, the funnel shape is not present. In fact the difference in the variance in the parties vote share between those wards where PCLASS2>40 (s.d.=10.7) and those where PCLASS2<20 (s.d.=12.9) is not as great as for Labour. The variance is more constant for the Conservatives.

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Figure 8-5 - Scatterplot of Labour and Conservative Vote Share by PCLASS2
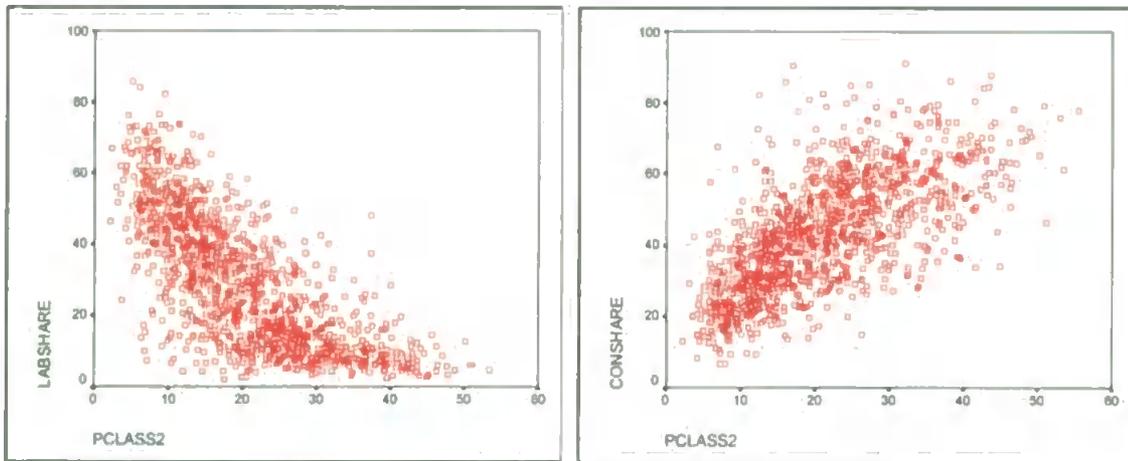
In wards with less than 20% of residents in social class 2, voting for both parties varies widely (Labour s.d.=16.2, Conservative s.d.=12.9). In wards with over 40% residents in this group, voting for Labour varies little (s.d.=4.8). In these wards the Labour vote share is always quite low (mean=7.9). For the Conservatives in these wards, however, the vote share still varies widely (s.d.=10.7). The reluctance of these wards to vote Labour, therefore, does not necessarily result in a proportionate advantage to the Conservatives. The variation must be due, therefore, to those not supporting Labour instead of voting for candidates other than the Conservatives - such as the Liberals, for example. The absence of heteroskedasticity for the Conservatives, actually supports our earlier findings that suggested that if not voting Conservative, voters from social class 2 would be more likely to support the Liberals than Labour. This is particularly true of 1982 when the Liberals polled over 28% of the vote in shire district partial council elections.

Dougherty (1992) suggests that heteroskedasticity may result in the significance levels of regression coefficients being underestimated. We determined that each regression coefficient was significant if the t-test was less than 0.1. We might,

therefore, be concerned if the significance of the Labour coefficients were close to the 0.1 threshold. Table 8-6 shows the significance levels of those coefficients previously accepted as being different to zero. Most of the coefficients are significant at $\alpha=.01$ which is well below our level of 0.1. Moreover, the coefficients for those years where the significance levels are higher (PCLASS1 in 1988 and 1996, PCLASS3M in 1987 and 1992) are not markedly different from those in the other years. Although heteroskedasticity exists, therefore, we have good reason to believe that we can remain confident in the coefficients.

Table 8-6 - Labour Vote 1982 on Class T-Test Significance Values

Year	1978	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988	1990	1991	1992	1994	1995	1996
PCLASS1									0.08	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01		0.07
PCLASS2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS3N				0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.01
PCLASS3M	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06		0.00	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS4	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCLASS5	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

With the exception of heteroskedasticity, all of the assumptions are met for each regression in every year. As the model appears to work well for the Conservatives and the pattern of coefficients for the Liberal and Labour vote share is as expected (despite the heteroskedasticity), we would suggest the coefficients shown in Table 8-1 are an accurate reflection of the independent class relationships. Unfortunately, this still leaves the unexpected direction of the coefficients PCLASS1 and PCLASS3N for the Conservative vote unexplained.

8.3.4 A Decline of Class Voting?

The previous chapter found only little evidence of a decline in class voting in local elections between 1978 and 1996. It is possible, however, that examining the combined effect of class voting might reveal more compelling evidence that class

declined. Figure 8-6 plots the total explained variance in vote share during the period. For each of the parties, a linear regression trend line is also shown. Despite fluctuations in explained variance of both Conservative and Labour voting the trend lines appear to show a reduction in combined class voting.

Figure 8-6 - Total Explained Variance in Party Vote Share 1978-96.
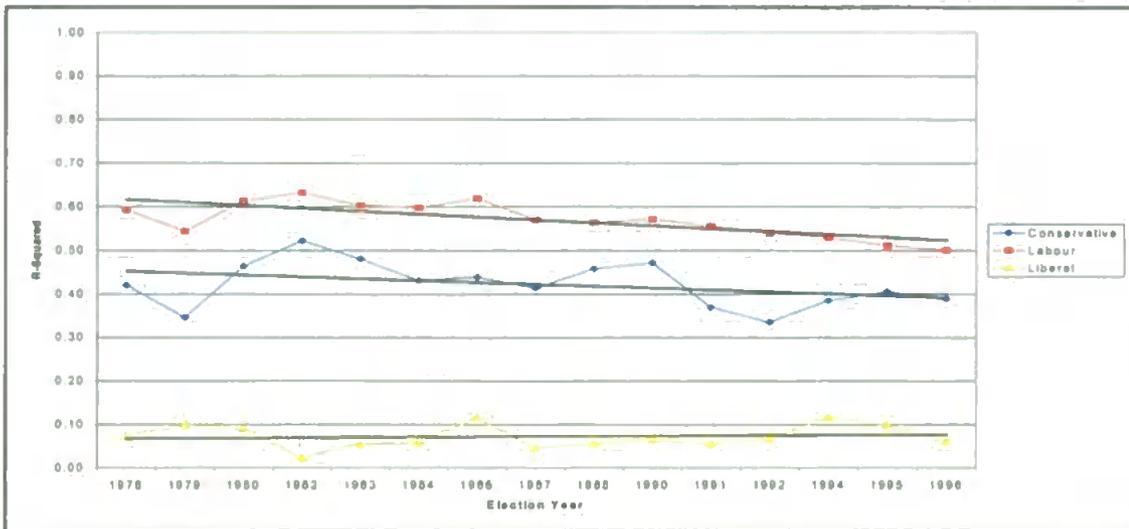
8.3.5 Which Class Groups are Relevant?

Before examining the effects of other characteristics, it would be useful to reduce the model so that it includes only the most relevant class variables. Doing so will provide a more concise and easily interpretable model, especially when other variables are included later. The previous section discussed the relevance of each class coefficient in terms of its contribution to the amount of variance in vote share. Coefficients could also be considered to be relevant if they contributed consistently to the variance in every election. Table 8-7 shows the standardised betas for the three main parties. After 1978, only the coefficients for PCLASS2, PCLASS4 and PCLASS5 significantly and consistently contributed to the variance of the Conservative and Labour vote. For the Liberals also, PCLASS4 and PCLASS5 were relevant both in terms of the size and consistency of contribution to the variance of the party's vote.

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While PCLASS2 was significant for the Liberals in only four years, the value of the standardised beta on these occasions indicates that the contribution of this variable was quite large. The reduced model will include, therefore, only PCLASS2, PCLASS4 and PCLASS5.

Table 8-7 - Standardised Betas for Class Voting

Year	1978	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988	1990	1991	1992	1994	1995	1996
Conservative															
PCLASS1				-0.10		-0.06	-0.09					-0.07		-0.05	-0.08
PCLASS2	0.35	0.37	0.36	0.35	0.33	0.32	0.30	0.42	0.40	0.40	0.41	0.39	0.38	0.33	0.35
PCLASS3N			-0.06	-0.05		-0.08	-0.10			-0.06			-0.11	-0.11	-0.11
PCLASS3M	-0.14	-0.10	-0.18	-0.25	-0.16	-0.17	-0.24			-0.06			-0.07	-0.14	-0.11
PCLASS4		-0.09	-0.12	-0.12	-0.12	-0.17	-0.15	-0.14	-0.19	-0.16	-0.11	-0.16	-0.14	-0.18	-0.18
PCLASS5	-0.17	-0.13	-0.17	-0.23	-0.22	-0.21	-0.22	-0.15	-0.17	-0.20	-0.18	-0.19	-0.17	-0.17	-0.18
Labour															
PCLASS1									-0.05	-0.06	-0.06	-0.06	-0.07		-0.05
PCLASS2	-0.32	-0.21	-0.27	-0.31	-0.31	-0.29	-0.30	-0.44	-0.43	-0.33	-0.39	-0.37	-0.33	-0.34	-0.28
PCLASS3N				-0.09	-0.08	-0.06	-0.06	-0.10	-0.09	-0.07	-0.08	-0.10	-0.10	-0.05	-0.05
PCLASS3M	0.26	0.25	0.28	0.21	0.19	0.23	0.20	0.04		0.13	0.07	0.04	0.14	0.16	0.16
PCLASS4	0.21	0.20	0.25	0.21	0.18	0.23	0.22	0.19	0.19	0.22	0.20	0.22	0.20	0.22	0.23
PCLASS5	0.20	0.23	0.16	0.20	0.22	0.16	0.21	0.14	0.13	0.16	0.15	0.14	0.12	0.12	0.13
Liberal															
PCLASS1		-0.25	-0.21			-0.11						-0.08			
PCLASS2										0.12	0.09		0.15	0.13	
PCLASS3N		-0.14	-0.12	0.06			0.09	0.07						0.06	
PCLASS3M			-0.10	0.10		-0.09						-0.07		-0.07	
PCLASS4	-0.17	-0.24	-0.14		-0.12	-0.10	-0.13		-0.15	-0.11	-0.16	-0.17	-0.16	-0.14	-0.18
PCLASS5	-0.19	-0.28	-0.22	-0.07	-0.11	-0.11	-0.13	-0.09	-0.10	-0.11			-0.06		

All coefficients are significant at P<0.1

Omitting those class variables not considered as relevant from the model changes the

value   of R^2 only   slightly   (see

Table 8-8). A regression of vote share upon only PCLASS2, PCLASS4 and PCLASS5 produces on average, an R^2 of only 0.02 less than the models that included the other class groups. Reducing the model provides us with a simpler model that retains much of the strength of the fully specified model. In so doing, it excludes also, those coefficients that did not confirm our theoretically expected results (PCLASS1 and PCLASS3N).

Table 8-8 - Difference in R² between Full and Reduced Class Model

	1978	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988	1990	1991	1992	1994	1995	1996
Conservative R²															
Full Model	0.42	0.35	0.46	0.52	0.48	0.43	0.44	0.41	0.46	0.47	0.37	0.34	0.38	0.40	0.39
Reduced Model	0.41	0.34	0.44	0.49	0.46	0.42	0.41	0.41	0.46	0.46	0.37	0.33	0.37	0.38	0.37
Labour R²															
Full Model	0.59	0.54	0.61	0.63	0.60	0.60	0.62	0.57	0.56	0.57	0.56	0.54	0.53	0.51	0.50
Reduced Model	0.56	0.50	0.57	0.60	0.57	0.56	0.59	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.54	0.53	0.50	0.49	0.48
Liberal R²															
Full Model	0.07	0.10	0.09	0.02	0.05	0.06	0.11	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.12	0.10	0.06
Reduced Model	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.02	0.05	0.05	0.11	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.11	0.09	0.06

8.3.6   Class Voting - a Conclusion?

This section illustrated the nature of the relationship between class groups and voting using a multiple regression model. While the direction of the relationships between each class and the Liberal and Labour vote supported findings from the bivariate analysis, those for the Conservatives were not all as expected. When holding the other class variables constant, PCLASS1 and PCLASS3N appear to be negatively related to the party's vote. Testing the assumptions of the model for the Conservatives produced no evidence that the model was incorrectly estimating the coefficients, leaving this phenomena unexplained. Reducing the coefficients to those considered most relevant produced a model that is both simpler to interpret and reflects the hypothesised nature of the class relationships. The model reveals that class relationships were strongest for Labour, accounting for almost half of the variance in vote share in every election. Class relationships were weakest for the Liberals with the model explaining less than 10% of the variance in most elections while for the Conservatives' the model explained between a third and half of the variance.

8.4 Class and Housing

After controlling for class, Heath et al (1991) identified housing tenure as the most influential explanatory socioeconomic variable upon voting for the parties. Although the bivariate analysis conducted in Chapter 7.4 identified an apparent public/private sector housing cleavage, the effect of class was not considered. However, any relationship between class and housing may have affected such an analysis. If a strong relationship existed between the proportion of council tenants and the proportion of working class residents then some of our previous correlation coefficients would be influenced by the effects of class.

If Heath et al (1991) are correct then we would still find evidence of a relationship between housing tenure and partisan voting after controlling for class. Such a relationship could be tested with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4.5: After controlling for class, housing tenure is related to partisan voting

The inclusion of the different housing variables into the class model developed in Chapter 8.3, allows us to estimate the effects of housing tenure upon partisan voting while controlling for class. Given the previous findings, we would expect negative coefficients for Conservative and Liberal voting and public sector housing, while we would expect the reverse for Labour.

Although Chapter 7.4 revealed that all types of housing tenure were consistently related to partisan voting, the inclusion of all housing variables into the regression model produces strange results. Table 8-9 shows the SPSS output for the Conservatives in 1983. Not only is the value of the constant impossibly high (110.23)

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- suggesting that the Conservative may poll over 100% of the vote - but all of the housing coefficients are negative. If correct, this would suggest that residents of all types of housing tenure would be unlikely to vote Conservative. However, as the value of the variance inflation factor is over 10 for most of the housing coefficients it is likely that collinearity exists between the variables.

Table 8-9 - Conservative Vote 1982 on Class and Housing (Coefficients)

	Coefficients[a]						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF-.
1	(Constant)	110.236	22.423		4.916	.000		
	PCLASS2	.593	.049	.366	12.224	.000	.435	2.300
	PCLASS4	-.183	.088	-.056	-2.077	.038	.537	1.864
	PCLASS5	-.776	.161	-.124	-4.826	.000	.586	1.706
	PHASSOC	-.781	.252	-.132	-3.097	.002	.215	4.651
	PCOUNCIL	-.908	.224	-1.125	-4.055	.000	.005	197.875
	POWNEROCC	-.674	.224	-.794	-3.009	.003	.006	179.016
	PPRIVATE	-.809	.231	-.274	-3.504	.000	.064	15.692
	POTHTENUR	-.300	.247	-.083	-1.217	.224	.083	12.031

a. Dependent Variable: CONSHARE

We can identify any collinearity be examining the variance proportions of each of the independent variables. Table 8-10 shows that the variances of those variables with high variance inflation factors are all loading onto dimension nine. In particular, there is evidence of very high collinearity between the proportion of council house residents (PCOUNCIL) and the proportion of owner occupiers (POWNEROCC). Such collinearity would be expected given the theoretical justification of the inclusion of housing into the model. If a public/private sector housing cleavage existed then we would expect an opposite relationship between council housing and voting to that for owner-occupiers. Indeed, Figure 7-2 in Chapter 7.4 revealed that the relationship

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between PCOUNCIL and partisan voting is almost the exact mirror image of the relationship between POWNEROCC and such voting.

Table 8-10 - Conservative Vote 1982 on Class and Housing (Collinearity Diagnostics)

				Variance Proportions							
Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	(Constant)	PCLASS2	PCLASS4	PCLASS5	PHASSOC	PCOUNCIL	POWNEROCC	PPRIVATE	POTHTENUR
1	1	5.840	1.000	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	2	1.035	2.375	.00	.00	.00	.03	.00	.00	.00	.00	.02
	3	.848	2.624	.00	.00	.00	.00	.20	.00	.00	.00	.00
	4	.578	3.180	.00	.03	.00	.02	.00	.00	.00	.00	.04
	5	.367	3.986	.00	.02	.00	.06	.01	.00	.00	.06	.03
	6	.178	5.728	.00	.01	.00	.51	.00	.00	.00	.02	.01
	7	.120	6.973	.00	.11	.44	.26	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	8	3.382E-02	13.140	.00	.82	.55	.11	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01
	9	1.380E-04	205.681	1.00	.01	.00	.00	.78	.99	1.00	.92	.89

a. Dependent Variable: CONSHARE

We can avoid this collinearity by excluding PCOUNCIL or POWNEROCC from the model. Excluding POWNEROCC leaves us with two categories on each side of the housing cleavage. Table 8-11 shows the effect upon the variance inflation factors when POWNEROCC is excluded from the model. The maximum VIF is now only 2.29. Not only has the exclusion of owner-occupiers eliminated the high collinearity, the value of the constant has returned to a more realistic level and the coefficients are more in line with our public/private sector housing hypothesis.

Table 8-11 - Conservative Vote 1982 on Class and Reduced Housing (Coefficients)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	43.061	2.084		20.658	.000		
PCLASS2	.598	.049	.369	12.293	.000	.435	2.298
PCLASS4	-.176	.089	-.054	-1.991	.047	.537	1.862
PCLASS5	-.784	.161	-.126	-4.860	.000	.586	1.706
PHASSOC	-.111	.119	-.019	-.934	.351	.979	1.022
PCOUNCIL	-.237	.022	-.294	-10.899	.000	.537	1.861
PPRIVATE	-.147	.070	-.050	-2.096	.036	.698	1.433
POTHTENUR	.403	.080	.112	5.053	.000	.802	1.247

a. Dependent Variable: CONSHARE

When the model applied over the entire period, the only coefficients that are consistently significant are those for council tenants and other types of tenure (POTHTENUR). Table 8-12 shows the significant standardised betas for class and housing, the total variance explained (R^2) and the R^2 change from the reduced class model. After controlling for class, the coefficients for PCOUNCIL and POTHTENUR are significantly different than zero for most years. This supports hypothesis 4.5. After controlling for class, housing tenure does appear to have an effect on partisan voting.

The directions of the standardised coefficients for PCOUNCIL are consistently negative for the Conservative and Liberals, while positive for Labour. For POTHTENUR the opposite relationship appears to exist. The directions of the coefficients are, as we would expect, if we support a private/public sector housing cleavage. The size of the housing coefficients is interesting also. The proportion of council tenants appears to have the second largest influence upon the variance of the Conservative and Labour vote - the largest being social class 2. This suggests that council housing is more relevant to Conservative and Labour voting than employment in semi-skilled or non-skilled occupations. For the Liberals, this variable appears to influence voting more than any one of the class groups.

Table 8-12 - Regression of Vote on Class and Housing 1978-96.

Year	1978	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988	1990	1991	1992	1994	1995	1996
Conservative															
R^2	0.46	0.37	0.50	0.57	0.52	0.47	0.49	0.47	0.50	0.50	0.40	0.35	0.41	0.42	0.40
R^2 Change	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.08	0.06	0.05	0.08	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.03
PCLASS2	0.37	0.38	0.43	0.44	0.38	0.36	0.39	0.36	0.36	0.39	0.33	0.29	0.38	0.36	0.37
PCLASS4					-0.05	-0.06		-0.10	-0.15	-0.11	-0.08	-0.10	-0.08	-0.12	-0.10
PCLASS5	-0.12	-0.08	-0.07	-0.11	-0.13	-0.11	-0.08	-0.07	-0.09	-0.13	-0.12	-0.12	-0.09	-0.09	-0.10
PCOUNCIL	-0.28	-0.20	-0.26	-0.26	-0.27	-0.26	-0.24	-0.25	-0.22	-0.17	-0.21	-0.19	-0.16	-0.16	-0.16
POTHTENUR		0.05	0.08	0.16	0.09	0.08	0.20	0.12	0.10	0.14	0.08		0.13	0.13	0.11
Labour															
R^2	0.67	0.55	0.64	0.66	0.62	0.61	0.63	0.61	0.61	0.59	0.60	0.57	0.54	0.53	0.53
R^2 Change	0.10	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.05

	1978	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988	1990	1991	1992	1994	1995	1996
PCLASS2	-0.37	-0.33	-0.40	-0.39	-0.37	-0.40	-0.39	-0.39	-0.39	-0.37	-0.36	-0.34	-0.38	-0.37	-0.32
PCLASS4	0.11	0.15	0.16	0.16	0.15	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.17	0.21	0.19	0.21	0.20	0.20	0.21
PCLASS5	0.09	0.16	0.08	0.14	0.17	0.10	0.16	0.09	0.07	0.10	0.09	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.07
PCOUNCIL	0.35	0.25	0.31	0.27	0.25	0.25	0.20	0.26	0.29	0.21	0.27	0.24	0.19	0.20	0.24
POTHTENUR	-0.14	-0.06	-0.08	-0.09	-0.07	-0.08	-0.10	-0.08	-0.07	-0.09	-0.10	-0.06	-0.10	-0.10	-0.11

Contd..../

Year	1978	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988	1990	1991	1992	1994	1995	1996
Liberal															
R^2	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.02	0.05	0.07	0.12	0.06	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.09	0.13	0.11	0.09
R^2 Change	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03
PCLASS2		-0.12											0.11	0.11	
PCLASS4				-0.08	-0.09	-0.08	-0.13		-0.10		-0.11	-0.13	-0.13	-0.12	-0.13
PCLASS5	-0.14	-0.16	-0.10	-0.10	-0.08	-0.08	-0.13	-0.07							
PCOUNCIL		-0.21	-0.17		-0.08	-0.10	-0.12	-0.17	-0.21	-0.18	-0.19	-0.14	-0.18	-0.16	-0.19
POTHTENUR	0.11		0.09		0.08						0.08	0.08	0.09	0.06	0.06

All coefficients are significant at p<0.1

The inclusion of housing into the reduced class model increases the total amount of explained variance for all of the parties. The greatest increase was for Labour. The model, averaged over the entire period, explains 60% of the variance in Labour voting - an increase of five percentage points over the class model. The mean explained variance in the Conservative vote increased four points to 46% while for the Liberals it increased from 6% to 8% on average.

8.5 Class, Housing and Employment Status

While class and housing together can account for almost two thirds of the variance in Labour voting and almost half the variance in Conservative voting, they explain, on average, less than 10% of the Liberal vote. After class and housing, employment status is possibly the most influential socioeconomic characteristic upon partisan voting (Heath et al, 1991). Chapter 7.5 identified high correlation scores between voting and certain employment characteristics. This section examines the extent to which these variables exert an independent effect upon partisan voting.

Chapter 7.5 hypothesised that self-employment would be positively related to Conservative and Liberal voting while unemployment would be negatively related.

When the correlation scores for voting and these variables were examined, we found that not only were the hypotheses supported, but also that these characteristics exerted the greatest influence upon voting of all the employment variables. If the influence of these variables were independent then we would expect that:

Hypothesis 4.6: After controlling for class and housing, self-employment and unemployment are related to partisan voting.

Table 8-13 shows the standardised betas for the model when employment status is included. For all parties, the coefficients for the proportion of unemployed residents (PWORKSEEK) are significantly different from zero in most years. The directions of these relationships are as expected given the previous findings. Those for the proportion of self-employed with employees (PSELFWITH), are less significant for Labour than the Conservatives or Liberals, while self-employed without employees (PSELFWOUT) are least significant for the Conservatives. There does appear to be an independent relationship between partisan voting and the proportion of self-employed and unemployed residents. Hypothesis 4.6, therefore, appears to be correct.

Although the directions of the coefficients for PWORKSEEK conformed to our expectations, those for self-employed residents do not. Chapter 7.5 revealed that both types of self-employed residents were positively correlated with Conservative and Liberal voting. When holding class, housing and the other employment types constant, however, the relationship appears fundamentally different for the Liberals than the Conservatives. The coefficients for (PSELFWITH) suggest that increases in the proportion of self-employed with employees leads to an increase in Conservative voting, but a decrease in Liberal voting. The coefficients for (PSELFWOUT) suggest

that an increase in self-employed without employees will lead to an increase in the Liberal vote and a decrease in *both* Conservative and Labour voting. This is interesting, because it is the only socioeconomic variable identified so far, where Labour and Conservatives are consistently related in the same direction. If correct this would suggest that the Liberal have a distinct (although small) voter base.

Table 8-13 - Regression of Vote on Class, Housing and Employment 1978-96.

Year	1978	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988	1990	1991	1992	1994	1995	1996
Conservative															
R^2	0.49	0.39	0.57	0.62	0.57	0.54	0.55	0.52	0.55	0.58	0.46	0.41	0.51	0.53	0.48
R^2 Change	0.03	0.02	0.07	0.05	0.04	0.07	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.10	0.12	0.09
PCLASS2	0.19	0.24	0.18	0.20	0.18	0.10	0.13	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.13	0.10	0.13	0.11	0.13
PCLASS4					-0.05	-0.07	-0.05	-0.06	-0.11	-0.09		-0.07	-0.08	-0.09	-0.08
PCLASS5	-0.09			-0.08	-0.08	-0.07	-0.06		-0.06	-0.10	-0.09	-0.08	-0.06	-0.06	-0.07
PCOUNCIL	-0.21	-0.15	-0.19	-0.18	-0.20	-0.18	-0.15	-0.17	-0.14	-0.09	-0.13	-0.11	-0.08	-0.08	-0.07
POTHTENUR				0.09			0.12	0.06	0.05	0.07			0.06	0.06	0.05
PSELFWITH	0.30	0.20	0.43	0.34	0.30	0.41	0.37	0.24	0.28	0.39	0.34	0.30	0.45	0.50	0.39
PSELFWOUT	-0.08		-0.15			-0.09		0.04		-0.07	-0.08		-0.07	-0.08	-0.05
PWORKSEEK	-0.12	-0.14	-0.16	-0.15	-0.16	-0.15	-0.13	-0.17	-0.16	-0.14	-0.15	-0.17	-0.10	-0.10	-0.14
Labour															
R^2	0.68	0.57	0.65	0.68	0.64	0.63	0.66	0.66	0.65	0.62	0.63	0.60	0.57	0.56	0.56
R^2 Change	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03
PCLASS2	-0.30	-0.25	-0.30	-0.30	-0.31	-0.32	-0.29	-0.25	-0.26	-0.26	-0.25	-0.23	-0.28	-0.26	-0.21
PCLASS4	0.14	0.12	0.15	0.15	0.12	0.14	0.15	0.13	0.13	0.19	0.15	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17
PCLASS5	0.09	0.11	0.05	0.10	0.10	0.04	0.10	0.07	0.04	0.08	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.06
PCOUNCIL	0.32	0.21	0.27	0.23	0.22	0.22	0.16	0.19	0.23	0.15	0.21	0.18	0.13	0.15	0.18
POTHTENUR	-0.11	-0.03	-0.06	-0.06	-0.05	-0.06	-0.07	-0.05	-0.06	-0.08	-0.08	-0.06	-0.09	-0.08	-0.09
PSELFWITH	-0.12	-0.06	-0.08	-0.05											
PSELFWOUT		-0.06	-0.07	-0.09	-0.09	-0.06	-0.10	-0.20	-0.18	-0.15	-0.15	-0.17	-0.17	-0.17	-0.16
PWORKSEEK		0.15	0.09	0.10	0.16	0.16	0.17	0.20	0.17	0.16	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.14	0.16
Liberal															
R^2	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.03	0.07	0.10	0.13	0.09	0.11	0.15	0.11	0.12	0.17	0.14	0.11
R^2 Change	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.02
PCLASS2		-0.24							-0.10						
PCLASS4		-0.11		-0.07			-0.11				-0.08	-0.11	-0.10	-0.07	-0.11
PCLASS5	-0.18	-0.15	-0.09	-0.07			-0.09					0.07			
PCOUNCIL		-0.16	-0.13		-0.08	-0.10	-0.11	-0.13	-0.16	-0.10	-0.14	-0.10	-0.11	-0.12	-0.16
POTHTENUR			0.07				0.10				0.06	0.07	0.09		0.06
PSELFWITH		0.13		-0.17	-0.17	-0.22	-0.13	-0.20			-0.11	-0.15		-0.13	-0.16
PSELFWOUT	0.21	0.16	0.25	0.10	0.16	0.22	0.12	0.15	0.14	0.15	0.19	0.20	0.13	0.18	0.16
PWORKSEEK							-0.12	-0.15	-0.19	-0.28	-0.18	-0.15	-0.22	-0.18	-0.14

All coefficients are significant at p<0.1

The inclusion of employment status increases the average amount of explained variance in Conservative voting by six percentage points, and in Liberal voting by four percentage points. The increase in explained variance is the least for Labour voting - although from a higher initial threshold. When employment status is included the explained variance of the Labour vote increased by only 3%.

8.6 A Socioeconomic Model of Partisan Voting

Chapter 7.6 considered a range of other socioeconomic characteristics that might be considered to have an independent effect upon voting. The most relevant of these appeared to be the proportion of qualified residents (PQUALIFIED) and those working in agriculture (PAGRICULT) or other service industries (POTHSERV) such as banking. This section completes the model of socioeconomic voting by examining the relevance of these variables.

The standardised betas for the final model of partisan voting are shown in

Table 8-14. Although the inclusion of the additional socioeconomic characteristics into the model adds little to the total variance of the parties' vote, the direction of some of the coefficients are worthy of discussion. The coefficients for PAGRICULT and POTHSERV indicate that there is an independent positive relationship between the proportion of residents employed in agriculture or other service industries and voting for the Conservatives and Liberals. The opposite is the case for Labour. These values confirm findings from Chapter 7.6. The coefficients for the proportion of qualified residents, however, are different than we expected. Chapter 7.6 suggested that there is a positive relationship between this characteristic and voting for the Liberals and Conservatives. When controlling for all relevant socioeconomic characteristics it appears that both these parties' votes will decrease as PQUALIFIED increases. Instead it is Labour that is the beneficiary of the independent effect of qualified residents.

Table 8-14 - Regression of Vote on Relevant Socioeconomic Characteristics 1978-96.

Year	1978	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988	1990	1991	1992	1994	1995	1996
Conservative															
R^2	0.51	0.40	0.57	0.63	0.58	0.55	0.56	0.53	0.56	0.58	0.47	0.43	0.51	0.54	0.49
R^2 Change	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01
PCLASS2	0.21	0.28	0.16	0.22	0.16	0.09	0.17	0.20	0.21	0.22	0.20	0.20	0.19	0.12	0.18
PCLASS4						-0.08	-0.06		-0.10	-0.09	-0.06	-0.09	-0.10	-0.10	-0.09
PCLASS5	-0.09			-0.08	-0.08	-0.07	-0.06	-0.04	-0.07	-0.10	-0.09	-0.09	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07
PCOUNCIL	-0.21	-0.16	-0.19	-0.20	-0.21	-0.20	-0.17	-0.19	-0.15	-0.11	-0.15	-0.12	-0.09	-0.09	-0.08
POTHTENUR			-0.05		-0.06	-0.06	0.06		0.04	0.05			0.06		0.06
PSELFWITH	0.34	0.22	0.44	0.32	0.26	0.38	0.34	0.27	0.33	0.42	0.35	0.36	0.45	0.48	0.41
PSELFWOUT			-0.16	-0.07	-0.06	-0.12	-0.07		-0.04	-0.11	-0.11	-0.06	-0.09	-0.13	-0.07
PWORKSEEK		-0.12	-0.14	-0.13	-0.13	-0.14	-0.12	-0.16	-0.15	-0.13	-0.15	-0.16	-0.09	-0.09	-0.14
PAGRICULT	-0.08		0.05	0.08	0.14	0.11	0.12							0.10	
POTHSERV	0.17	0.16	0.12	0.14	0.16	0.10	0.12	0.17	0.13	0.11	0.05	0.07		0.08	
PQUALIFIED		-0.12			-0.10		-0.11	-0.18	-0.18	-0.18	-0.15	-0.26	-0.10	-0.08	-0.12
Labour															
R^2	0.69	0.60	0.68	0.70	0.67	0.65	0.67	0.68	0.67	0.65	0.65	0.63	0.61	0.59	0.59
R^2 Change	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.03
PCLASS2	-0.31	-0.17	-0.25	-0.27	-0.28	-0.29	-0.26	-0.24	-0.25	-0.20	-0.22	-0.22	-0.21	-0.20	-0.13
PCLASS4	0.10	0.08	0.10	0.12	0.07	0.10	0.12	0.06	0.08	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.07	0.08	0.09
PCLASS5	0.10	0.10	0.04	0.10	0.10	0.04	0.10	0.06	0.03	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.04	0.05	0.05
PCOUNCIL	0.33	0.21	0.28	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.16	0.19	0.24	0.15	0.22	0.20	0.14	0.15	0.17
POTHTENUR		0.05	0.04		0.04										
PSELFWITH	-0.11	-0.06	-0.09	-0.06				-0.07	-0.06	-0.08	-0.06	-0.06	-0.07	-0.10	-0.09
PSELFWOUT		-0.06	-0.05	-0.07	-0.08	-0.04	-0.10	-0.17	-0.14	-0.13	-0.12	-0.12	-0.14	-0.17	-0.15
PWORKSEEK		0.12	0.05	0.08	0.12	0.13	0.14	0.20	0.17	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.14	0.15
PAGRICULT		-0.08	-0.07	-0.07	-0.08	-0.07	-0.05							0.05	
POTHSERV	-0.17	-0.23	-0.25	-0.22	-0.24	-0.23	-0.19	-0.25	-0.24	-0.31	-0.25	-0.28	-0.34	-0.27	-0.27
PQUALIFIED	0.10			0.08	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.17	0.15	0.13	0.13	0.20	0.14	0.11	0.07
Liberal															
R^2	0.24	0.15	0.15	0.03	0.08	0.10	0.14	0.09	0.11	0.15	0.12	0.13	0.18	0.16	0.12
R^2 Change	0.10	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01
PCLASS2		-0.15			0.13										
PCLASS4	-0.36	-0.15	-0.11	-0.09			-0.08	-0.11					-0.07		
PCLASS5	-0.20	-0.16	-0.11	-0.07			-0.09				0.06				
PCOUNCIL		-0.19	-0.15			-0.09	-0.11	-0.12	-0.13	-0.17	-0.12	-0.15	-0.10	-0.11	-0.16
POTHTENUR			0.08										-0.05		
PSELFWITH				-0.19	-0.15	-0.25	-0.14	-0.17					-0.15		-0.13
PSELFWOUT			0.19	0.08	0.15	0.18	0.11	0.14	0.11	0.12	0.17	0.18	0.09	0.17	0.15
PWORKSEEK							-0.10	-0.15	-0.18	-0.26	-0.18	-0.15	-0.21	-0.18	-0.13
PAGRICULT	0.39	0.10	0.09			0.10				0.08			0.07		
POTHSERV						0.08	0.08	0.09		0.09	0.13	0.14	0.23	0.19	0.16
PQUALIFIED		-0.15			-0.12						-0.11	-0.14	-0.12	-0.10	

All coefficients are significant at p<0.01

Despite the inclusion of three additional socioeconomic characteristics, the total explained variance in vote share changes little. It appears, therefore, that we have reached the limit to which socioeconomic characteristics can theoretically and practically explain partisan voting. For Labour the model is quite successful, explaining over two thirds of the party's vote in some years. For the Conservatives,

the model explains over half of the variance in most years, while for the Liberals the model generally explains less than 20% of the variance.

Upon considering the model it becomes apparent that POTHTENUR and PAGRICULT contribute only rarely to the variance in the main parties' vote share. When they do contribute, the standardised betas are small when compared to the other independent variables. Excluding these variables from the model results in a reduction in R^2 of less than 0.01, while making it easier to interpret. The following sections apply this more concise model to the other types of local authority. This will allow us to identify any fundamental differences in the ways that these characteristics impact upon partisan voting for quite distinct types of local authority. It will also, where appropriate, allow us to test our previous findings regarding the effect of the electoral system while controlling for socioeconomic characteristics.

8.7 Shire District Whole Council Elections

This section applies the model to shire districts with whole council elections. The standardised regression coefficients for this type of authority are shown in Table 8-15. The average value of R^2 indicates that the model explains 38% of the variance in Conservative voting[2], 53% of the variance in Labour voting but just 8% of the variance in Liberal voting. The total explained variance in voting for the parties is, therefore, on average less than the shire districts with partial council elections. The decline in class voting evident in partial council elections is not as clear for whole council elections. The value of R^2 for the Conservatives falls in 1987 and 1991, only to rise again in 1995, while for Labour it seems to decrease slightly. With only five

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[2] Calculated for each party by summing R^2 for all years and dividing by the number of years.

years to compare, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the change in class voting.

The direction of the Labour and Conservative coefficients are identical to partial council elections and the values of the coefficients are similar also. The main difference between the two types of authority appears to be for the proportion of qualified residents (PQUALIFIED). For partial council elections, this variable tended to be negatively related to Conservative voting when controlling for the other characteristics. For whole council elections, however, this variable had no significant effect upon Conservative voting. The variable appears to have a significant effect, upon Labour voting, between 1987 and 1995, but intriguingly, the direction is the opposite of that for partial council elections. For the Liberals, the only socioeconomic characteristic that produces significant coefficients in every year is the proportion of unemployed residents (PWORKSEEK). The direction of the relationship between this variable is the same as for partial council elections, as are for most years, the proportion of self-employed (both PSELFWITH and PSELFWOUT) or those working in other service industries (POTHSERV). It appears, therefore, that the relationships between partisan voting and ward level socioeconomic characteristics in shire district whole council elections reflect that of partial council elections.

Shire district whole council elections allow us to estimate the effect of the electoral system upon vote share while controlling for socioeconomic characteristics. The standardised coefficients for the number of vacancies (VACANCIES) indicate that for *all* parties, an increase in the number of vacancies will result in a lower share of the vote. This is probably an indication of the effect of the voter's ability, in theory, to

split their ticket. The coefficient for VACANCIES is generally lowest for Labour and highest for the Liberals in 1979. On most occasions, however, it is the Conservative vote share that is largely affected by the number of vacancies. One explanation for this might be protest voting against the government in urban areas with higher district magnitudes.

Table 8-15 - Regression of Vote on Model in Shire District Whole Council Elections

Year	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995
Conservative					
N	1983	2133	3276	3231	2905
R^2	0.26	0.41	0.39	0.38	0.46
Constant	44.25	45.90	50.00	48.53	28.48
PCLASS2	0.27	0.21	0.10	0.18	0.11
PCLASS4			-0.05	-0.06	-0.05
PCLASS5	-0.07	-0.06	-0.06	-0.07	-0.07
PCOUNCIL	-0.16	-0.13	-0.12	-0.09	
PSELFWITH		0.21	0.21	0.25	0.38
PSELFWOUT				-0.13	
PWORKSEEK		-0.09	-0.15	-0.14	-0.14
POTHSERV	0.06	0.06			0.05
PQUALIFIED					
VACANCIES	-0.11	-0.16	-0.15	-0.15	-0.12
Labour					
N	1694	1977	2920	2829	2985
R^2	0.55	0.55	0.56	0.52	0.48
Constant	58.31	50.06	39.81	47.24	60.37
PCLASS2	-0.11	-0.11	-0.06	-0.05	
PCLASS4	0.04	0.04	0.07	0.07	0.07
PCLASS5	0.06	0.06		0.04	
PCOUNCIL	0.16	0.15	0.18	0.12	0.05
PSELFWITH	-0.25	-0.16			-0.04
PSELFWOUT	-0.12	-0.17	-0.26	-0.23	-0.29
PWORKSEEK	0.10	0.17	0.26	0.27	0.28
POTHSERV	-0.22	-0.21	-0.16	-0.16	-0.16
PQUALIFIED			-0.06	-0.07	-0.14
VACANCIES	-0.07	-0.05	-0.05	-0.08	-0.09
Liberal					
N	650	1629	3052	2309	2551
R^2	0.13	0.07	0.05	0.07	0.10
Constant	40.60	39.29	37.54	45.27	36.38
PCLASS2	-0.13	-0.17			
PCLASS4					
PCLASS5					0.04
PCOUNCIL		0.05		-0.07	
PSELFWITH	0.10		-0.17	-0.15	-0.13
PSELFWOUT		0.06	0.13	0.14	0.20
PWORKSEEK	-0.16	-0.22	-0.17	-0.15	-0.18
POTHSERV	0.16		0.06		0.07
PQUALIFIED					0.07
VACANCIES	-0.27	-0.14	-0.10	-0.13	-0.13

All coefficients are significant at p<0.01

8.8 Metropolitan Borough Elections

When the model was applied to the metropolitan boroughs, we found that the value of R^2 was 0.62 for Labour, 0.57 for the Conservatives and 0.11 for the Liberals (see Table 8-16). The model explains slightly less variance in partisan voting than for shire district partial council elections. For all three parties, the values or R^2 are markedly lower after 1986. It appears, therefore, that class voting in the metropolitan boroughs declined after 1986, supporting hypothesis 4.5.

The directions of most of the coefficients are similar to those for the shire districts. Before 1987, however, the relationship between the proportion of unemployed residents (PWORKSEEK) and voting tended to be positive for the Conservatives and negative for Labour. The direction of the standardised coefficient reverses in 1987 for both the Conservatives and Labour, suggesting that the image of the two parties, regarding unemployment, may have changed radically in the metropolitan boroughs during the period. The proportion of residents classed as unemployed was over 7% in both the 1981 and 1991 census, compared with less than 5% for the whole of England. If as Webb (2001: 143) suggests, issues such as high unemployment adversely affect the government of the day, then we might be observing a manifestation of such a phenomenon as the Conservatives term in office lengthened.

Table 8-16 - Regression of Vote on Model in Metropolitan Borough Elections.

Year	1978	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988	1990	1991	1992	1994	1995	1996
Conservative															
N	53	146	480	474	467	474	444	750	778	729	758	767	740	727	720
R²	0.67	0.57	0.62	0.64	0.66	0.63	0.65	0.53	0.59	0.56	0.47	0.45	0.48	0.49	0.47
Constant		24.85	21.71	20.44	25.55		12.86	28.72	16.49	24.26	27.57	30.13	18.20	19.38	24.63
PCLASS2	1.55	0.83	0.36	0.55	0.46	0.49	0.53	0.31	0.37	0.34	0.35	0.39	0.37	0.38	0.40
PCLASS4															
PCLASS5		-0.31	-0.15	-0.25	-0.22	-0.14	-0.11	-0.16	-0.11	-0.11	-0.14	-0.14	-0.12	-0.11	-0.12
PCOUNCIL			-0.18	-0.19	-0.12	-0.11									
PSELFWITH			0.23	0.13	0.18	0.20	0.25	0.14	0.14	0.25	0.20	0.13	0.32	0.32	0.30
PSELFWOUT									0.08					-0.10	-0.13
PWORKSEEK		0.43		0.18		0.12		-0.19	-0.12	-0.16	-0.16	-0.19			
POTHSERV	0.42	0.13								-0.10	-0.09		-0.10	-0.11	
PQUALFIED	-0.75				-0.17										
VACANCIES															

Year	1978	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988	1990	1991	1992	1994	1995	1996
Labour															
N	52	158	506	507	505	505	493	808	809	772	789	814	798	794	791
R^2	0.64	0.62	0.70	0.71	0.76	0.72	0.75	0.64	0.67	0.61	0.56	0.53	0.49	0.47	0.44
Constant	92.24	62.74	70.65	67.02	66.49	77.17	75.58	67.68	84.51	70.31	68.11	63.71	73.96	77.51	86.97
PCLASS2	-0.76	-0.38	-0.40	-0.64	-0.62	-0.62	-0.61	-0.34	-0.32	-0.26	-0.23	-0.33	-0.25	-0.21	-0.24
PCLASS4			0.14	0.10	0.10	0.09	0.13								
PCLASS5			0.15	0.19	0.18	0.17	0.15	0.11	0.10	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.07	0.07	
PCOUNCIL		0.17	0.25	0.24	0.21	0.23	0.21	0.09	0.12	0.10	0.13		0.08	0.15	0.12
PSELFWITH															-0.11
PSELFWOUT				-0.13	-0.11		-0.07	-0.16	-0.14	-0.10	-0.15	-0.18	-0.11	-0.12	-0.11
PWORKSEEK			-0.18	-0.22	-0.16	-0.17	-0.18	0.18	0.12	0.10	0.08				
POTHSERV		-0.24	-0.27	-0.17	-0.16	-0.19	-0.22	-0.13	-0.16		-0.14	-0.13			-0.10
PQUALFIED			0.13	0.18	0.13	0.15	0.18			-0.13			-0.13		
VACANCIES		-0.10						-0.04	-0.04						
Liberal															
N	17	58	286	501	480	417	437	754	591	517	589	668	617	637	640
R^2		0.41	0.11	0.11	0.13	0.15	0.21	0.13	0.10	0.09	0.09	0.05	0.11	0.11	0.09
Constant			26.01				18.70		14.52	28.62	24.75	21.46	28.22	31.11	21.79
PCLASS2															-0.21
PCLASS4							-0.15								
PCLASS5															
PCOUNCIL			-0.25	-0.13	-0.12		-0.14		-0.15	-0.17	-0.16	-0.13	-0.12	-0.13	
PSELFWITH				-0.24	-0.24	-0.30	-0.26	-0.16	-0.17						
PSELFWOUT		0.53	0.18	0.13		0.21		0.14	0.13		0.14	0.14			
PWORKSEEK		-0.77	0.27					-0.17			-0.14		-0.16	-0.13	-0.19
POTHSERV			0.27	0.21	0.20	0.33	0.37	0.35	0.17			0.13			0.15
PQUALFIED			-0.37			-0.22		-0.23	-0.21						
VACANCIES		-0.36			0.09			0.07							

All coefficients are significant at p<0.01

The sudden reversal of the relationship between voting and PWORKSEEK in 1987, however, is some cause for concern. The socioeconomic data for metropolitan borough elections before 1987 is derived from the 1981 census and those after, the 1991 census. As a result of the reorganisations between 1979 and 1982 (see Appendix One), some of the elections could not be accurately matched to the census data. Labour, for example, contested all 827 elections held in 1986, but our sample for this year is only 497 elections. In 1987 our sample size is much larger (808). Is it possible that the reduced sample is producing unreliable results? Figure 8-7 shows histograms of PWORKSEEK for all metropolitan wards in the 1981 census (n=830), and the sample of wards contested by Labour in 1986. Although the mean value of PWORKSEEK in Labour contested wards (6.8%) is slightly less than in all wards (7.4%), the distribution of wards is similar suggesting that our sample accurately reflects the socioeconomic characteristics of all the metropolitan boroughs. The value

of R^2 for Labour in 1986 was 0.745 compared with an adjusted R^2 of 0.740. The very small difference also indicates that we can be confident that findings from our sample are reliable. In addition, the reversal in the relationship between voting and PWORKSEEK is still apparent when the level of significance for the t-test is reduced to 0.01.

Figure 8-7 - Histogram of PWORKSEEK in Metropolitan Boroughs
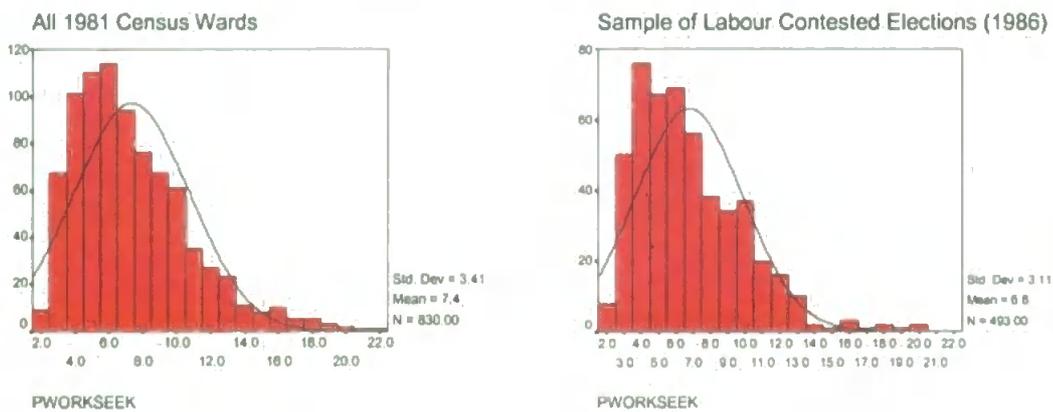
In order to try and confirm the reliability of the finding, we re-analysed the 1987 elections using only those wards that were included in the 1981 census. If the negative relationship between the proportion of unemployed and Labour voting were caused by the reduction in the 1981 sample, then we would expect to see the same negative relationship for the reduced sample in 1987. The results of the regression on this sample, however, revealed the same reversal in the relationship.

It appears that in the metropolitan boroughs, therefore, a fundamental change in the relationship between the proportion of unemployed and Conservative or Labour voting did occur. Unfortunately because of the static nature of our socioeconomic data, it is not possible to pinpoint exactly when the change occurred.

8.9 London Boroughs

When applied to London borough elections, the model explains the greatest variance in partisan voting among the different types of authority. It explains up to three-quarters of the variance in Conservative voting and almost four fifths of the variance in Labour voting. For Liberal voting, however, the model explains just over a tenth of the variance in most years. The value of R^2 appears markedly lower after 1986, supporting the hypothesis that class voting declined during the period. The values of the Conservative and Labour coefficients are again similar to the other types of authority. For Liberals, however, several of the relationships appear to be fundamentally different.

Table 8-17 - Regression of Liberal Voting on Model in London Boroughs

Year	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
Conservative					
N	706	691	708	741	731
R^2	0.73	0.75	0.70	0.61	0.55
Constant	50.44	45.43	34.71	48.98	43.25
PCLASS2	0.23	0.21	0.21	0.15	
PCLASS4	-0.17	-0.17	-0.18	-0.17	-0.16
PCLASS5	-0.12	-0.13	-0.14	-0.07	
PCOUNCIL	-0.15	-0.16	-0.14	-0.23	-0.26
PSELFWITH	0.20	0.21	0.30	0.42	0.47
PSELFWOUT	-0.09	-0.07	-0.07	-0.11	-0.10
PWORKSEEK	-0.18	-0.23	-0.12	-0.12	
POTHSERV	0.14	0.14	0.14		
PQUALIFIED	-0.10	-0.17	-0.19	-0.19	-0.11
VACANCIES	-0.44	0.63	-0.13	-0.15	-1.14
Labour					
N	724	723	723	756	757
R^2	0.79	0.78	0.72	0.58	0.55
Constant	56.91	37.19	51.94	36.32	51.70
PCLASS2	-0.42	-0.36	-0.42	-0.27	-0.32
PCLASS4		0.10		0.17	0.19
PCLASS5					
PCOUNCIL	0.09	0.07			-0.09
PSELFWITH	-0.10	-0.07		-0.23	-0.22
PSELFWOUT				0.14	0.09
PWORKSEEK	0.30	0.39	0.44	0.34	0.32
POTHSERV	-0.09	-0.11	-0.12	-0.12	-0.16
PQUALIFIED		0.13	0.09	0.12	0.19
VACANCIES	-1.66	-1.04	-1.07	0.16	-1.16
Liberal					
N	454	689	704	542	681
R^2	0.13	0.06	0.12	0.10	0.09
Constant		27.17	19.92	18.06	23.72
PCLASS2			0.32	0.21	0.34
PCLASS4					
PCLASS5	0.14	0.15	0.20		
PCOUNCIL	0.26	0.25	0.38	0.35	0.36
PSELFWITH	-0.28	-0.21	-0.29	-0.27	-0.21
PSELFWOUT	0.20	0.15	0.20		
PWORKSEEK	-0.48	-0.39	-0.51	-0.34	-0.38
POTHSERV					
PQUALIFIED	0.36	0.17			
VACANCIES	-0.04	-0.68	-0.50	-0.10	0.17

All coefficients are significant at p<0.01

The similarities and differences in the parties' coefficients between the different types of authority can be seen in Figure 8-8, which summarises the effects of ward-level characteristics upon the vote. For each characteristic the average standardised coefficients for all years is shown for each type of authority. The total variance explained (R2) is shown also. Care must be taken when interpreting this chart as some characteristics may have been significantly different from zero on only a few occasions.[3] For the Conservative and Labour vote share, the greatest amount of variance explained by the model (R2) was in the London boroughs and the least amount in shire districts with whole council elections. Although the sizes of the coefficients fluctuate between authorities, the directions remain the same for both parties. All of the Conservative coefficients for PCLASS2 are positive, for example, while for Labour they are all negative. It appears that the directions of the relationship between the different ward level characteristics and Labour or Conservative are similar for the different types of authority. In most cases the direction of the Labour coefficients are opposite to those of the Conservatives. For the proportion of self employed residents without employees (PSELFWOUT), however, they are mainly both negative.

The chart highlights the unique different relationship between PSELFWOUT and Liberal voting. Where this tended to be negative for the Conservatives and Labour, it was positive for the Liberals in all types of authority. The possible unique Liberal

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[3] In the metropolitan boroughs, the only year in which the coefficient for PCLASS2 was significant for the Liberals was in 1986. The average Liberal coefficient for PCLASS4 in the metropolitan boroughs (-0.15) reflects, therefore, only the value in 1986.

voter base identified in section 8.5 appears to exist in all types of authority. The chart highlights also, some interesting differences in Liberal voting between London and the other types of authority. The variables for PCLASS2, PCOUNCIL and PQUALIFIED appear to be fundamentally different in London. For PCLASS2, however, there are only a few significant coefficients, making any conclusion about the difference unreliable. With the exception of shire district whole council elections, the average R^2 for PCOUNCIL and PQUALIFIED shown in Figure 8-8 appears to accurately reflect the relationships in each authority. Holding all other ward characteristics constant, there appears to be a positive relationship between the proportion of council tenants or qualified residents and Liberal voting in London. In the other authorities the relationship tends to be the opposite. This appears to be particularly true of the relationship for council tenants, which was significantly positive in every year.

Figure 8-8 - Mean Standardised Betas for Main Parties

Conservative

Labour

Liberal

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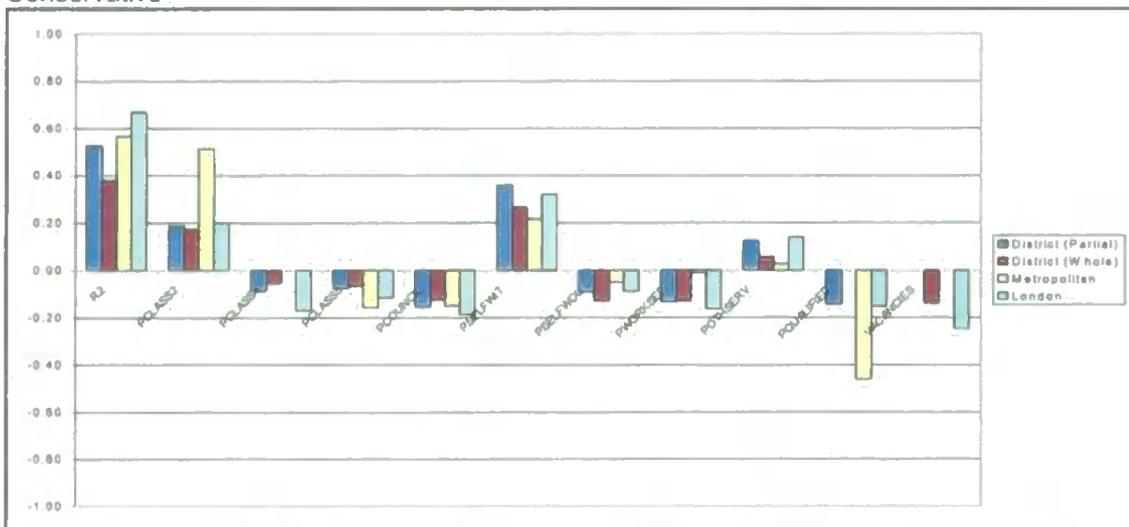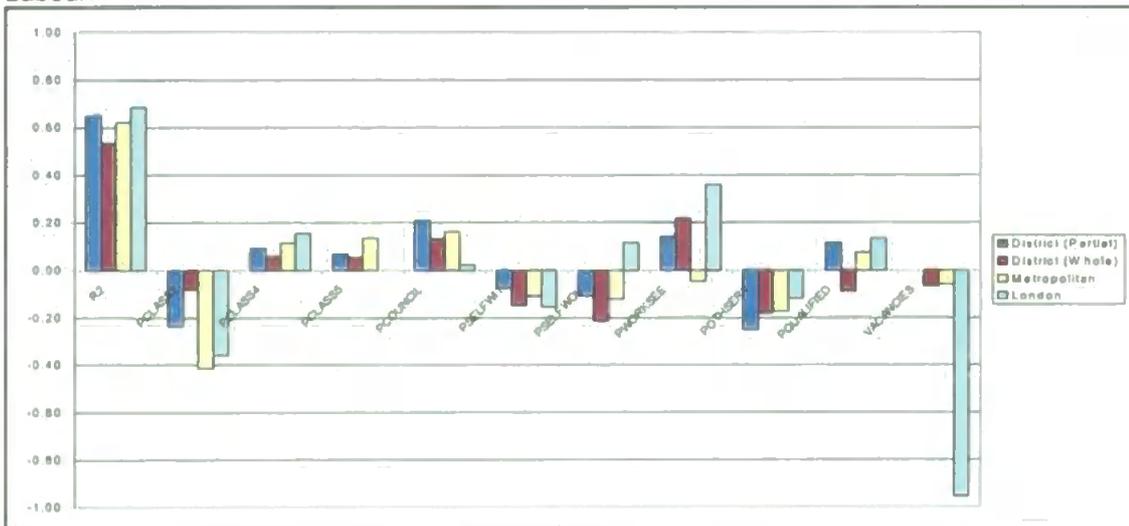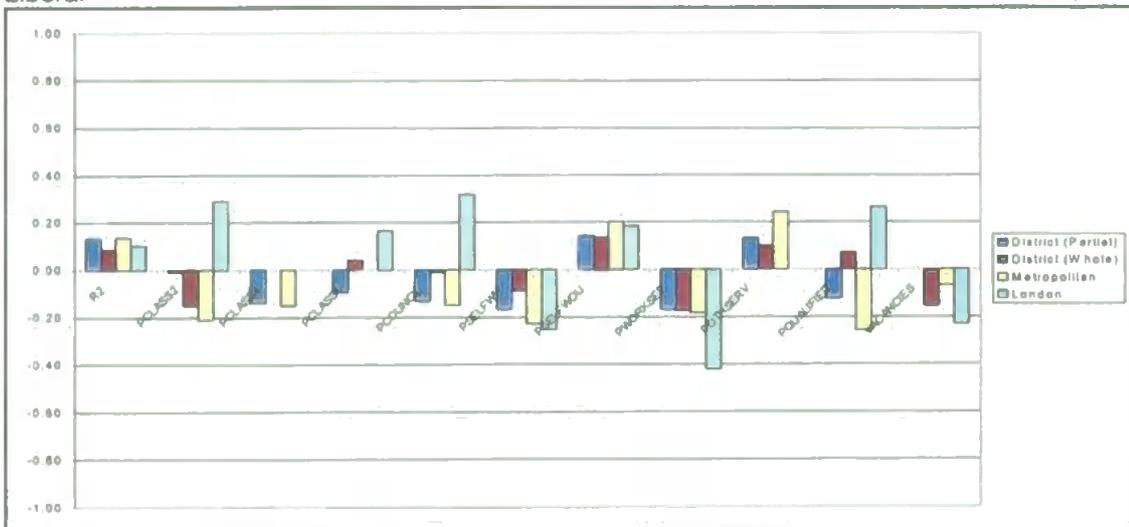
8.10 Conclusion

This chapter produced a model of voter choice for the Liberals that can be applied to the different types of local authority. The model was designed by maximising the combined explanatory power of those variables that were theoretically and previously linked to party voting. The model produced the greatest explanation for the London boroughs. In some years, three quarters of the variance in Labour and Conservative vote share (and two-thirds on average) could be accounted for using only ward level characteristics. The model performed worst in shire district whole council elections, explaining only 38% of Conservative and 53% of Labour vote variance. In all types of authority the model explained Liberal voting least. On average it accounted for only 8% of the variance in shire district whole council elections and 14% in metropolitan borough elections.

The total explained variance in Labour and Conservative vote share did not remain constant. Instead, the amount of explained variance tended to decline during the period, suggesting that the relationship between class and local voting has grown weaker.

For all types of authority there was a significant negative relationship between the Conservative vote and the proportion of residents in working class groups, council tenants, and the unemployed. For the proportion of residents in social class 2, self-employed with employees and those employed in other service industries a significant positive relationship appears to exist. For all of these ward characteristics, the opposite relationship appears to exist for Labour. Only one socioeconomic

characteristic was identified where the relationship was the same for both parties – the proportion of self employed without employees. This characteristic was found to be negatively related to both parties' vote share.

Although the variance in Liberal voting was largely unexplained, there were some interesting features highlighted by the model. When holding all other variables constant, social class, housing, employment status, occupation and education were significantly related to Liberal voting in all authorities. The proportion of self-employed residents without employees is particularly interesting in that it was the only characteristic uniquely related to Liberal voting. The relationship between qualified residents and Liberal voting is also interesting. Although research by Miller (1991) suggested that more qualified residents may vote for the Liberals, there appears to be a negative relationship between this characteristic and Liberal voting in the shire districts and metropolitan boroughs. The same does not appear to be the case in London. When significant, the relationship was positive in these elections. More of a conundrum, is the positive relationship between council tenants and Liberal voting in London, which was shown to be distinctly different than the relationship in other types of authority.

Although the model can explain more than half of the variance in voting for Labour and Conservatives, it by no means explains these parties' entire vote. It appears, therefore, that local political characteristics (identified in Chapter 2) not measured by the census might also be important determinants of voting – particularly for the Liberals. The model, however, does highlight areas worthy of further investigation. The effect of council tenancy upon voting for the party appears to be fundamentally

different in London than in other types of local authority. The following chapter examines such differences in the housing cleavage by focusing in greater detail upon individual level voting behaviour.

Chapter 9 Inferring Individual Voting Behaviour in Local Government Elections

9.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to provide a methodological corroboration of findings from the regression analysis conducted in Chapter 8.9. The analysis suggested that in 1994, the relationship between council tenants and Liberal voting was fundamentally different in the shire districts than in the London boroughs. We could not infer from the findings, however, if this was the result of different voting behaviour by council tenants in the two types of authority due to problems related to the ecological fallacy (see Chapter 4.4.9). This chapter attempts to determine if council tenants *did in fact*, vote differently in the shire districts than in the London boroughs. In so doing it using a recent and innovative technique developed by King (1997) that claims to solve some of the problems of making such ecological inferences.

The chapter begins by highlighting the apparent difference between the two authorities and suggests some reasons for this difference. We then remind the reader of the main methodological problems associated with the research by applying Goodman's technique to the problem of estimating the proportion of council tenants voting for the Liberals. Because our data does not contain the actual proportion of council tenants voting, we must either assume that this is the same as the proportion of council tenants or estimate the proportion of these residents voting. In fact, to increase the strength of our findings, we use both approaches and compare the results

with those for the Goodman's (1953) model and also a nonparametric approach.[1] The first sections apply the methods to the 1994 shire district elections, which are followed by a similar analysis for the 1994 London borough elections.

9.2 Inferring Individual Level Local Voting Behaviour

Chapter 8.9 revealed that the influence of council tenants upon the Liberal vote appears to be fundamentally different in the London Boroughs than the shire districts. In 1994 for example, the regression coefficient for council tenants on Liberal vote share was negative (-0.26) in the shire districts while in the London boroughs it was positive (0.12). This would appear to suggest that when holding all other variables constant, the vote share for Liberal candidates would decrease by a quarter of a percent for every percentage rise in council tenants in shire district wards. For the same one percentage point rise in the London boroughs however, the Liberals' vote share would increase by 0.12%. Although these effects are quite small, the fact that they are influencing the Liberal's vote share in opposite directions is rather interesting. Why would it be that, according to our regression models, council tenants are more likely to vote Liberal in the London boroughs and less likely in the shire districts (and metropolitan boroughs)? If such differences exist between the two types of authority, then exactly what proportion of council tenants are voting for the Liberals in the shire districts compared to the London boroughs?

We could suggest many reasons why council tenants might behave differently in the London boroughs compared with the shire districts. The two types of authority have

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[1] A nonparametric approach does not assume that the distribution of the actual values is truncated bivariate normal.

different kinds of council housing. In London there is a greater amount of high-rise council accommodation. Such housing provides smaller parties with the opportunity easily to reach a large number of potential voters. The type of housing in London might produce particular kinds of local issues, which the Liberals seek to champion. The Liberal controlled Tower Hamlets, for instance, pioneered a 'one-stop shop' system to deal with public enquiries. The system was considered by the party to be at the cutting edge of community politics (Ingle, 1996: 126).

Although the regression model highlighted the difference between the independent effect of council tenancy upon Liberal voting, without survey data we have no idea of the actual difference in the behaviour of individual voters. One way to examine the differences might be the Goodman regression model (outlined in Chapter 4.4.10), to estimate the proportion of council tenants as opposed to other residents voting for the party. Figure 9-1 plots the proportion of votes polled by Liberal candidates (LDSHARE) in the shire districts in 1994 by the proportion of council tenants (PCOUNCIL) in each ward[2]. The regression line calculated using the Goodman model equation is also plotted. The model estimates that the line intersects the left y-axis (PCOUNCIL=0) at 0.422 and the right y-axis (PCOUNCIL=100) at 0.007. The model suggests, therefore, that while 42.2% of other residents vote for the Liberals, just 0.7% of council tenants do so. However, although both of these estimates are valid in that they lie between 0 and 1, the very small proportion of council tenants suggests that some aggregation bias may exist within the model.

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[2] The methods for inferring individual level behaviour express both the known values and the model estimates as a proportion of one. A percentage vote share of 37% would, therefore, be expressed as 0.37.

Figure 9-1 - Scatter Plot of Liberal Voting by Council Tenancy in 1994 Shire District Elections
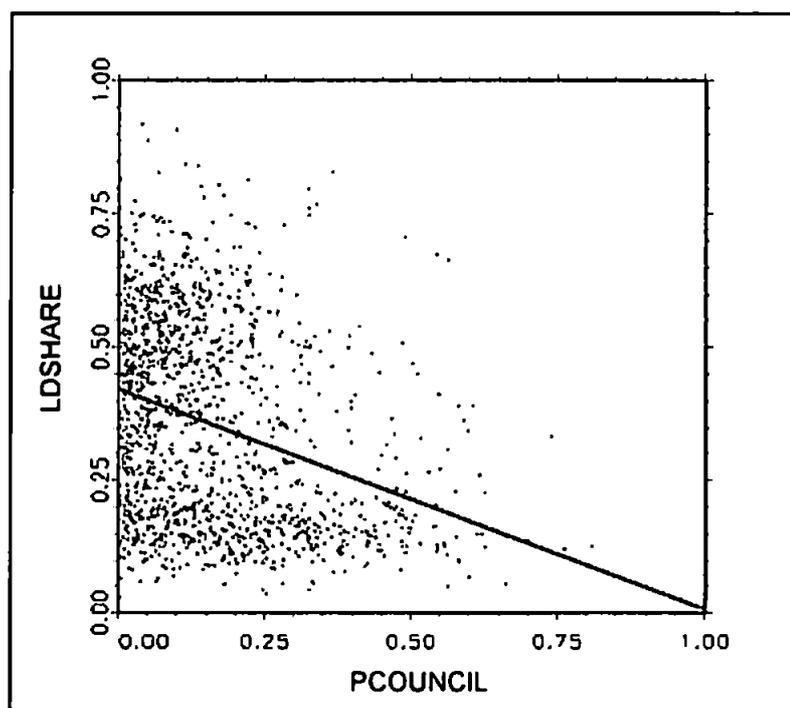
In addition to the general problems with using this method to infer individual level behaviour outlined in chapter 3, there is also a problem with the inferences that can be made using census data. Firstly, the proportion of council tenants is assumed to be the same in the electorate as it is for all residents. Secondly, the proportion of the electorate turning out to vote is assumed to be the same for both council tenants and other residents. While the first assumption might be reasonably acceptable, the consequences of the second assumption (which is usually ignored in the methodological literature on ecological inference) may be too great to rely solely upon findings from the model (King, 1997: 69). Indeed, if turnout was lower for council tenants than for other residents, such a model might underestimate the proportion of council tenants voting for the Liberals. Techniques for reducing the impact of these assumptions are themselves problematic. One method involves estimating the unknown values (such as proportion of council tenants turning out to

vote) from the known values (proportion of council tenants from all residents). Unfortunately, using estimates instead of real values is likely to increase the amount of error in the final estimations. In order to address such problems, the King method will be applied to the problem using both the known values for council tenants (with the previous assumptions) and the estimated unknown values. If both models produce similar results then we can be more confident in the results than would be the case had we used a single model.

9.3 Ecological Inference Model with Assumptions

If we assume that the proportion of council tenants voting is equal to the proportion of other residents then the results of the Goodman regression model can be easily checked against the King method. Figure 9-2 shows a plot of the same data divided into four sections (an X-graph). An X-graph is useful as it allows us to draw certain conclusions regarding the data points in the different sections. Data points that lie in the left-hand triangle have [0,1] bounds for number of council tenants (β_i^c) and very narrow bounds for other residents (β_i^o), where i is the individual ward. For these data points therefore, the true proportion of council tenants voting Liberal can range between 0 and 1, while the true proportion of other residents will have a more limited range (King, 1997: 89). Most of the data points lie in this quarter and many of these are close to 0 along the x-axis. For these wards, therefore, the proportion of council residents is quite low. The highlighted ward is that of Mile Cross in the district of Norwich. In 1994, the Liberals proportion of the vote (V_i) in this ward was 0.1393 (13.93% of total votes polled) and the proportion of council tenants (X_i) was 0.6992 (69.92% of total residents). Knowing this information allows us to make statements about the actual number of council tenants (β_i^c) and other residents (β_i^o) that voted

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for the Liberals. For example, if turnout was equal for both groups, it would not possible for 100% of council tenant voters to have voted Liberal. If this were the case then the vote share for the party would be at least 69.92%.

Figure 9-2 - X-Graph of Liberal Voting by Council Tenancy in 1994 Shire District Elections
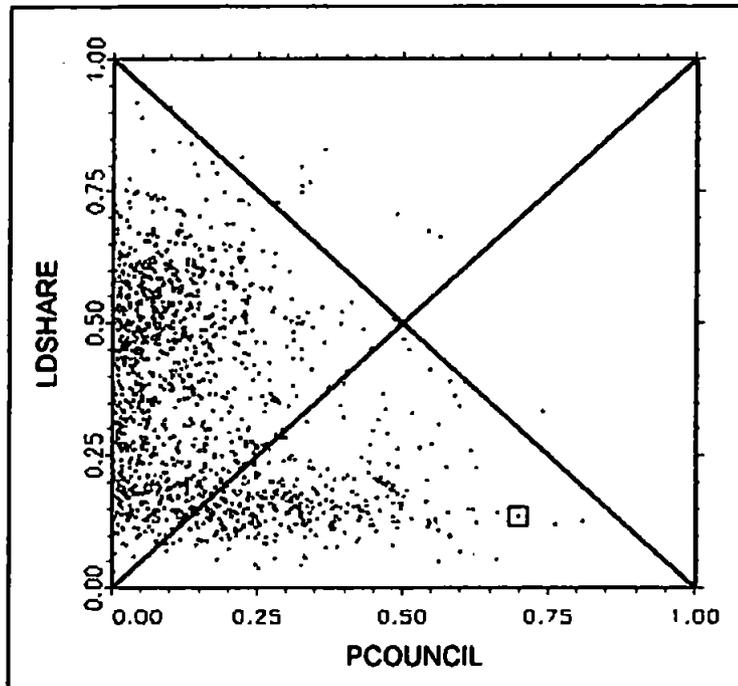
Knowing this information allows us to specify the possible range of values (bounds) for both the proportion of council tenants and other residents voting Liberal. The bounds for β_i^c are calculated as follows:

$$\max\left(0, \frac{V_i - (1 - X_i)}{X_i}\right) \leq \beta_i^c \leq \min\left(\frac{V_i}{X_i}, 1\right)$$

$$\max(0, -0.2303) \leq \beta_i^c \leq \min(0.1992, 1)$$

The bounds for β_i^o are calculated in a similar way:

$$\max\left(0, \frac{V_i - X_i}{1 - X_i}\right) \leq \beta_i^o \leq \min\left(\frac{V_i}{1 - X_i}, 1\right)$$

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$$\max(0,-1.8613) \le \beta_i^o \le \min(0.463,1)$$

The true values for β_i^c in Mile Cross must lie, therefore, between 0 and 0.1992 while those for β_i^o must lie between 0 and 0.463. In this ward, therefore, the percentage of council tenants that voted for the Liberals must have been between 0 and 19.9% while the percentage of other residents voting for the party must have been between 0 and 46.3%. The possible range of values for council tenants voting Liberal are far less than those for other residents. If the method is applied to all shire district wards it can considerably reduced the range of possible values for this type of authority. Of the 1332 shire district elections in 1994, for example, the possible value of β_i^o can be determined to within 2.5% for 319 (23.9%) of wards. Most of these wards have a low proportion of council tenants (under 5%). Brickhill ward in Bedford has only 2.3% council tenants and the Liberals polled 58% of the vote in 1994. Although the range for β_i^c is [0,1] the true value for β_i^o must lie between 0.569 and 0.593. Between 56.9% and 59.3% of non-council tenants must, therefore, have voted for the party in Brickhill. A narrow range for β_i^o does not always require a small proportion of X_i. Haymill ward in Slough has 25.3% of residents living in council housing. However, as the Liberals' vote in this ward was only 3.6% the value of β_i^o must lie between 0 and 0.048 (between 0% and 4.8% non-council tenants voting Liberal). While small values for X_i provide a narrow range of values for β_i^o, small values for V_i generally provide narrow ranges for both β_i^o and β_i^c. The value for β_i^c in Haymill ranges between 0 and 0.142. Because there are generally fewer council tenants in a ward, on the whole the bounds for β_i^c are far greater than are those for β_i^o. In fact, the bounds

for β_i^c are [0,1] in 991 of the 1332 wards. For these wards the percentage of council tenants voting Liberal can range from 0% to the 100%.

As the value for non-council tenants is linearly related to council tenants, Goodman's regression equation can also be rearranged to express the proportion of council tenants voting Liberal, as a linear function of the proportion of other residents voting for the party (King, 1997: 80).

$$\beta_i^o = \left(\frac{V_i}{1 - X_i}\right) - \left(\frac{X_i}{1 - X_i}\right)\beta_i^c$$

If the proportion of council tenants (β_i^c) voting for the party in the Mile Cross ward was 0 then the value for the proportion of other residents (β_i^o) voting for the party must be:

$$\beta_i^o = \left(\frac{0.1393}{1 - 0.6992}\right) - \left(\left(\frac{0.6992}{1 - 0.6992}\right) \times 0\right)$$

$$\beta_i^o = 0.4631$$

The percentage of other residents voting Liberal in the Mile Cross ward in 1994 must, therefore, have been between 0% and 46.31% if no council tenants voted for the party. A similar method can also be used to calculate the proportion of council tenants voting for Liberal candidates:

$$\beta_i^c = \left(\frac{V_i}{X_i}\right) - \beta_i^o$$

If the number of other residents voting were zero then the proportion of council tenants voting Liberal must be:

$$\beta_i^c = \left(\frac{0.1393}{0.6992}\right) - 0$$

$$\beta_i^c = 0.1992$$

For each shire district ward, a line representing the range of possible values for β_i^c and β_i^o can be plotted. Figure 9-3 shows a sample of the data[3] with one line plotted for each shire district ward. Each line represents all of the possible true values of the proportion of council tenants and other residents that voted Liberal in 1994. The thick black line which corresponds to the Mile Cross ward, is relatively short in length which indicates a limited range for the true values of council tenants voting Liberal (0-19.9%) but a larger range for the proportion of other residents voting for the party (0-46.3%). All of the flatter horizontal lines originated from data points in the left hand side of the X-graph shown in Figure 9-2. The proportion of council tenants in these wards is very small and nearly all of the Liberal support must have come from other residents. Because a far greater number of wards have a small proportion of council tenants, the majority of lines traverse the y-axis very little but extend across the entire x-axis. Although we know little about the behaviour of council tenants in these wards, we can use those wards we do know more about (such as Mile Cross) to estimate where along the horizontal line the true point is most likely to lie.

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[3] A sample (1 in 10) is used as plotting all of the lines on the graph results in a solid block. The reduced size of the sample allows us to identify easily, the Mile Cross ward.

Figure 9-3 - Possible True Values of Council Tenants and Other Residents Voting Liberal in 1994 District Elections
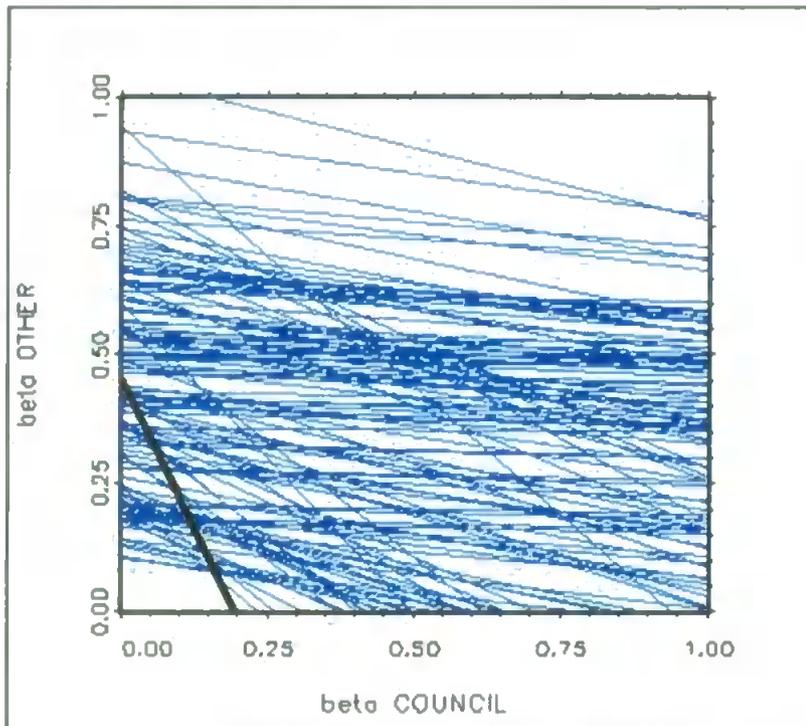
The distribution of these lines for the entire data set can be estimated by calculating the truncated bivariate normal distribution for all cases (King, 1997). Truncating the bivariate normal distribution ensures that the parameters always range between 0 and 1. The model also weights the size of each ward when calculating the distribution. The parameters of the truncated bivariate normal distribution are estimated using the maximum likelihood technique and consist of the mean and standard deviations of β_i^c (0.1380,0.1071) and β_i^o (0.3425,0.2080) with a correlation between β_i^c and β_i^o (in this case 0.9341). The truncated bivariate normal distribution can be represented by a tomography plot, on which 50% (inner) maximum likelihood contours and 95% (outer) maximum likelihood contours of the distribution are overlaid. The likelihood function, (which is proportional to the sampling distribution), is used to summarise all information in the data about the parameters on the scale most convenient for estimation (King, 1997: 139). Figure 9-4 displays for

each ward, the lines on which the true values of β_i^c and β_i^o must lie, together with the 50% and 95% maximum likelihood contours. The true values for β_i^c and β_i^o are most likely to lie within the centre of the contours. As the contours are centred round the area where the lines appear more densely clustered we can be reasonably confident that the contours are an accurate reflection of the correct distribution. Another characteristic of the model is that when β_i^c is equal to β_i^o this value must also be equal to the Liberal vote share. The vote share for the Liberals in each ward can, therefore, be read off from where its tomography line crosses the 45-degree diagonal. As only three lines cross this diagonal where $\beta_i^c > 0.8$ (the top right corner of the graph) we know the Liberals polled more than 80% of the vote in only three wards.

Figure 9-4 - Tomography plot with 50% and 95% Maximum Likelihood Contours
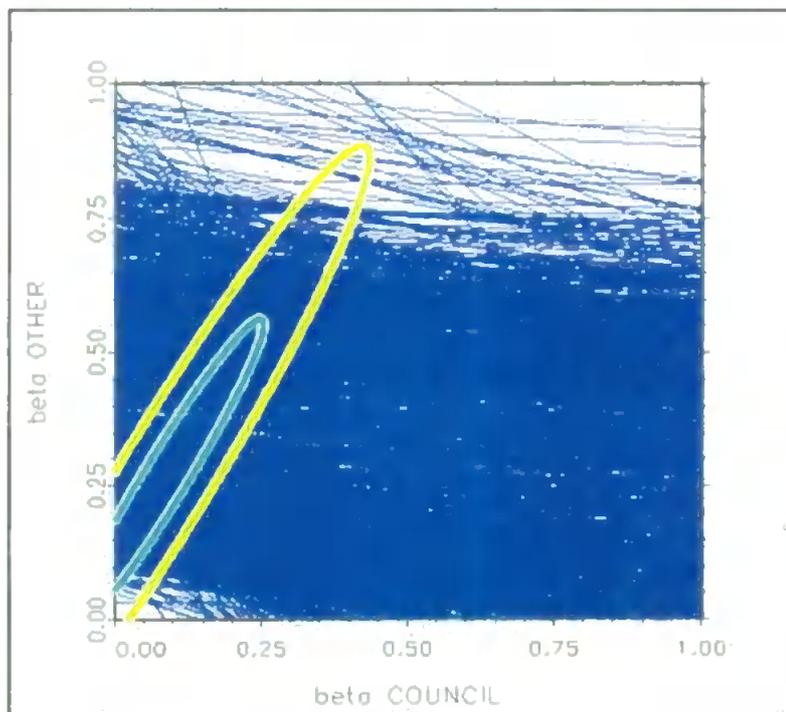
Before proceeding to the next stage in this method, the estimate of the distribution can be compared with an alternative non-parametric visual representation of the

distribution of lines. The method for the non-parametric surface plot does not assume that the distribution of the lines is truncated bivariate normal. The surface plot in Figure 9-5 shows a representation of the lines. The portions of the volume above the unit square (such as $\beta_i^c > 0.9$ and $\beta_i^o < 0.2$) indicate the probability of these events occurring under the model (King, 1997: 133). The distribution of the lines is therefore represented by the vertical axis. The highest point of the surface plot is similar to the distribution indicated by the contour lines in the tomography plot shown in Figure 9-4. The distribution is affected by truncation along the β_i^c axis due to the fact that a large number of values for the parameter ranged across the entire [0,1] bounds. Without truncation, therefore, the estimated value of the proportion of council tenants would not be restricted to between zero and one.

Figure 9-5 - Nonparametric Surface Plot Representing the Beta Distribution for Shire Districts
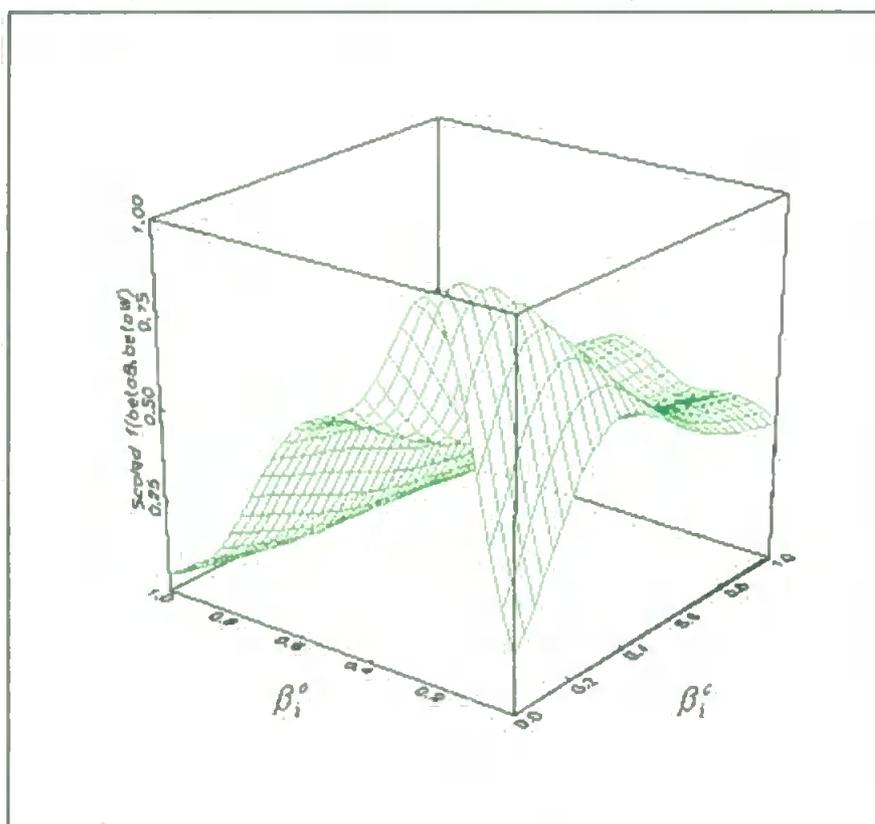
Now that we have some idea of the distribution of β_i^c and β_i^o we can estimate the authority level proportions of both council tenants voting Liberal (β^c) and other residents voting Liberal (β^o). The technique of simulation is the easiest way to estimate these values from the truncated bivariate normal distribution. The technique can estimate the numerical value of these quantities to any degree of precision. The basic idea involves taking random samples of the parameters of interest from the given probability distribution, averaging to approximate the mean and calculating the standard deviation to approximate the standard error (King 1997, 141). If the degree of precision is not sufficient then simply increasing the number of random draws will provide greater precision (King, 1997: 143). Figure 9-6 shows a smoothed histogram of the results of the estimates for each ward. The aggregate lower bound for β^c is 0.0061 and its upper bound is 0.6999. The aggregate lower bound for β^o is 0.2586 and its upper bound is 0.4037. Although the range of values between the lower and upper bound is greater for β^c than for β^o, the histogram for β^c is negatively skew. The estimates for β_i^o are, therefore, generally higher than are those for β_i^c. The variances of the both of the distributions are not great although the sharp cut off for the estimates of β_i^o reveal that these estimates are strongly affected by their upper bound. We can also tell from Figure 9-6, that while the probability of β_i^o falling between 0.35 and 0.4 is quite likely, the probability of exceeding 0.41 is highly unlikely. However, while the probability of β_i^c exceeding 0.25 is remote, it is still possible that it might be as high as 0.6999.

Figure 9-6 - Posterior Distributions of Shire District Ward Estimations
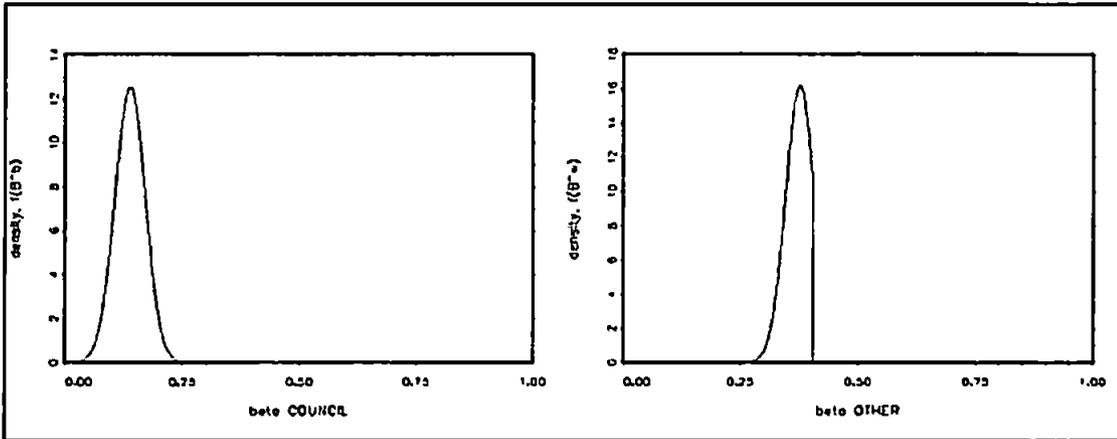
The estimated authority level values for council tenants and other residents voting Liberal can be calculated from the central tendency and distribution of the simulations. The estimated value for β^c is 0.1379 (13.8%) with a standard deviation of 0.01 (1%) while that for β^o is 0.3762 (37.6%) with a deviation of 0.002 (0.2%).

The standard deviation of both parameters is quite small, indicating there is little variation in the estimates from ward to ward. Indeed the lower the standard deviation of the parameters, the more confidence we have that the true value falls close to the estimate (King, 1997: 206). The model estimates that the proportion of council tenants in the districts voting for the Liberals is 13.8% and the proportion of other residents voting for the party is 37.6%. There does appear, therefore, to be a large difference in the behaviour of council tenants compared with other residents.

9.4 : Ecological Inference using Parameter Estimates for Shire Districts

The model appears to suggest a large difference between the proportion of council tenants and other residents voting for the Liberals, assuming that turnout in the districts is the same for both groups. Unfortunately the King method was used to estimate the voting patterns according to the model specified in Figure 9-7. Neither the census nor the local election data, however, include the values for the number of

council tenants that voted. The analysis in the previous section used the total number of residents instead[4]. In order for the model to be correct, we would have to assume that the proportion of council tenants voting is the same as the proportion of council residents in the ward. Unfortunately, this may be an unrealistic assumption. Previous survey based research suggests that turnout among council tenants may be higher than that for home-owners (Miller, 1988: 96). Miller's research, however, does not include other forms of housing tenure and more recent research has suggested that voter turnout may well be lower among council tenants than other residents (Rallings et al, 1996). Differences in turnout between the two groups might lead to errors in the estimates of the proportion of council tenants voting for the Liberals. If turnout is less for council tenants our estimate of 13.79% of this group voting for the Liberals may well be lower than the correct value.

Figure 9-7 - The King Model Applied to Council Tenancy and Liberal Voting

| | Voting Decision | | |
	Liberal	Non-Liberal	
Council Tenants	Liberal Voting Council Tenants	Non-Liberal Voting Council Tenants	Total Council Voters
Other Residents	Liberal Voting Other Residents	Non-Liberal Voting Other Residents	Total Other Voters
	Total Liberal Votes	Total Non-Liberal Votes	Total Voters

(Row labels grouped under: Housing Tenure)

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[4] The King model estimate the values in the cells (e.g. Liberal Voting Council Tenants) using information from the values in the marginals (e.g. Total Council Voters).

One approach to this problem is to estimate the unknown marginal values (e.g. proportion of council tenants turning out to vote) from the information about the group that is known (proportion of council tenants). Figure 9-8 shows the specification that is required to estimate the proportion of council tenants turning out to vote. Unfortunately, we are again subject to a similar condition whereby the total number of council tenants registered to vote is not known. In order to use this model we would have to assume that the proportion of council tenants registered to vote was equal to the proportion of council residents. This again might not be the case as voter registration, according to Miller (1988: 60), may also vary between different social groups.

Figure 9-8 - The King Model Applied to Council Tenancy and Turnout

| | **Voting Decision** | | |
	Vote	Not Vote	
Council Tenants	Voting Council Tenants	Non-Voting Council Tenants	Total Council Electorate
Other Residents	Voting Other Residents	Non-Voting Other Residents	Total Other Electorate
	Total Voters	Total Non-Voters	Total Voters

(Housing Tenure)

The proportion of council tenants registered to vote could be estimated using the model shown in Figure 9-9. In this case the data used in the model contains all of the available information required to produce reliable estimates of the proportions of council and non-council tenants registered to vote. It will estimate the proportion of

council tenants registered to vote from the total number of council tenants and as such will take into account not only those residents under 18, but also those of voting age that are not registered.

Figure 9-9 - The King Model Applied to Council Tenancy and Voter Registration

| | **Voting Registration** | | |
	Registered	Not Registered	
Council Tenants	Registered Council Tenants	Non- Registered Council Tenants	Total Council Tenants
Other Residents	Registered Other Residents	Non- Registered Other Residents	Total Other Residents
	Total Registered	Total Non-Registered	Total Voters

(Housing Tenure labels the rows: Council Tenants, Other Residents)

The model now becomes a three-stage process of estimation. Firstly, the proportion of council tenants registered to vote is estimated from the total number of council tenants. These estimates are then used to estimate the proportions of registered council tenants turning out to vote which in turn can be used to estimate the proportion of council tenant voters voting for the Liberals. The preliminary estimates are not only useful in determining the final quantities of interest but also provide useful information themselves.

The first stage of the model produces estimates for the proportion of council residents that are registered to vote. As the model estimates voter registration as a proportion of the entire electorate, we might expect the proportion of residents registered to vote to be higher for those residents that were not council tenants. One of the main reasons

for this is that the number of children under voting age is positively related to council tenancy. There should, therefore, be fewer residents of voting age among council tenants. Figure 9-10 shows a tomography plot of all possible values of β_i^c (registered council tenants) and β_i^o (registered other residents) for each ward. The figure also shows the 50% and 95% maximum likelihood contours, indicating the most likely location of the true aggregate quantities of interest. The area within the 95% contour line is considerably less than the entire unit square. The model has, therefore, narrowed the possible values for β_i^c and β_i^o from the entire unit-square, to only this area for 95% of the cases. The position of the centre of the contours indicates that the estimates will be higher for other residents. Indeed the model estimates that the aggregate proportion of council tenants registered to vote is 0.693 (69.3%) with a standard deviation of 0.009 (0.9%). The estimated aggregate proportion of other residents that are registered to vote however is 0.786 (78.6%) with a standard deviation of 0.002 (0.2%). As expected the model estimates registration is lower among council tenants than for residents not in this type of housing - due to a proportion of children living in local authority as opposed to other accommodation.

Figure 9-10 - Tomography Plot of Voter Registration in 1994 Shire District Elections
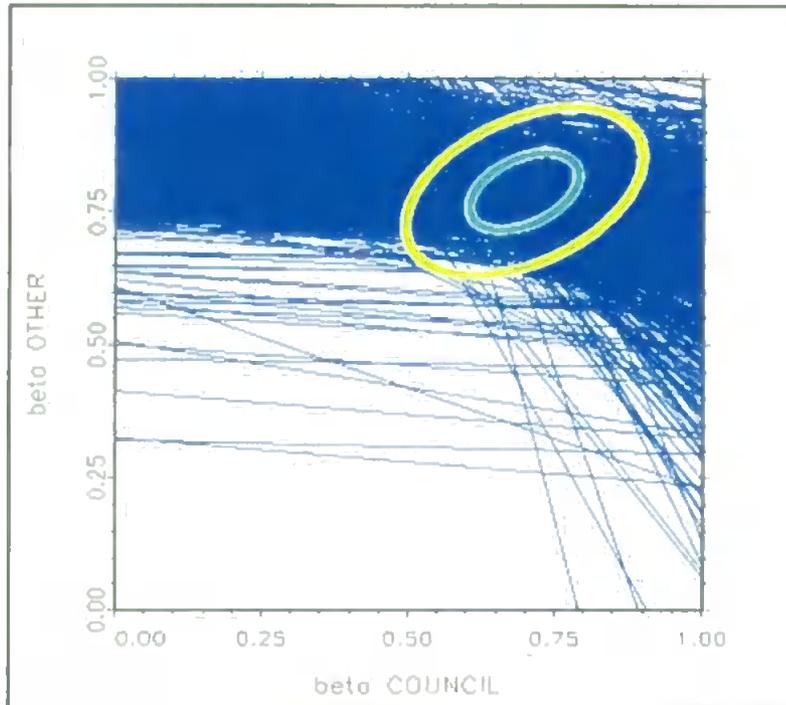
The second stage of the model produces estimates of the proportion of council residents turning out to vote from the estimated proportion of council tenants that were registered to vote. The estimates of β_i^c from the first stage must first be converted into the proportion of the electorate consisting of council tenants[5]. Using these estimates, both the Goodman and King models have similar proportions for the average turnout of both groups. The Goodman model estimates the average proportion of council tenants turning out to vote as 0.258 (25.8%) with a standard deviation of 0.013 (1.3%) and other residents as 0.460 (46%) with a standard deviation of 0.003 (0.3%). A tomography plot for the data with 50% and 95% maximum likelihood contours is shown in Figure 9-11. The King model estimates

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[5] In order to calculate these values, the estimated number of council tenants registered to vote in each ward is first calculated by multiplying the β_i^c estimates produced by the first stage by the total number of council tenants in each ward. Dividing this value into the electorate for each ward provides the estimated proportions of the electorate that were council tenants.

turnout among council tenants as 0.246 (24.6%) with a standard deviation of 0.012

(1.2%) and other residents as 0.447 (44.7%) with a standard deviation of 0.002

(0.2%). Both models estimate that turnout among council tenants is over 20

percentage points less than that for non-council tenants. Miller (1988) suggested that

a greater proportion of council tenants turn out to vote than home-owners. When

compared with all other residents however, council tenants appear far less likely to

vote. Such a large difference in turnout may well have affected our previous

estimates for the proportion of council tenants voting Liberal. The model may have

underestimated the values for this group, resulting in significant errors in the final

estimates.

Figure 9-11 - Tomography Plot of Voter Turnout in 1994 Shire District Elections
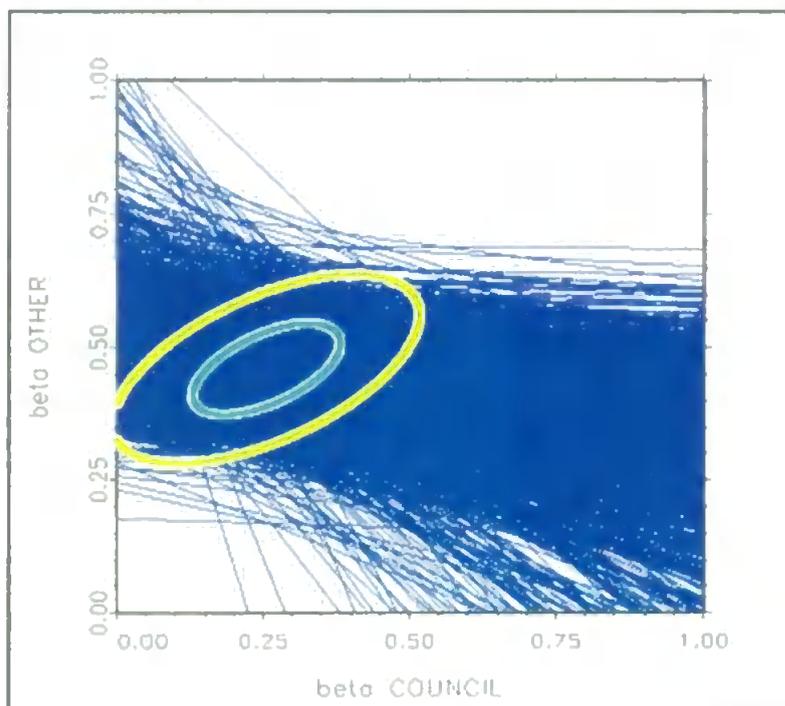
The third stage produces estimates of the proportion of council tenants voting for the

Liberals from the estimated proportion of council tenants turning out to vote. The

estimates of β_i^c from the second stage must first be converted into the proportion of voters consisting of council tenants[6]. The tomography plot for the third stage is shown in Figure 9-12. The model estimates the proportion of council tenants voting for the Liberals as 0.112 (11.2%) with a standard deviation of 0.032 (3.2%) and other residents as 0.371 (37.1%) with a standard deviation of 0.003 (0.3%). This suggests that other residents are three times more likely to vote Liberal than council tenants.

How do these results compare with the model that assumed turnout was the same for both groups? For that model, the estimated percentage of council tenants voting Liberal was 13.8% while other residents were 37.6%. The percentage of other residents voting for the Liberals differs by only 0.5% from the model that assumed that turnout was the same for both groups. The estimates for the percentage of council tenants voting for the party is 2.6% lower than the previous estimate. The estimates for the percentage of council tenants voting for the Liberals, therefore, did not increase greatly when the model was adjusted for voter turnout. Evidence from both models (Goodman and King) appears to support that there is a significant difference in voting for the party among the different types of resident.

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[6] In order to calculate these values, the estimated number of council tenants turning out to vote in each ward is first calculated by multiplying the β_i^c estimates produced by the second stage by the estimated number of council tenants registered in each ward. Dividing these values into the total votes cast in each ward provides the estimated proportion of voters that are council tenants.

Figure 9-12 - Tomography Plot of Liberal Voting in 1994 Shire District Elections
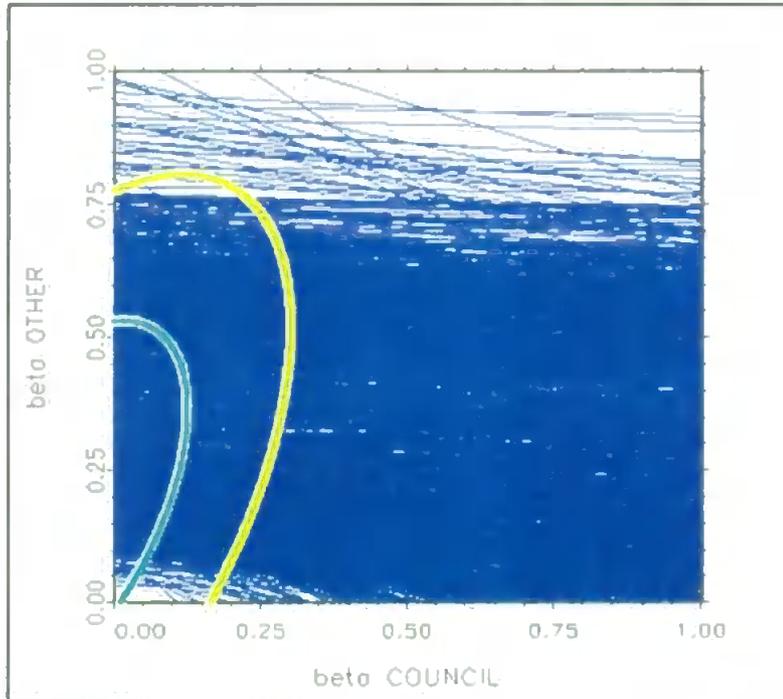
9.5 : Ecological Inference in the London Boroughs

By contrast, the relationship between council tenants and Liberal support appears much more positive in the London boroughs. The nature of this relationship will be examined both with and without the assumptions relating to voter turnout. The first section therefore examines the relationship using the known values for the proportion of council tenants in each ward. Figure 9-13 shows a scatter plot of Liberal vote share by proportion of council tenants for the 1994 elections with Goodman's regression line plotted. The regression line is almost flat indicating that there is little difference in the proportion of the two groups voting for the Liberals. The Goodman model estimates reflect this fact. It estimates the percentage of council tenants voting for the party as 24.5% (*s.d.* = 2.44) and non-council residents as 23.7% (*s.d.* = 0.95).

Figure 9-13 - Scatter Plot of Liberal Vote Share by Council Tenants in 1994 London Borough Elections
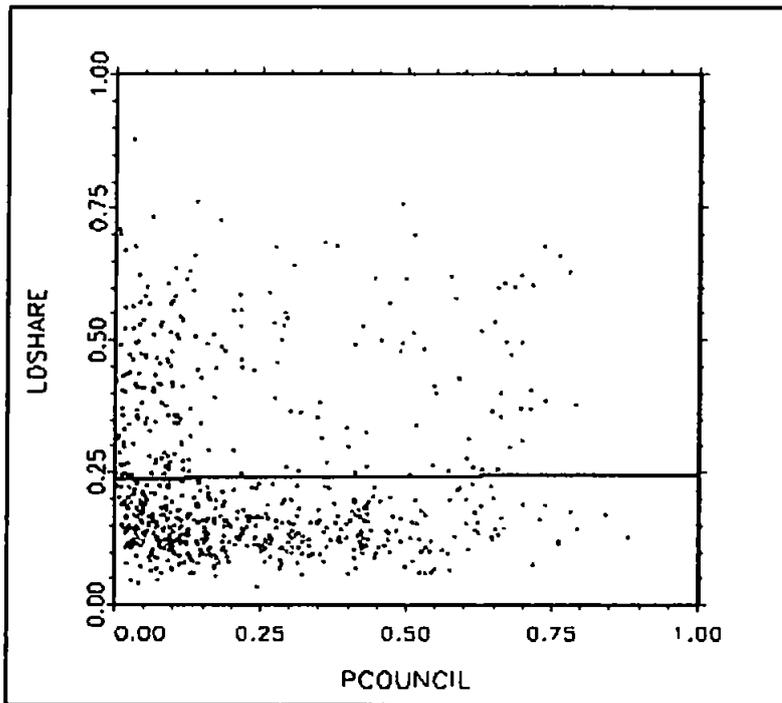
A tomography plot showing the possible values for β_i^c and β_i^o for all wards is shown in

Figure 9-14. The parameters for the truncated bivariate normal distribution consist of

the mean and standard deviation of β_i^c (0.1673, 0.1686) and β_i^o (0.1800, 0.1414) with

a correlation between β_i^c and β_i^o (0.8703). The tomography plot reveals that the

distribution appears to be densely concentrated around the bottom left corner of the

graph. The maximum likelihood contours are also elongated along the β_i^c axis which

indicates that the range of possible values for the proportion of council tenants is

wider than that for non-council tenants.

Figure 9-14 - Tomography Plot of Council Tenancy and Liberal Voting in 1994 London Borough Elections with 50% and 95% Maximum Likelihood Contours
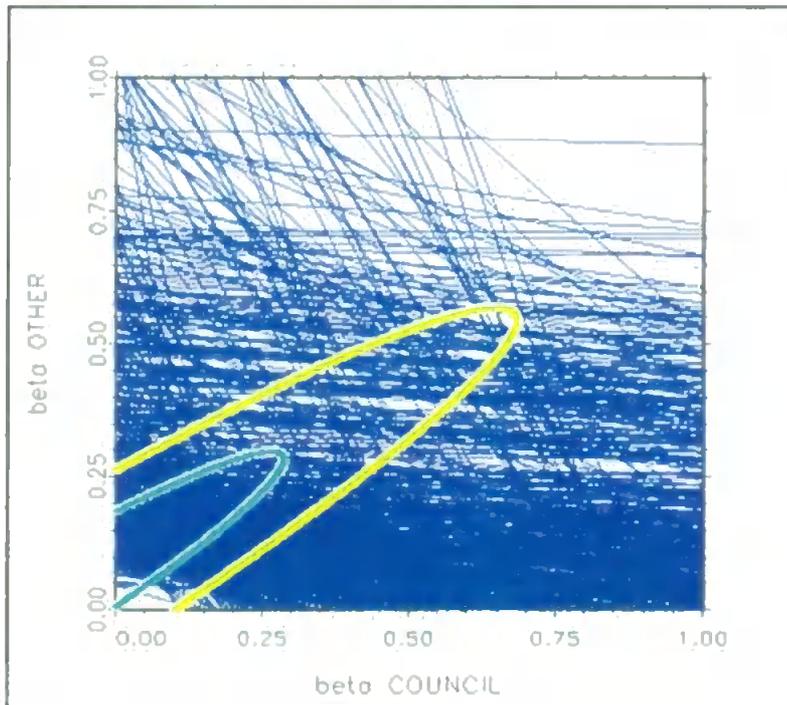
The distribution of the lines along which the actual values must lie can be verified by examining a non-parametric representation of the distribution shown in Figure 9-15. The method for the non-parametric surface plot does not assume that the distribution of the lines is truncated bivariate normal. The highest point of the surface plot is similar to the distribution indicated by the contour lines in the tomography plot. The surface plot appears therefore, to support the maximum likelihood contours estimated using the truncated bivariate normal distribution.

Figure 9-15 - Nonparametric Surface Plot Representing the Beta Distribution for 1994 London Borough Elections
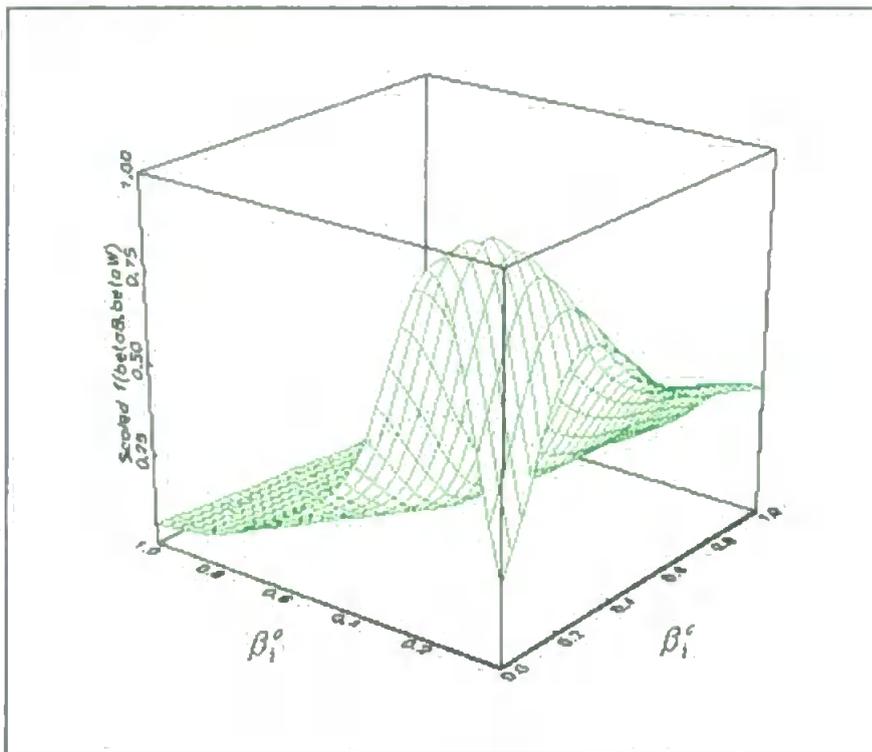
The smoothed histograms of the simulations produced by the model are shown in Figure 9-16. The histograms are plotted from the estimated values of β_i^c and β_i^o for each ward. The aggregate lower bound for β_i^c is 0.032 and its upper bound is 0.589. The aggregate lower bound for β_i^o is 0.134 while its upper bound is 0.297. The estimated percentage of council tenants voting Liberal, therefore, lies between 3.2% and 58.9%, while the percentage of other residents voting for the party lies between 13.4% and 29.7%. The King model estimates the aggregate percentage of council tenants voting for the Liberals as 25.5% (*s.d.* = 4.25). We would expect therefore, the actual percentage of council tenants voting for the Liberals to lie between 17% and 34% in 95% of cases - that is, within two standard deviations. The estimated aggregate percentage of other residents voting for the party is 23.2% (*s.d.* = 1.24).

We would expect therefore, the actual percentage of other residents voting for the Liberals to lie between 20.7% and 25.7% in 95% of cases.

Figure 9-16 - Posterior Distributions of London Borough Ward Estimations
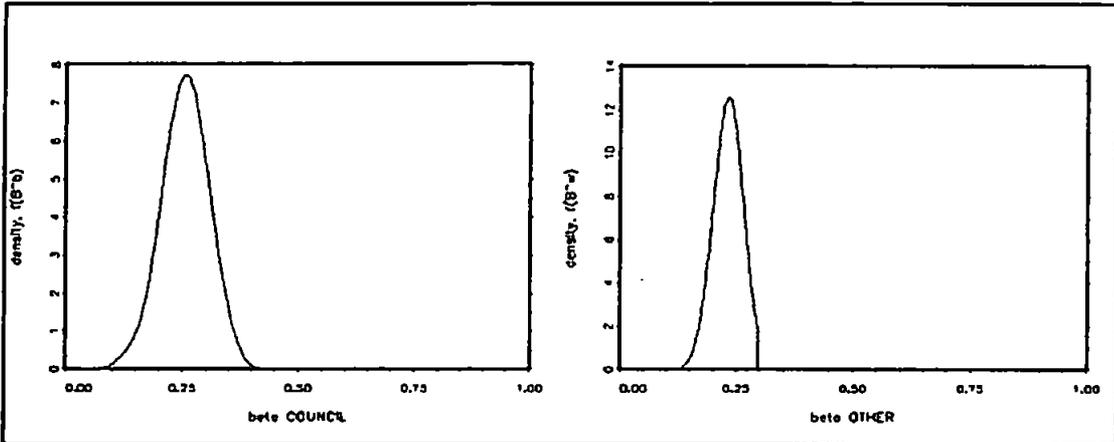
9.6 Ecological Inference using Parameter Estimates for London Boroughs

The three-stage extension of the previous model revealed that in the shire districts, turnout appeared to have an effect upon its results in an unexpected way. We would expect the actual level of support among council tenants to be greater than predicted if turnout was lower for this group. This proved not to be the case for the shire districts and levels of support for the party actually reduced when turnout was lower. If a similar phenomenon occurred in London then the previous estimates for these wards might well be too high!

Given the previous observations we would expect registration among council tenants in London to be lower than that for other residents. But what of the difference between the London boroughs and the shire districts? Previous research suggests that voter registration in London is far lower than in the shire districts (Miller, 1988: 60). In addition to this, non-payment of the community charge was much more prevalent in London than in the shires (Travers, 1995: 19) and although the poll-tax was

abolished in 1991, it is arguable that the electoral effects of the legislation remained

for some time after (Rallings & Thrasher, 1997: 40). This being the case we would

expect the estimates of voter registration in London to be less than those for the shire

districts. Figure 9-17 shows a histogram of the estimates for the values of β_i^c and β_i^o.

The model estimates that the aggregate percentage of council tenants registered to

vote in the London boroughs is 68.8% (*s.d.* = 1.2). The estimated aggregate

percentage of other residents registered to vote however is 74.2% (*s.d.* = 0.35). The

model, which estimates that voter registration is higher among non-council tenants,

reflects the higher proportion of children living in council housing.

Figure 9-17 - Posterior Distributions of London Borough Voter Registration Estimations.
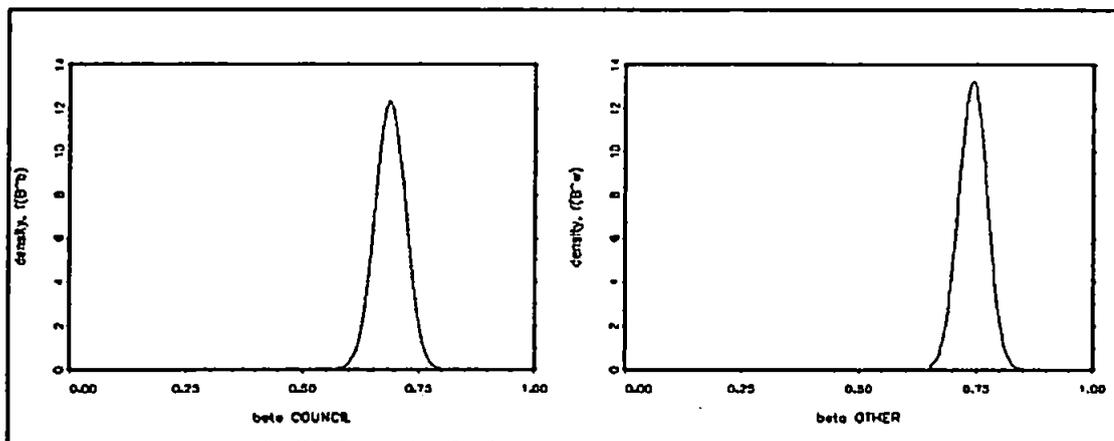
Using the results to estimate the proportion of council residents turning out to vote,

reveals, as with the shire districts, that both the Goodman and King models produce

similar results. The Goodman model estimates the aggregate percentage of council

tenants voting as 36.4% (*s.d.* = 0.97) and other residents as 49.3% (*s.d.* = 0.36). A

histogram of the estimates for each ward is shown in Figure 9-18. The King model

estimates turnout among council tenants as 36% (*s.d.* = 0.76) and other residents

49.2% (*s.d.* = 0.2). Both models estimate that turnout among council tenants is

around 13% less than that for non-council tenants. But do these differences affect our

previous estimates for the London boroughs in the same way as they did for the shire

districts? If the effects of turnout are similar then we may well expect the third stage

to produce lower estimates of the proportion of council tenants voting Liberal.

Figure 9-18 - Posterior Distributions of London Borough Voter Turnout Estimations.
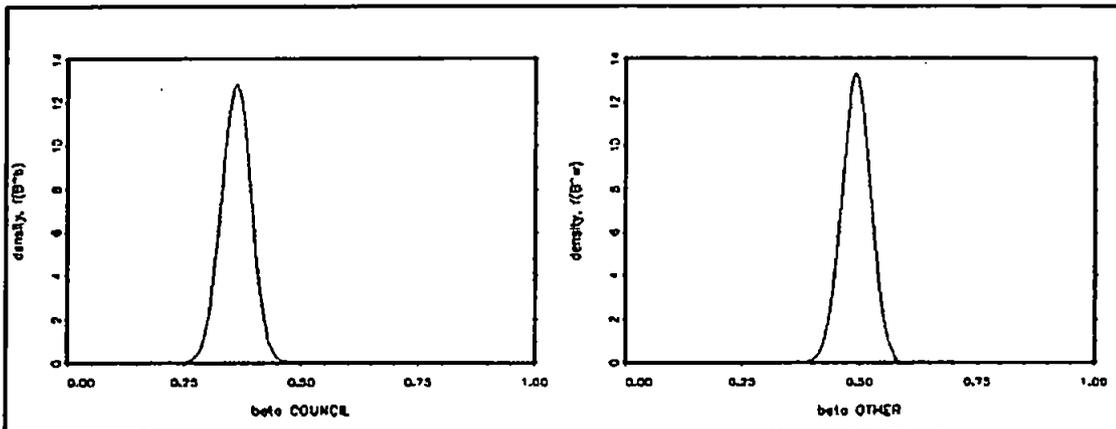
The tomography plot for the estimates of the proportion of council tenants voting

Liberal is shown in Figure 9-19. The centre of the contours appears to be located

somewhere off the graph, indicating truncation of the normal distribution. Most of

the lines, however, appear to be concentrated, within the section of the 50% contour

line that is visible. We can be reasonably confident that the contour lines are an

accurate description of the distribution. The area within the 95% contour is almost

half of the area of the entire unit square. Unlike the more compact tomography plot

for voter registration, the model has only narrowed the possible values to half of the

unit square. The 50% contour is clearly representing much higher values for β_i^c than

for β_i^o. The highest 50% likelihood value for β_i^c indicated by the contour is 0.48

while that for β_i^o is 0.25. There if a far higher likelihood therefore that the values for

β_i^c are higher than those for β_i^o.

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Figure 9-19 - Tomography Plot of Liberal Voting by Housing for London Boroughs.
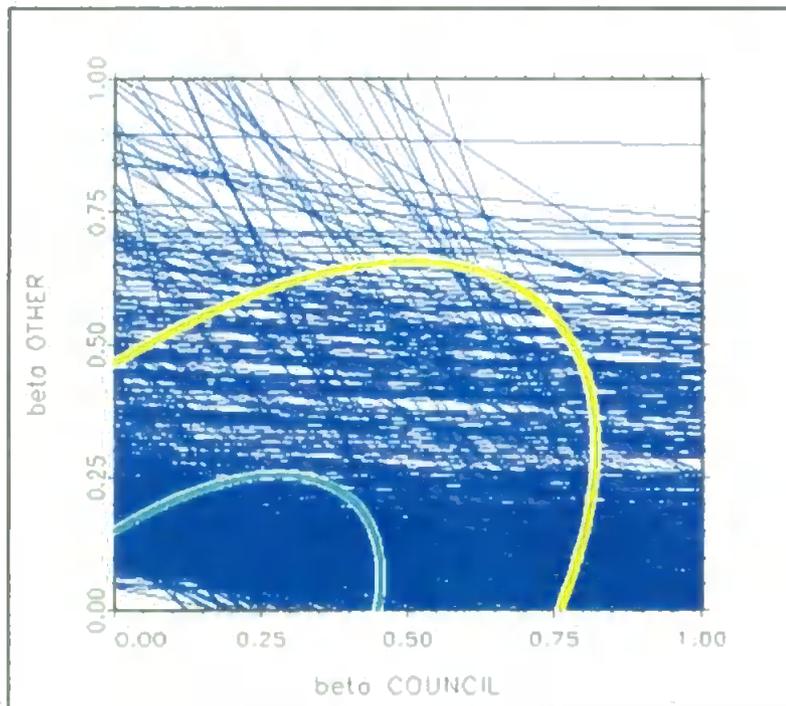
The histograms for the estimates of β_i^c and β_i^o for each ward are shown in Figure 9-20. The model estimates the percentage of council tenants voting Liberal as 31.2% ($s.d.$ = 3.61) and other residents as 22.8% ($s.d.$ = 0.71). The percentage of other residents voting for the Liberals differs by only 0.4% from the model that assumed that turnout was the same for both groups. The estimate for the percentage of council tenant voters that voted for the party is 5.7% higher than the previous estimate. Unlike the shire districts, the estimate for Liberal voting council tenants in the London boroughs did increase when the model was adjusted for voter turnout. As turnout among council tenants was estimated to be far higher in London than the shires, the increase is not unexpected. Evidence from both models appears to suggest that there is a significant difference in support for the Liberals between the two groups.

Figure 9-20 – Posterior Distributions of London Borough Liberal Voting Estimations.
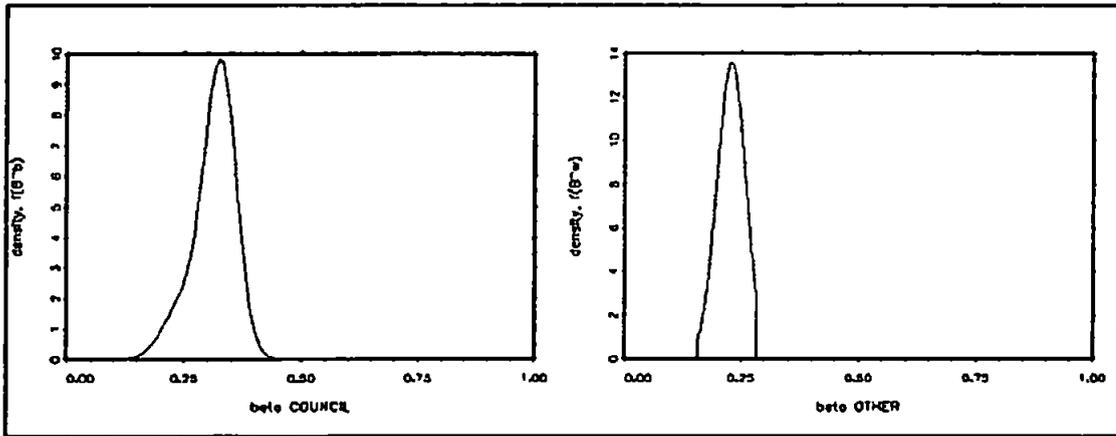
If we compare the results of the models for both types of authority there appears to be a distinct difference between the behaviour of council tenants. The percentage of Liberal voting council tenants in the shire districts (11.2%) is far less than the percentage of non-council tenants voting for the party (37.1%). The percentage of council tenants voting for the party (31.2%) in the London boroughs is, however, far greater than that for non-council tenants (22.8%).

9.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined apparent differences in Liberal voting by council tenants compared with other residents. Although the previous chapter highlighted these differences, any assumptions made about the individual behaviour of council tenants might be considered unsound because of the problems associated with ecological inference. As no method for inferring individual behaviour from aggregate data can be considered totally reliable, a number of methods for measuring this phenomenon were employed. Foremost among these methods was a recent and innovative technique, developed by King (1997) which claims to make substantial improvements in reliability over traditional methods.

Due to the nature of the census and election data, the parameter values (number of council tenant voters) required to produce estimates of the proportion of council tenants voting Liberal does not exist. One method that is widely used is simply to assume that turnout is the same for both groups. The proportion of council tenants that voted in an election is assumed to be equal to the proportion of council tenants in the ward. The Goodman model estimated that 0.7% council tenants voted for the Liberals in the districts while the King model estimated 13.8%. When the same models were applied to the London boroughs the Goodman model estimated that 24.5% council tenants voted Liberal while the King model produced an estimate of 25.5%. Goodman's estimate for the districts is a good example of why the model ought not to be used in this case: it is unlikely that less than 1% of council tenants voted for the party. The estimates produced by the King model appear more realistic. Furthermore, the estimates also appear to confirm the regression estimates that council tenants are far more likely to vote for the Liberals in the London boroughs than in the shire districts.

The assumption that the proportion of council tenants voting is the same as the proportion of residents voting can produce estimates that are unreliable - especially as children are included in the sample. An alternative method, therefore, was used to estimate the proportion of voters from information known already. This process requires not only an estimation of voter turnout, but also an estimation of voter registration among council tenants. The model produced similar estimates of registration and turnout among council tenants for both authority types. For the shire districts the estimated proportion of council tenants that were registered was 69.3% while the proportion of these that voted was 25.8%. For the London boroughs the

proportion of council tenants registered was 68.8% and the proportion of these that voted were 36.4%. The final estimates of the proportion of council tenants that voted for the Liberals, however, were markedly different for the two types of authority. The estimated proportion of council tenants in the shire districts that voted for the Liberals was 11.2%, while for the London boroughs it was 31.2%. The estimated proportion of voters living in other types of housing tenure voting for the Liberals was 37.1% in the shire districts while in London it was 22.8%. The number of council tenants voting for the Liberals appears to be over three times higher in the London boroughs as it is in the shire districts. In addition to this, the proportion of council tenants voting Liberal in the London boroughs is greater than the proportion of non-council tenants voting for the party.

While the Goodman model proved to be inaccurate at providing individual level inferences about the voting behaviour of council tenants the King model appears to provide more realistic results. The findings from the model may not be so evident in a normal regression model due to the problems of ecological inference and also because there is little strength (low R-square) in the relationships. In addition to providing an easy visual guide to the data, the model combines the information that is known about each ward in a way that strengthens the estimates of those wards where little information can be determined.

If the estimates provided by the model are accurate then this may help to explain the unusual nature of the London boroughs. With council tenants making up almost a quarter (23.1%) of all residents in London and 16.2% of all residents in the shire districts, a party that can gain support from a substantial proportion of this group will

receive a considerable payoff in terms of total vote share. More importantly, however, is the fact that support for the Liberals among this social group in London appears to be quite distinct from that in the shires. The behaviour of council tenants might be different because the fundamental difference in the nature of council housing between the two-types of authority might make the Liberals brand of community politics more appealing to these residents. Another possibility might be that the Liberals are able to reach a larger proportion of council tenants in the more densely populated council estates of London and/or specifically target these areas. Unfortunately, while the effects of such behavioural differences can be highlighted using aggregate data, it is not possible to identify the reasoning behind the voter's decision. In this case survey data would be a more appropriate method to determine if such reasons for the difference were correct.

Chapter 10 Conclusions

10.1 Introduction

This study has applied various theories regarding the development of party systems using results from English local government elections held between 1973 -1998. The quantitative approach used within the thesis has enabled conclusions to be drawn, which are based upon the individual circumstances of over 10,000 local authority wards. The main purpose of the research has been to provide an understanding of the development of local party systems since local government reorganisations in the early 1970s. The results detailed in this thesis show that the approach has succeeded in throwing new light on the nature of party systems. Some of the findings support previous theories. Others, however, have raised important new questions, in the areas of both party system development generally and local government studies specifically.

We begin by providing the reader with a brief summary of each chapter. We then summarise the nature of local party systems in England and consider the extent to which they conform to prior theoretical expectations. Following sections highlight the effect of a range of characteristics considered as determinants of party system development. Finally, the consequences of our findings for future studies of party systems and English local government are assessed.

10.2 Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 outlined the nature of the research. It discussed why the study of party systems is important and also why the English local party systems are a particular area of interest. We highlighted a fundamental problem with conducting research in local party system development - a lack of individual voting data, before outlining the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 discussed previous research on party systems with a view to identifying theories that can be applied to a local study. It discussed the nature of the relationship between parties and voters, and socioeconomic and structural determinants of local party system development. The chapter also identified the importance of local factors such as local issues and campaigning.

Chapter 3 provided the reader with an overview of the English local government system. It discussed the evolution of the local government system in terms of its structure and functions and identified how this reflected the need to provide services at a local level. We discussed in more detail, structural differences between different authorities and the impact of party politicisation upon the party system.

Chapter 4 discussed the various research questions emerging from the previous chapters. It provided a justification for the quantitative methodology used before proceeding to review commonly used methods for answering the research questions.

The problems of acquiring, storing and analysing the large amount of aggregate data required by the research were also addressed.

Chapter 5 employed a typology of party systems in order to provide an understanding of the nature of party systems in local government authorities. It allowed us to gauge the extent to which party system did or did not conform to expectations and also provided us with a framework with which to examine the success of the Liberals.

Chapter 6 examined the effects of the structural differences in electoral system upon local party systems. It focussed upon one of the most important of these differences - district magnitude - in order to ascertain whether, as some authors believe increased district magnitude discriminates against the third party.

Chapter 7 conducted a preliminary examination of those socioeconomic characteristics identified as important in Chapter 2 in order to ascertain their suitability for inclusion in a subsequent model of partisan voting.

Chapter 8 developed a model of partisan voting based upon the theoretical and actual relationships identified in the previous chapter. The model allowed us to test the independent effect of socioeconomic characteristics and identify such characteristics considered as relevant. The model also allows us to examine the effect of district magnitude when controlling for socioeconomic characteristics and gauge the extent to which the combination of these factors influences the party system

Chapter 9 attempts to validate the results of the previous chapter by using a recent and innovative technique that claims to make more reliable, the inference of individual behaviour from aggregate data. It focuses upon the apparent difference in Liberal voting between two types of authority and attempts to estimate the exact proportion of voters from a specific social group voting for the party.

10.3 The Nature of English Local Party Systems

One of the first questions this thesis has asked is "what is the nature of local party systems?" Previous writers viewed the national party system as consisting fundamentally of only two parties. Duverger (1964), suggested that the effect of simple plurality elections would encourage the formation and maintenance of such a two-party system. The local political system in England, however, has not remained static during the period. Examining the political control of local authorities after 1973 highlighted the nature of these changes. Increased party politicisation of local authorities took place and when, in 1979, the Conservatives came to power in national government, they dominated local government also, before succumbing to Labour and then, as the second largest party, to the Liberals.

If Duverger were correct, it would be difficult for the Liberals to achieve the level of success that they attained. Was Duverger incorrect (and many others who subscribe to the original analysis) or were the Liberals somehow able to overcome the effects of the electoral system? Local government, however, consists of not one, but many party systems. In order to answer this question, a classification of local party systems, in terms of the number of parties, was required. This research presents the first comprehensive classification based on local elections held between 1973 and 1998.

Our classification revealed the extent of the diversity that exists in English local party systems. With the exception of county councils, single party systems, for example, existed for all types of local government authority. Some of these authorities (such as Rotherham) have a distinct cultural identity while others (such as Barking and Dagenham) are so dominated by a single party that other candidates feel that there is little point in contesting elections. Rather than encouraging a two-party system, the simple plurality electoral helps to maintain single-party systems in authorities such as these.

For all types of local authority, we found that multi-party systems also exist. The presence of these systems contradicts the rationale that underpins Duverger's theory of the relationship between simple-plurality elections and two-party systems – the notion that voters coalesce into two opposing categories in an attempt to prevent an unwanted result. If such an effect does occur then some authorities proved to be extremely resilient to it. In Tynedale, for example, the increasing party politicisation coincided with an increase in Liberal councillors. The net effect of this was an overall stability in the system and the authority remained hung for most of the period. While Tynedale was perennially classed as a multi-party system, other authorities were less stable. In West Dorset, the decline of Independents coincided with gains for both the Conservatives and Liberals. As a result the authority could be classified as single-party, two-party or multi-party, dependent upon the year under review.

However, it is the case that a large number of two-party systems existed throughout the period. Some authorities are typical of what we might expect if aspects of the

electoral system dissuaded voters from supporting third parties. In Welwyn Hatfield, third parties were marginalised during the entire period. Power was balanced instead between Labour and the Conservatives, with control alternating between the two-parties. Two party systems in local government are not simply the result of the electoral system. In Kensington and Chelsea, the two-party system reflects a distinct socioeconomic divide within the authority.

There is evidence, therefore, that the electorate acts in ways that Duverger suggested, thereby reinforcing the dominance of the two parties. The unpopularity of the Labour party in Derbyshire in 1977, however, resulted in a loss of over half of the parties representation. Rather than this adverse swing against Labour resulting in additional seats for the Liberals or Independents, these groups also lost seats on the council. Instead, voters polarised around the Conservatives in a concerted effort to defeat the incumbent party.

When comparing the number of party systems in English local government we found those classed as two-party by far the most common. In all types of local authority, the number of councils classed in this way outnumbered the combined number of single-party and multi-party systems. For English local government elections, it appears that Duverger may have been correct in asserting that the operation of simple plurality favours two-party systems. Despite the proliferation of Independents at the beginning of the period and the increased success of the Liberals in the 1990s, two-party systems have remained most common. We examined whether the Liberals were more successful in certain types of party system. In terms of the number of parties there appeared to be little in common between authorities won by the Liberals. One

possible explanation for the lack commonality might be that the electoral system *does not* discriminate against the Liberals to an extent that prevents them from winning. Another explanation might be that examining party systems of local authorities somehow "masks" relationships that exist at a more local level.

10.4 Effects of the Electoral System

The use of a common electoral system prevents comparisons between simple-plurality and other types of ballot system in English local government elections. Several authors suggested, however, that increases in district magnitude may exaggerate the effects of the plurality system (Taagepera & Shugart, 1989; Ware et al, 2001). Following this line of reasoning we would expect this phenomena to manifest itself in local elections that use large district magnitudes. In particular this should result in a disadvantageous situation for the Liberals. Examining such ward-level characteristics overcomes also, the problems associated with aggregation of data to the local authority level.

Some of out most important findings relate to the effects of district magnitude upon the third party. Our analysis revealed that the Liberals were disadvantaged in terms of its ability to contest elections with higher district magnitudes. In such cases where the party does not contest all available seats, potential Liberal voters are forced to either choose another candidate or abstain. District magnitude also adversely affects the elected number of parties in local government. The additional available seats in elections with large district magnitude will tend to go to the party that come top of the poll. Examining the seat share of the parties for each authority type revealed that the Liberals net share of seats was not adversely affected by district magnitude. When

the share of vote is also taken into account, however, the Liberals appear to be distinctly disadvantaged, particularly in the shire districts. Although other authors have discussed these effects, we have for the first time, proved that district magnitude discriminates against the third party. Multimember plurality elections, therefore, do disadvantage third parties in English local government, thereby confirming Taagepera and Shugart's (1989) speculations to this effect.

10.5 Effects of Socioeconomic Characteristics

The electoral system, however, is by no means the sole determinant of party systems. Many authors - Duverger among them - have highlighted the relationship between class and partisan voting as being relevant in national politics - particularly for the Conservatives and Labour. Significant relationships between other socioeconomic characteristics and national voting for the two parties have also been previously highlighted. The availability of ward socioeconomic and voting data for most of the period, allows us to examine these relationships in far greater detail and at a lower level of aggregation than has previously been the case.

Our preliminary examination of ward socioeconomic characteristics in shire districts confirmed several important hypotheses. Voting for the Conservatives and Labour are indeed related to a wide range of socioeconomic characteristics but by far the strongest relationship is that between class and voting. Positive relationships exist between the proportion of residents in all of the working class (defined as those employed in manual occupations) and Labour voting, while the reverse is the case for the Conservatives. For both parties, the relationship between class and voting appears to be strongest for managerial and technical occupations. As the proportion of such

residents in a ward increases, voters are far more likely to support the Conservatives and far less likely to vote for Labour. In terms of direction a similar class/vote relationship to that of the Conservatives appears to exist for the Liberals. As the proportion of residents in non-manual, technical and managerial or professional and business occupations in wards increase voters are slightly more likely to vote Liberal. As the proportion of ward residents employed in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations increases, local voters are slightly less likely to support the Liberals.

Statistically significant relationships also exist between partisan voting and housing, reflecting a public/private sector provision cleavage. Increases in proportions of council or housing association tenants are positively related to increases in Labour voting and decreases in Conservative and Liberal voting. Increases in owner-occupiers, tenants renting privately and residents living in other types of tenure – such as those included with employment – are related to decreases in Labour voting and increases in Conservative and Liberal voting. The strongest relationship between housing and partisan voting is that for the proportion of owner-occupiers.

Employment status also showed strong bivariate relationships with voting. Wards with higher proportions of unemployed residents were consistently positively related to Labour voting and negatively related to Liberal voting. Consistent relationships between employment status and partisan voting were also observed for self-employed residents. For Labour these relationships were consistently negative, while for the opposite is true for the Conservatives and Liberals. Other variables related to employment were also shown to be significant. In particular, the proportion of

residents employed in agricultural or other service industries - such as banking - were shown to be positively related to Liberal voting, as was the proportion of residents in receipt of a higher educational qualification.

There is little doubt that some socioeconomic characteristics are related to each other. Those residents in the higher social class groups are more likely to own their own homes, for example. We examined, therefore, the extent to which the relationships between voting and ward characteristics exist independently of each other by constructing an OLS model of partisan voting and applying it to different types of local authority.

The OLS model of partisan voting produced some interesting results. When applied to shire district partial council elections, the relationships between the class groups and Labour or Liberal voting does not contradict findings from the bivariate analysis. Consistently positive and independent relationships exist between Labour voting and the proportion of residents in each working class group. Consistently negative and independent relationships exist between Labour voting and the proportion of residents in each middle class group. For the Liberal vote, however, some of the class groups do not appear to have an independent effect. In most years, a consistent relationship only existed for the proportion of residents employed in semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations. Liberal voting appears, as we expected, to be negatively related to these class groups.

Perhaps the most interesting finding was the relationship between class and the Conservatives. For working class groups, the relationships support existing theories.

As the proportion of these residents in a ward increase, voters are less likely to vote Conservative. The proportion of residents employed in technical and managerial occupations also support previous hypotheses. Conservative voting was consistently and independently positively related to this variable. The relationship between Conservative voting and the proportion of residents employed in professional, business or skilled non-manual occupations was contrary to expectations, however. In those years when the relationships were significantly different than zero, the directions were always negative. Holding the other class groups constant, the Conservative vote decreases when the proportion of these residents increases.

Reducing the model to only class groups which significantly contributed to the total variance and including the other significant ward characteristics revealed that the determinants of Conservative and Labour voting are generally as we expected. When controlling for all our ward characteristics, the Conservative vote generally decreases while Labour's increases as the proportion of council tenants or unemployed residents increases. In the metropolitan boroughs, however, the relationship appears to have been reversed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, suggesting that the impact of unemployment in these wards damaged Labour, to the advantage of the Conservatives. The proportion of qualified residents also produced unexpected results for some types of local authority. Holding all other characteristics constant, increases in the proportion of residents in these wards corresponded to increases in Labour voting and decreases in Conservative voting.

In some types of authority the relationship between our combined ward characteristics and Conservative or Labour voting was considerable. On average in London, these

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characteristics alone can explain two-thirds of the variance in Labour voting between 1978 and 1996. Although slightly weaker, combined ward characteristics still accounted for well over half of the variance in Conservative vote share. For the two-parties, it appears not only that voting patterns are largely deterministic, but that they are deterministic in ways we would expect given the traditional notions of voting. The total amount variance explained, however, tends to have lessened. It appears, therefore, that a degree of partisan dealignment has occurred in local government. The Conservative party's growing unpopularity while it was in office might account for such a dealignment. Disaffected Conservative voters switching to Labour and the Liberals would have diluted the effect of any underlying socioeconomic relationships.

Explaining the variance in Liberal voting using ward characteristics provided far more difficult. In all types of authority, on average, less than a fifth of the variance in Liberal voting could be explained using a linear regression model. The Liberals drew support, therefore, far more evenly across the different socio-economic groups than did the Conservative or Labour parties. Despite this, some ward characteristics do emerge from the analysis that appear to be related to Liberal voting. Some of these relationships reflect those found to be significant for the Conservative vote. The proportion of residents seeking work and those employed in other service industries are positively related to Liberal voting. Other relationships appear to be similar to those for Labour. The proportion of self-employed residents with employees is negatively related to both parties, as is the proportion of council tenants - except in London where this relationship appears to be positive. The relationship between Liberal voting and the proportion of self-employed residents without employees appears to be distinctly different for the Liberals than the other two parties. In each

type of authority, a negative relationship exists between this characteristic and Conservative or Labour voting. For the Liberals however, the relationship tends to be positive. It appears that small "one-man" businesses appear to support the Liberals

10.6 Ecological Inferences

We then focused upon one interesting aspect of Liberal voting - the apparent difference in the relationship between the proportion of council tenants and Liberal voting in London compared with other parts of the country. Unlike rises in unemployment - which may actually have produced a positive relationship with Conservative voting in the metropolitan counties in the early 1980s - it is difficult to see how increases in council tenants would produce an increase in Liberal support unless people from this type of housing actually voted for the party. We attempted, therefore, to estimate the actual proportion of council tenants that voted for the Liberals in London and the shire districts to see if we could replicate our findings from the regression analysis.

Reliably inferring individual level behaviour from aggregate voting data is extremely difficult and popular methods - such as Goodman's regression - can produce unreliable results. The main method employed here was developed by Garry King and is innovative in that the estimates are based upon all possible true values for the number of council tenants voting for the party (King, 1997). However, because we do not know how voters actually behaved it is not possible to compare the results with actual behaviour. We approached the problem using a combination of ecological inference methods. Comparing the results produced by the different methods allowed us to provide some validation of the findings.

The results of the ecological inference analysis supported our previous findings. All of the methods employed suggest that Liberal voting by council tenants is far higher in London than in the shire districts. It appears, therefore, that council tenants in London differ from their counterparts in the shire districts, in terms of Liberal voting.

10.7 Future Research

This thesis has addressed some important issues relating to local party system development in England. It has provided empirical evidence from aggregate data for some theories while confounding others. It has also identified further areas of research that are required if the variation among local party systems is to be understood in more detail. Important research should be undertaken regarding the nature and effects of local party organisation and campaigning. What is the nature of party membership and what are its effects upon the pattern of voter support for local parties? In what ways does the brand of 'community politics' favoured by the Liberals, and to some extent copied elsewhere by other parties, affect the effectiveness of campaigning by these candidates?

Answers to such questions can not be found in the aggregate voting and socioeconomic data used in this thesis. What is required is more detailed survey data regarding the motivations influencing specifically local electoral behaviour. Additionally, the lack of information regarding the motivations of candidates and councillors represents a serious gap in our knowledge base. Without such research we may never fully understand the nature of local voters' attachments to Conservative and Labour, traditional class parties, and support for local parties and candidates,

particularly the Liberals. Equipped with those data we could contribute still further to our knowledge of the evolution and development of party systems in English local government.

10.8 An Explanation of English Local Party Systems?

Although this thesis has addressed many important questions, it has also highlighted several others. In shire district authorities, the effect of district magnitude appears to discriminate against third parties. Although the findings support the "mechanical" relationship between the electoral system and party-system, it was not possible with aggregate data, to determine the "psychological" effects upon the voters or parties. What causes voters and parties to behave differently in multi-member elections? Are there tactical advantages to fielding fewer candidates in wards with large district magnitude and/or what is the impact of local party resources upon contestation in these wards? The answers to such questions will help political science understand better, the effects of district magnitude in plurality elections. Given the recent move to three-member wards in the London boroughs, a better understanding of the effects of district magnitude may also allow those responsible for adopting this policy to ascertain better the likely impact of these and similar changes elsewhere.

Although the electoral system was shown to affect the Liberals adversely, we faced particular difficulty in deriving socioeconomic explanations of the Liberal vote. This difficulty, is in itself, informative because it indicates the relatively amorphous nature of Liberal support. It also leaves us asking why people voted, and still vote for the party. Our research suggests that the relationships between ward characteristics and Liberal voting are similar to those of the Conservatives. The success of the Liberals

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in the 1990s corresponds to a national downturn in support for the Conservatives. As the Conservatives were the party of government for much of the period, we could not gauge the effect upon the Liberals, of a similar downturn in national Labour popularity.

The unexplained variance in voting itself raises important questions. To what extent is this caused by local characteristics and how do the effects of these characteristics persist over time? One method of examining such phenomena might involve comparing differences between estimates of partisan voting and the actual vote received by the parties. If in a ward, our model consistently underestimated voting for a party then the underestimation might be attributable to persistent local factors.

The unexpected results of some relationships also raise important questions. The apparent change in the effect of unemployment upon Labour and Conservative voting in the metropolitan boroughs is certainly worthy of further investigation. Were unemployed residents in these areas more likely to vote for the Conservatives in the early 1980s or were employed residents disproportionately voting for the party in areas of high unemployment? The positive relationship between qualified residents and Labour voting - apparent in most types of authority - is also interesting, as it appears to contradict previous theories of how these residents might vote. After controlling for other ward characteristics, do these residents actually tend to vote Labour? When controlling for the other ward characteristics, the Liberals appear to have a distinct voter base among self-employed residents without employees. It is difficult to see why the Liberals would appeal to such residents. It may be more likely that these residents are turned off by Labour and Conservative policies and vote

instead for the Liberals. We eagerly await the results of the 2001 census, so we can examine effects of five years of Labour government, upon the relationships identified in this study.

The quantitative methods employed in this thesis can be used to identify areas where answers to these questions might be found. In particular, the King method may be used to identify wards where residents from different social groups vote more or less in favour of a particular party. In the case of unemployed residents in metropolitan boroughs, the method can help us determine the extent to which this group contributed to Conservative voting. For self-employed residents without employees, we might use the method to identify wards where high and low proportions of this group vote for the Liberals. More detailed case studies of these wards might shed more light upon this phenomenon.

For much of the period that this thesis covers, a Conservative government was in office. This enabled us to observe the party systems, for a long period, without the additional "noise" that changes in government may have produced. During this time, the deterministic relationships for the parties appeared to have weakened, suggesting partisan dealignment. If, as mentioned previously, such a dealignment was caused by Conservatives voters switching in protest of their performance in national government, then we might expect them to return to their "natural" party once out of power. Such a phenomenon would result in a degree of partisan realignment. As the Labour party has been in government for over five years we are at a point where we are able to examine the effects of New Labour upon the local party system. The

results of the 2001 census will be available for analysis shortly[1]. It will be interesting to see not only if the individual relationships identified in this thesis have remained stable but also if apparent partisan dealignment has continued into Labour's second term of office.

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[1] The first results from the 2001 census are due to be published in September 2002 with the main results being published between December 2002 and the summer of 2003 (see http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/)

Appendix One – English Local Government Authorities

This appendix lists all local government authorities that existed between 1973 and 1998. The date that authorities were created is shown and also the date of abolition for those that no longer existed in 1998. The number of councillors is shown both for 1973 (or the creation date for unitary authorities), and 1998 (or abolition year for authorities that became unitary). The election type indicates those authorities that elect the whole council every four years or those where partial council elections are held in three years out of four.

Top Tier Local Government Authorities

Greater London Council

Created: 1964   Councillors 1973:   107
Abolished: 1986   Councillors 1985:   92

Election Type: Whole Council

Table A – Greater London Councils

Authority Name	1973 Councillors	Changes in Number of Councillors
Greater London	107	1977 – 92

Source: Local Elections Database

Metropolitan County Councils

Created: 1973   Councils 1973: 6   Councillors 1973:   601
Abolished: 1986   Councils 1998: 6   Councillors 1998:   601

Election Type: Whole Council

Table B – Metropolitan County Councils

Authority Name	1973 Councillors
Greater Manchester	106
Merseyside	99
South Yorkshire	100
Tyne & Wear	104
West Midlands	104
West Yorkshire	88

Source: Local Elections Database

Shire County Councils

Created: 1973   Councils 1973: 39   Councillors 1973:   3128
                                 Councils 1998: 34   Councillors 1998:   2203
Election Type: Whole Council

Table C – Shire County Councils

Authority Name	1973 Councillors	Changes in Number of Councillors			
Avon	73	1981 - 76			Abolished 1994
Bedfordshire	83	1985 - 73	1997 - 49		
Berkshire	86	1977 - 87	1985 - 76		Abolished 1996
Buckinghamshire	70	1985 - 71	1997 - 54		
Cambridgeshire	68	1985 - 77	1997 - 59		
Cheshire	67	1981 - 71	1997 - 48		
Cleveland	89	1985 - 77			Abolished 1994
Cornwall	79				
Cumbria	82	1981 - 83			
Derbyshire	98	1981 - 84	1997 - 64		
Devon	98	1985 - 85	1997 - 54		
Dorset	91	1985 - 77	1997 - 42		
Durham	72	1997 - 61			
East Sussex	84	1985 - 70	1997 - 44		
Essex	97	1981 - 98	1997 - 79		
Gloucestershire	61	1985 - 63			
Hampshire	97	1981 - 102	1997 - 74		
Hereford & Worcester	92	1985 - 76	1997 - 57		
Hertfordshire	72	1981 - 77			
Humberside	99	1981 - 75			Abolished 1994
Isle Of Wight	42	1981 - 43			Abolished 1994
Kent	102	1981 - 99	1997 - 84		
Lancashire	96	1981 - 99	1997 - 78		
Leicestershire	93	1985 - 85	1997 - 54		
Lincolnshire	75	1981 - 76			
Norfolk	83	1985 - 84			
North Yorkshire	93	1985 - 96	1997 - 74		
Northamptonshire	90	1981 - 68			
Northumberland	62	1981 - 66			
Nottinghamshire	89	1981 - 88	1997 - 63		
Oxfordshire	70	1977 - 69			
Shropshire	63	1981 - 66	1997 - 44		
Somerset	56	1981 - 57			
Staffordshire	85	1981 - 82	1997 - 62		
Suffolk	82	1985 - 80			
Surrey	72	1977 - 73	1981 - 76		
Warwickshire	55	1981 - 62			
West Sussex	83	1977 - 80	1985 - 71		
Wiltshire	79	1981 - 74	1985 - 75	1993 - 68	1997 - 47

Source: Local Elections Database.

Second Tier Local Government Authorities

London Borough Councils

Created: 1964   Councils 1973: 32   Councillors 1973:   2172
                       Councils 1998: 32   Councillors 1998:   1917
Election Type: Whole Council

Table D – London Borough Councils

Authority Name	1973 Councillors	Changes in Number of Councillors	
Barking & Dagenham	57	1978 - 48	1996 – 51
Barnet	70	1978 - 60	
Bexley	65	1974 - 68	1978 – 62
Brent	70	1978 - 66	
Bromley	70	1978 - 60	
Camden	70	1978 - 59	
Croydon	70		
Ealing	70	1997 - 71	
Enfield	70	1978 - 60	1982 – 66
Greenwich	70	1978 - 62	
Hackney	70	1978 - 60	
Hammersmith & Fulham	70	1978 - 50	
Haringey	70	1978 - 59	
Harrow	65	1978 - 63	
Havering	64	1978 - 63	
Hillingdon	70	1978 - 69	
Hounslow	70	1978 - 60	
Islington	70	1978 - 52	
Kensington & Chelsea	70	1974 - 71	1978 – 54
Kingston Upon Thames	70	1978 - 50	1996 – 48
Lambeth	70	1978 - 64	
Lewisham	70	1978 - 67	1982 – 68
Merton	63	1978 - 57	
Newham	70	1978 - 60	
Redbridge	70	1978 - 63	1997 – 62
Richmond Upon Thames	63	1978 - 52	
Southwark	70	1978 - 64	
Sutton	59	1978 - 56	
Tower Hamlets	70	1978 - 50	
Waltham Forest	56	1978 - 57	
Wandsworth	70	1978 - 61	
Westminster	70	1978 - 60	

Source: Local Elections Database

Metropolitan Borough Councils

Created: 1973   Councils 1973: 36   Councillors 1973:   2517
                              Councils 1998: 36   Councillors 1998:   2481
Election Type: Whole Council

Table E – Metropolitan Borough Councils

Authority Name	1973 Councillors	Changes in Number of Councillors
Barnsley	60	1979 - 66
Birmingham	126	1982 - 117
Bolton	69	1980 - 60
Bradford	93	1980 - 90
Bury	48	
Calderdale	51	1980 - 54
Coventry	54	
Doncaster	60	1980 - 63
Dudley	66	1982 - 72
Gateshead	78	1982 - 66
Kirklees	72	
Knowsley	63	1982 - 66
Leeds	96	1980 - 99
Liverpool	99	
Manchester	99	
Newcastle Upon Tyne	78	
North Tyneside	78	1982 - 60
Oldham	57	1979 - 60
Rochdale	60	
Rotherham	54	1980 - 66
Salford	66	1982 - 60
Sandwell	90	1979 - 72
Sefton	69	
Sheffield	90	1980 - 87
Solihull	51	
South Tyneside	66	1982 - 60
St. Helens	45	1980 - 54
Stockport	60	1980 - 63
Sunderland	78	1982 - 75
Tameside	54	1980 - 57
Trafford	63	
Wakefield	66	1982 - 63
Walsall	60	
Wigan	72	
Wirral	66	
Wolverhampton	60	

Source: Local Elections Database

Shire District Councils

Created: 1973 Councils 1973: 296 Councillors 1973: 13540
  Councils 1998: 267 Councillors 1998: 12159

Election Type: Mixed

Table F – Shire District Councils

Authority Name	1973 Councillors	Electoral System	Changes in Number of Councillors		
Adur	37	Partial	1979 - 39		
Allerdale	56	Whole	1979 - 55		
Alnwick	28	Whole	1979 - 29		
Amber Valley	60	Partial	1979 - 43		
Arun	60	Whole	1983 - 56		
Ashfield	55	Whole	1976 - 33		
Ashford	44	Whole	1976 - 49		
Aylesbury Vale	54	Whole	1976 - 58		
Babergh	38	Whole	1979 - 42		
Barrow In Furness	33	Partial	1979 - 38	1996 - 36	
Basildon	46	Partial	1979 - 42	1983 - 39	
Basingstoke & Deane	54	Partial	1976 - 59	1994 - 57	
Bassetlaw	51	Partial	1979 - 50	1996 - 48	
Bath	45	Partial	1976 - 48		Abolished 1994
Bedford	56	Partial	1983 - 53		
Berwick Upon Tweed	28	Whole			
Beverley	60	Whole	1979 - 53	1991 - 52	Abolished 1994
Blaby	37	Whole	1983 - 39		
Blackburn	60	Partial	1997 - 62		
Blackpool	56	Whole	1976 - 44		
Blyth Valley	48	Whole	1979 - 47		
Bolsover	36	Whole	1979 - 37		
Boothferry	35	Whole			Abolished 1994
Boston	34	Whole			
Bournemouth	57	Whole			
Bracknell Forest	31	Whole	1979 - 40		
Braintree	58	Whole	1979 - 60		
Breckland	51	Whole	1979 - 53		
Brentwood	38	Partial	1976 - 39		
Bridgnorth	32	Whole	1979 - 33		
Brighton	59	Partial	1983 - 48		Abolished 1995
Bristol	84	Partial	1983 - 68		Abolished 1994
Broadland	49	Partial			
Bromsgrove	42	Whole	1979 - 41	1995 - 39	
Broxbourne	40	Partial	1976 - 42		
Broxtowe	46	Whole	1976 - 49		
Burnley	53	Partial	1976 - 54	1991 - 48	1996 - 44
Cambridge	42	Partial			
Cannock Chase	37	Partial	1976 - 42		
Canterbury	51	Whole	1979 - 49		
Caradon	41	Whole			Contd..../

Authority Name	1973 Councillors	Electoral System	Changes in Number of Councillors		
Carlisle	48	Partial	1983 - 51		
Carrick	45	Whole			
Castle Morpeth	34	Whole			
Castle Point	39	Whole			
Charnwood	58	Whole	1983 - 52		
Chelmsford	60	Whole	1987 - 56		
Cheltenham	35	Partial	1983 - 33	1991 - 41	
Cherwell	45	Partial	1979 - 52		
Chester	62	Partial	1979 - 60		
Chester Le Street	33	Whole			
Chesterfield	54	Whole	1979 - 47		
Chichester	50	Whole			
Chiltern	51	Whole	1976 - 50		
Chorley	47	Partial	1987 - 48		
Christchurch	22	Whole	1979 - 25		
Cleethorpes	48	Whole	1979 - 41		Abolished 1994
Colchester	60	Partial			
Congleton	45	Partial			
Copeland	48	Whole	1979 - 51	1995 - 49	
Corby	33	Whole	1976 - 27		
Cotswold	45	Whole			
Craven	35	Partial	1979 - 34		
Crawley	32	Partial	1976 - 25	1979 - 26	
Crewe & Nantwich	60	Partial	1979 - 57		
Dacorum	62	Whole	1979 - 58		
Darlington	49	Whole	1979 - 52		
Dartford	44	Whole	1976 - 45	1987 - 47	
Daventry	35	Partial			
Derby	54	Partial	1979 - 44		
Derbyshire Dales	40	Whole	1979 - 39		
Derwentside	55	Whole			
Dover	55	Whole	1979 - 56		
Durham	61	Whole	1979 - 49		
Easington	60	Whole	1979 - 51		
East Cambridgeshire	35	Whole	1983 - 37		
East Devon	60	Whole			
East Dorset	33	Whole	1983 - 36		
East Hampshire	42	Whole			
East Hertfordshire	48	Whole	1979 - 50		
East Lindsey	58	Whole	1983 - 60		
East Northamptonshire	37	Whole	1979 - 36	1995 - 16	
East Staffordshire	60	Whole	1979 - 46		
East Yorkshire	43	Whole			Abolished 1994
Eastbourne	33	Partial	1976 - 30		
Eastleigh	42	Partial	1976 - 44	1997 - 45	
Eden	37	Whole			
Ellesmere Port & Neston	42	Partial	1976 - 41		
Elmbridge	64	Partial	1976 - 60		Contd..../

Authority Name	1973 Councillors	Electoral System	Changes In Number of Councillors			
Epping Forest	59	Partial				
Epsom & Ewell	40	Whole	1976 - 39	1991 - 42		
Erewash	54	Whole	1979 - 51	1987 - 52		
Exeter	34	Partial	1983 - 36			
Fareham	36	Partial	1976 - 42			
Fenland	40	Whole				
Forest Heath	25	Whole				
Forest Of Dean	47	Whole	1983 - 49			
Fylde	45	Whole	1976 - 49			
Gedling	55	Whole	1987 - 57			
Gillingham	35	Partial	1979 - 42	1996 - 43		Abolished 1996
Glanford	34	Whole	1979 - 40	1983 - 41		Abolished 1994
Gloucester	33	Partial	1991 - 35	1998 - 39		
Gosport	33	Partial	1979 - 30			
Gravesham	44	Whole				
Great Grimsby	42	Partial	1979 - 45			Abolished 1994
Great Yarmouth	48	Partial				
Guildford	42	Whole	1976 - 45			
Halton	43	Partial	1976 - 47	1986 - 53	1997 - 56	
Hambleton	48	Whole	1979 - 47			
Harborough	37	Whole				
Harlow	42	Partial				
Harrogate	60	Partial	1996 - 59			
Hart	33	Partial	1976 - 35			
Hartlepool	46	Partial	1976 - 47			Abolished 1994
Hastings	33	Partial	1979 - 32			
Havant	42	Partial				
Herefordshire	24	Partial	1979 - 27			Abolished 1996
Hertsmere	55	Partial	1976 - 39			
High Peak	46	Whole	1979 - 44			
Hinckley & Bosworth	34	Whole				
Holderness	29	Whole	1976 - 31			Abolished 1994
Horsham	41	Whole	1979 - 43	1983 - 42		
Hove	36	Whole	1979 - 30			Abolished 1995
Huntingdonshire	50	Partial	1976 - 53			
Hyndburn	48	Partial	1979 - 47			
Ipswich	47	Partial	1979 - 48			
Kennet	37	Whole	1976 - 40			
Kerrier	42	Whole	1979 - 44			
Kettering	45	Whole				
Kings Lynn & West Norfolk	60	Whole				
Kingston Upon Hull	63	Partial	1983 - 60			Abolished 1994
Kingswood	45	Whole	1976 - 47	1987 - 50		Abolished 1994
Lancaster	60	Whole				
Langbaurgh	64	Whole	1976 - 60	1991 - 59		Abolished 1994
Leicester	48	Whole	1983 - 47	1986 - 56		
Leominster	36	Partial				Abolished 1996
Lewes	47	Whole	1983 - 48			Contd....../

Authority Name	1973 Councillors	Electoral System	Changes in Number of Councillors			
Lichfield	56	Whole				
Lincoln	30	Partial	1979 - 33			
Luton	48	Whole				
Macclesfield	63	Partial	1979 - 60			
Maidstone	60	Partial	1979 - 55			
Maldon	30	Whole				
Malvern Hills	47	Whole	1979 - 51	1995 - 48	1997 - 42	
Mansfield	45	Whole	1979 - 46			
Medina	33	Whole	1979 - 36			Abolished 1994
Melton	24	Whole	1979 - 26			
Mendip	44	Whole	1979 - 43			
Mid Bedfordshire	49	Whole	1979 - 53			
Mid Devon	40	Whole				
Mid Suffolk	40	Whole				
Mid Sussex	54	Whole				
Middlesbrough	56	Whole	1979 - 53			Abolished 1994
Milton Keynes	40	Partial	1976 - 46	1996 - 51		
Mole Valley	41	Partial				
New Forest	60	Whole	1976 - 58			
Newark & Sherwood	52	Whole	1979 - 56	1987 - 54		
Newbury	57	Whole	1983 - 45	1997 - 54		
Newcastle-under-Lyme	62	Partial	1979 - 56			
North Cornwall	44	Whole	1979 - 38			
North Devon	44	Whole				
North Dorset	31	Whole	1983 - 33			
North East Derbyshire	51	Whole	1979 - 53			
North Hertfordshire	48	Partial	1979 - 50			
North Kesteven	37	Whole	1979 - 39			
North Norfolk	47	Whole	1979 - 46			
North Shropshire	38	Whole	1976 - 40			
North Warwickshire	33	Whole	1979 - 34			
North West Leicestershire	43	Whole	1983 - 40			
North Wiltshire	50	Whole	1983 - 52			
Northampton	48	Whole	1979 - 43			
Northavon	54	Whole	1976 - 57			Abolished 1994
Norwich	48	Partial				
Nottingham	54	Whole	1976 - 55			
Nuneaton & Bedworth	35	Partial	1979 - 45			
Oadby & Wigston	30	Whole	1979 - 26			
Oswestry	29	Whole				
Oxford	45	Partial	1991 - 51			
Pendle	51	Partial	1994 - 41			
Penwith	40	Partial	1979 - 34			
Peterborough	48	Partial	1997 - 57			
Plymouth	66	Whole	1979 - 60			
Poole	36	Whole	1996 - 39			
Portsmouth	48	Partial	1983 - 39			
Preston	57	Partial				

Authority Name	1973 Councillors	Electoral System	Changes in Number of Councillors			
Purbeck	21	Partial	1979 - 22			
Reading	46	Partial	1979 - 49	1983 - 45		
Redditch	25	Partial	1983 - 29			
Reigate & Banstead	50	Partial	1976 - 60	1979 - 49		
Restormel	38	Whole	1983 - 44			
Ribble Valley	38	Whole	1987 - 39			
Richmondshire	35	Whole	1979 - 34			
Rochester Upon Medway	59	Whole	1979 - 50			Abolished 1996
Rochford	40	Partial				
Rossendale	36	Partial				
Rother	45	Whole				
Rugby	51	Partial	1979 - 48			
Runnymede	40	Partial	1976 - 42			
Rushcliffe	49	Whole	1976 - 54			
Rushmoor	43	Partial	1979 - 45	1996 - 46		
Rutland	20	Whole				
Ryedale	45	Whole	1983 - 42	1996 - 21		
Salisbury	56	Whole	1976 - 58			
Scarborough	50	Whole	1979 - 49			
Scunthorpe	40	Partial				Abolished 1994
Sedgefield	53	Whole	1983 - 49			
Sedgemoor	48	Whole	1979 - 49			
Selby	48	Whole	1979 - 50			
Sevenoaks	54	Whole	1979 - 53			
Shepway	54	Whole	1979 - 56			
Shrewsbury & Atcham	45	Partial	1976 - 48			
Slough	40	Partial	1983 - 39	1997 - 41		
South Bedfordshire	45	Partial	1976 - 53			
South Buckinghamshire	42	Whole	1983 - 41	1995 - 40		
South Cambridgeshire	53	Partial	1976 - 55			
South Derbyshire	35	Whole	1979 - 34			
South Hams	41	Whole	1979 - 44			
South Herefordshire	34	Partial	1979 - 35	1994 - 39		Abolished 1996
South Holland	35	Whole	1979 - 38			
South Kesteven	55	Whole	1979 - 57			
South Lakeland	54	Partial	1979 - 52			
South Norfolk	47	Whole	1979 - 55			
South Northamptonshire	36	Whole	1976 - 40			
South Oxfordshire	62	Whole	1979 - 59	1983 - 56	1991 - 50	
South Ribble	49	Whole	1976 - 54			
South Shropshire	36	Whole	1976 - 40			
South Somerset	61	Whole	1976 - 60			
South Staffordshire	48	Whole	1979 - 50			
South Wight	24	Whole				Abolished 1994
Southampton	51	Partial	1979 - 45			
Southend On Sea	48	Partial	1976 - 39			
Spelthorne	52	Whole	1979 - 40			
St Albans	54	Partial	1979 - 57			

Authority Name	1973 Councillors	Electoral System	Changes in Number of Councillors		
St Edmundsbury	44	Whole			
Stafford	57	Whole	1979 - 60		
Staffordshire Moorlands	54	Whole	1976 - 56		
Stevenage	34	Partial	1979 - 39		
Stockton-on-Tees	60	Whole	1979 - 55		Abolished 1994
Stoke On Trent	72	Partial	1979 - 60		
Stratford On Avon	54	Partial	1979 - 55		
Stroud	56	Partial	1991 - 55		
Suffolk Coastal	55	Whole			
Surrey Heath	36	Whole			
Swale	50	Partial	1979 - 49		
Tamworth	24	Partial	1976 - 27	1987 - 30	
Tandridge	42	Partial			
Taunton Deane	48	Whole	1979 - 49	1987 - 53	
Teesdale	29	Whole	1983 - 31		
Teignbridge	57	Whole	1979 - 58		
Tendring	60	Whole			
Test Valley	43	Whole	1976 - 44		
Tewkesbury	51	Whole	1983 - 45	1991 - 36	
Thamesdown	46	Partial	1983 - 49	1986 - 54	
Thanet	63	Whole	1979 - 54		
The Wrekin	56	Whole	1979 - 46	1997 - 54	
Three Rivers	44	Partial	1976 - 47	1991 - 48	
Thurrock	39	Partial			
Tonbridge & Malling	53	Whole	1979 - 52	1991 - 55	
Torbay	36	Whole			
Torridge	36	Whole			
Tunbridge Wells	54	Partial	1976 - 48	1991 - 58	
Tynedale	45	Whole	1976 - 47		
Uttlesford	42	Whole			
Vale Of White Horse	48	Whole	1979 - 51		
Vale Royal	57	Whole	1976 - 60		
Wansbeck	45	Whole	1976 - 46		
Wansdyke	45	Whole	1976 - 47		Abolished 1994
Warrington	60	Whole			
Warwick	58	Whole	1983 - 45		
Watford	36	Partial			
Waveney	57	Partial	1983 - 48		
Waverley	61	Whole	1983 - 57		
Wealden	56	Whole	1983 - 58		
Wear Valley	41	Whole	1983 - 40		
Wellingborough	33	Whole	1983 - 34		
Welwyn Hatfield	43	Partial	1991 - 47		
West Devon	30	Whole			
West Dorset	55	Whole			
West Lancashire	52	Partial	1976 - 55		
West Lindsey	37	Partial			
West Oxfordshire	45	Partial	1979 - 49		Contd...../

Authority Name	1973 Councillors	Electoral System	Changes in Number of Councillors		
West Somerset	32	Whole			
West Wiltshire	42	Whole	1983 - 43		
Weymouth & Portland	39	Partial	1979 - 35		
Winchester	51	Partial	1976 - 54	1986 - 55	1994 - 45
Windsor & Maidenhead	59	Whole	1983 - 58		
Woking	32	Partial	1976 - 35		
Wokingham	52	Partial	1979 - 54		
Woodspring	61	Partial	1979 - 59		Abolished 1994
Worcester	36	Partial			
Worthing	30	Partial	1983 - 36		
Wychavon	45	Whole	1979 - 49		
Wycombe	59	Whole	1983 - 60		
Wyre	55	Whole	1979 - 56		
Wyre Forest	45	Partial	1979 - 42		
York	39	Whole	1979 - 45		Abolished 1994

Source: Local Elections Database

New Unitary Authorities

Councils 1998: 16 Councillors 1998: 926
Election Type: Mixed

Table G – New Unitary Authorities

Authority Name	Year Created	Councillors Created	Electoral System	Changes in Number of Councillors
Bath & North East Somerset	1995	65	Whole	
Brighton & Hove	1996	78	Whole	
Bristol	1995	68	Partial	1996 - 66
East Riding Of Yorkshire	1995	67	Whole	
Hartlepool	1995	47	Partial	
Herefordshire	1997	60	Whole	
Isle Of Wight	1995	48	Partial	
Kingston Upon Hull	1995	60	Partial	
Middlesbrough	1995	53	Whole	
North East Lincolnshire	1995	42	Whole	
North Lincolnshire	1995	42	Whole	
North Somerset	1995	59	Whole	
Redcar & Cleveland	1995	59	Whole	
South Gloucestershire	1995	70	Whole	
Stockton-on-Tees	1995	55	Whole	
York	1995	53	Whole	

Source: Local Elections Database

Appendix Two – Boundary Changes in English Local Government

This appendix details changes to boundaries of local government wards. The Tables show the change year for each type of authority and the total number of wards after boundary changes. The number of wards abolished and created is also shown. There were for example, 2938 shire county wards in 1981. In 1985, 1,251 wards were abolished and 1,318 new wards were created. The net result of these changes left the shire counties with a total of 3,009 wards.

Shire Counties

Change Year	Wards Created	Wards Abolished	Total Wards
1973	2826		2826
1981	1694	1582	2938
1985	1318	1251	3005
1995	40	47	2998
1997	0	796	2202

Source: Local Elections Database

Shire Districts

Change Year	Wards Created	Wards Abolished	Total Wards
1973	6229		6229
1976	1129	869	6489
1979	2018	1633	6874
1983	900	778	6996
1986	23	114	6905
1987	99	6	6998
1991	180	171	7007
1992	24	406	6625
1995	6	215	6416
1996		171	6245
1997		904	5341
1998	1		5342

Source: Local Elections Database

Metropolitan Counties

The metropolitan counties consisted of 547 Wards from 1973 until they were abolished in 1986. There were no boundary changes during this time.

Metropolitan Boroughs

Change Year	Wards Created	Wards Abolished	Total Wards
1973	822	0	822
1979	108	108	822
1980	349	341	830
1982	303	306	827

Source: Local Elections Database

Greater London

The Greater London Council consisted of 92 wards from 1973 to when it was abolished in 1986. There were no changes to the ward boundaries during this time.

London Boroughs

Change Year	Wards Created	Wards Abolished	Total Wards
1973			638
1974	22		660
1978	602	508	754
1982	33	30	757
1996	2	0	759

Source: Local Elections Database

Appendix Three – District Magnitude in English Local Government

This appendix lists the variations in district magnitude for each local authority type. The district magnitude of elections in Greater London is not included as single member plurality elections were employed until the authority was abolished in 1986.

Shire Counties

Elections		District Magnitude (M)		
Year	N	1	2	3
1973	2826	2569	211	46
1977	2826	2570	211	45
1981	2938	2801	116	21
1985	3005	3005		
1989	3005	3005		
1993	2998	2998		
1997	2202	2202		

Source: Local Elections Database

Shire Districts

Elections		District Magnitude (M)											
Year	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1973	6229	2723	1239	1450	432	178	138	38	16	7	5	2	1
1976	6489	2718	1440	1798	284	117	89	23	8	7	2	2	1
1978	659	642	16	1									
1979	6678	3183	1703	1673	59	32	22	3	1	2			
1980	1542	1488	43	11									
1982	1536	1493	43										
1983	6438	3645	1629	1159	1	4							
1984	1852	1807	43	2									
1986	1857	1784	52	21									
1987	6410	3821	1577	1006	2	4							
1988	1752	1706	45	1									
1990	1739	1658	46	35									
1991	6417	3776	1587	1047	3	4							
1992	1722	1674	36	12									
1994	1712	1664	46	2									
1995	5907	3541	1424	936	2	4							
1996	1485	1442	43										
1997	20	11	5	4									
1998	1314	1258	53	3									

Source: Local Elections Database

Metropolitan Counties

Elections		District Magnitude (M)		
Year	N	1	2	3
1973	547	511	18	18
1977	547	511	18	18
1981	547	511	18	18

Source: Local Elections Database

Metropolitan Boroughs

Elections		District Magnitude (M)					
Year	N	1	2	3	4	5	6
1973	822			804	1		17
1975	821	786	34	1			
1976	822	792	28	2			
1978	822	772	47	3			
1979	822	718	40	64			
1980	830	549	29	251	1		
1982	827	564	14	249			
1983	827	809	18				
1984	827	801	26				
1986	827	792	35				
1987	827	790	28	9			
1988	827	798	28	1			
1990	827	794	33				
1991	827	814	13				
1992	827	811	16				
1994	827	806	20	1			
1995	827	812	15				
1996	827	817	10				
1998	827	805	22				

Source: Local Elections Database

London Boroughs

Elections		District Magnitude (M)			
Year	N	1	2	3	4	5
1974	660	4	205	360	82	9
1978	754	16	322	416		
1982	757	16	325	416		
1986	757	16	325	416		
1990	757	16	325	416		
1994	759	15	330	414		
1998	759	15	330	414		

Source: Local Elections Database

Unitary Authorities

Elections		District Magnitude (M)		
Year	N	1	2	3
1995	389	108	163	118
1996	271	38	79	154
1997	484	122	164	198
1998	204	202	2	

Source: Local Elections Database

Appendix Four – Contestation of Local Government Elections

This appendix lists patterns of electoral contestation and non-contestation for the different types of English local government authorities. The Tables for contestation show the total number of candidates standing and proportion of candidates to vacancies in elections for different district magnitudes. The proportion of all candidates to all seats is shown also. In the 1973 shire county elections for example, there were 2.2 times as many candidates as total seats available. The proportion of candidates contesting 3 vacancy elections was 2.1 in the same year. The Tables for non-contestation show the total number and percentage of uncontested elections and also the percentage of uncontested elections by district magnitude. In the 1973 shire county elections, a total of 390 elections were uncontested, representing 13.8% of all elections. Of single vacancy elections 14.9% were uncontested, while 2.8% of two vacancy elections were uncontested.

Contestation in Shire Counties

Candidates		Proportion of Candidates to Seats by District Magnitude (M)			
Year	N	All	1	2	3
1973	6783	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.1
1977	7570	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.6
1981	8432	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.5
1985	8742	2.9	2.9		
1989	8946	3.0	3.0		
1993	9068	3.0	3.0		
1997	6809	3.1	3.1		

Source: Local Elections Database

Non-Contestation in Shire Counties

Elections		Percentage Uncontested Seats by District Magnitude (M)			
Year	N	All	1	2	3
1973	390	13.8	14.9	2.8	
1977	361	12.8	13.6	4.7	2.2
1981	121	4.1	4.2	1.7	
1985	61	2.0	2.0		
1989	64	2.1	2.1		
1993	60	2.0	2.0		
1997	33	1.5	1.5		

Source: Local Elections Database

Contestation in Shire Districts

Candidates		Proportion of Candidates to Seats by District Magnitude (M)												
Year	N	All	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1973	26902	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.1	2.4	1.6	1.8
1976	27179	2.0	1.7	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	1.8	1.9
1978	1666	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.0									
1979	23636	1.9	1.7	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.1	1.6	1.8	2.5			
1980	4079	2.5	2.6	2.5	1.8									
1982	4536	2.9	2.9	2.8										
1983	23406	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.3	1.8	2.3							
1984	5252	2.8	2.8	2.6	3.0									
1986	5555	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.1									
1987	24189	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.0							
1988	5122	2.8	2.9	2.6	3.0									
1990	5509	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.4									
1991	23844	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.3	1.9							
1992	5253	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.4									
1994	5104	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.5									
1995	22313	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.0	2.0							
1996	4387	2.9	2.9	2.7										
1997	74	2.2	1.8	2.4	2.5									
1998	3987	2.9	2.9	2.7	3.0									

Source: Local Elections Database

Non-Contestation in Shire Districts

Elections		Percentage Uncontested Seats by District Magnitude (M)								
Year	N	All	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1973	1171	18.8	31.6	14.0	6.1	8.3	4.5	3.6		
1976	1684	26.0	48.8	16.2	5.7	5.3	3.4	2.2		4.3
1978	46	7.0	7.0	6.3						
1979	1844	27.6	45.8	16.1	6.3	8.5		4.5		
1980	107	6.9	7.2							
1982	48	3.1	3.2							
1983	1118	17.4	25.1	9.9	3.6					
1984	90	4.9	4.9	4.7						
1986	53	2.9	3.0							
1987	720	11.2	15.5	6.2	3.0					
1988	76	4.3	4.4	2.2						
1990	60	3.5	3.6							
1991	798	12.4	16.8	7.2	4.5		25.0			
1992	57	3.3	3.4							
1994	64	3.7	3.8							
1995	519	8.8	11.6	5.9	2.7	50.0				
1996	32	2.2	2.2							
1997	2	10.0	18.2							
1998	13	1.0	0.9	3.8						

Source: Local Elections Database

Contestation in Metropolitan Counties

Candidates		Proportion of Candidates to Seats by District Magnitude (M)			
Year	N	All	1	2	3
1973	1520	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.5
1977	1819	3.0	3.0	2.8	3.5
1981	1824	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0

Source: Local Elections Database

Non-Contestation in Metropolitan Counties

Elections		Percentage Uncontested Seats by District Magnitude (M)			
Year	N	All	1	2	3
1973	20	3.7	3.7		5.6
1977	6	1.1	1.2		
1981	2	0.4	0.4		

Source: Local Elections Database

Contestation in Metropolitan Boroughs

Candidates		Proportion of Candidates to Seats by District Magnitude (M)						
Year	N	All	1	2	3	4	5	6
1973	5810	2.3			2.3	1.5		2.2
1975	2445	2.9	2.9	2.5	2.7			
1976	2457	2.9	2.9	2.7	1.8			
1978	2458	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.3			
1979	2642	2.7	2.8	2.3	2.2			
1980	3527	2.6	2.7	2.4	2.5	2.3		
1982	3855	2.9	3.1	3.1	2.7			
1983	2560	3.0	3.0	2.6				
1984	2441	2.9	2.9	2.6				
1986	2536	2.9	3.0	2.6				
1987	2665	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.1			
1988	2628	3.1	3.1	2.9	1.3			
1990	2622	3.0	3.1	2.8				
1991	2614	3.1	3.1	2.7				
1992	2721	3.2	3.2	2.9				
1994	2580	3.0	3.1	2.8	3.0			
1995	2587	3.1	3.1	2.9				
1996	2566	3.1	3.1	2.8				
1998	2722	3.2	3.2	2.8				

Source: Local Elections Database

Non-Contestation in Metropolitan Boroughs

Elections		Percentage Uncontested Seats by District Magnitude (M)						
Year	N	All	1	2	3	4	5	6
1973	21	2.6			2.5			5.9
1975	23	2.8	2.9					
1976	13	1.6	1.6					
1978	7	0.9	0.9					
1979	7	0.9	0.8	2.5				
1980	13	1.6	2.0		0.8			
1982	3	0.4	0.4		0.4			
1983	6	0.7	0.6	5.6				
1984	13	1.6	1.5	3.8				
1986	24	2.9	2.9	2.9				
1987	14	1.7	1.6	3.6				
1988	16	1.9	1.9	3.6				
1990	53	6.4	6.5	3.0				
1991	37	4.5	4.5					
1992	12	1.5	1.5					
1994	29	3.5	3.6					
1995	31	3.7	3.8					
1996	34	4.1	4.2					
1998	17	2.1	2.0	4.5				

Source: Local Elections Database

Contestation in Greater London

Candidates		Proportion of Candidates to Seats by District Magnitude (M)	
Year	N	All	1
1973	318	3.5	3.5
1977	473	5.1	5.1
1981	489	5.3	5.3

Source: Local Elections Database

Non-Contestation in Greater London

No Greater London elections were uncontested from 1973 to 1981.

Contestation in London Boroughs

Candidates		Proportion of Candidates to Seats by District Magnitude (M)				
Year	N	All	1	2	3	4	5
1974	5300	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.6
1978	5763	3.0	2.6	3.1	3.0		
1982	5980	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.1		
1986	5992	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.2		
1990	5779	3.0	3.8	3.1	3.0		
1994	5834	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1		
1998	5839	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.1		

Source: Local Elections Database

Non-Contestation in London Boroughs

Elections		Percentage Uncontested Seats by District Magnitude (M)				
Year	N	All	1	2	3	4	5
1974	9	1.4		2.4	1.1		
1978							
1982	1	0.1		0.3			
1986	1	0.1			0.2		
1990	1	0.1			0.2		
1994							
1998	1	0.1			0.2		

Source: Local Elections Database

Contestation in Unitary Authorities

Candidates		Proportion of Candidates to Seats by District Magnitude (M)			
Year	N	All	1	2	3
1995	1995	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.6
1996	1996	2.9	2.7	2.9	3.0
1997	1997	2.7	3.1	2.6	2.7
1998	1998	3.3	3.3	3.0	

Source: Local Elections Database

Non-Contestation in Unitary Authorities

Elections		Percentage Uncontested Seats by District Magnitude (M)			
Year	N	All	1	2	3
1995	1	0.3	0.9		
1996	3	1.1	7.9		
1997	2	0.4		1.2	
1998	1	0.5	0.5		

Source: Local Elections Database

Appendix Five – Party Control in English Local Government

This appendix lists the party control of the English local government system between 1973 and 1998. The Tables show the total number of councils controlled by each of the main parties separately for top tier and second tier authorities. The Tables also show the number of authorities controlled by other councillors (OTH) and those where no one group has overall control (NOC).

Table A – Party control of English Local Authorities 1973 to 1998 – Top Tier

YEAR	N	CON	LAB	LD	OTH	NOC
1973	46	13	14		2	17
1974	46	13	14		2	17
1975	46	13	14		2	17
1976	46	13	14		2	17
1977	46	41	3		1	1
1978	46	41	3		1	1
1979	46	41	3		1	1
1980	46	41	3		1	1
1981	46	19	17	1	1	8
1982	46	19	17	1	1	8
1983	46	19	17	1	1	8
1984	46	19	17	1	1	8
1985	46	10	12	1		23
1986	39	10	5	1		23
1987	39	10	5	1		23
1988	39	10	5	1		23
1989	39	17	8	1		13
1990	39	17	8	1		13
1991	39	17	8	1		13
1992	39	17	8	1		13
1993	39	1	9	3		26
1994	39	1	9	3		26
1995	35	1	7	2		25
1996	35	1	7	2		25
1997	34	9	8	2		15
1998	34	8	8	2		16

Source: Local Elections Database

Table B – Party control of English Local Authorities 1973 to 1998 – Second Tier

YEAR	N	CON	LAB	LD	OTH	NOC
1973	364	76	118	1	66	103
1974	364	79	115	1	66	103
1975	364	83	111	1	66	103
1976	364	193	64		53	54
1977	364	193	64		53	54
1978	364	201	57		53	53
1979	364	190	80	1	42	51
1980	364	172	96	3	43	50
1981	364	172	96	3	43	50
1982	364	170	90	3	42	59
1983	364	168	91	3	37	65
1984	364	160	91	3	37	73
1985	364	160	91	3	37	73
1986	364	134	107	7	35	81
1987	364	134	99	11	21	99
1988	364	140	102	10	21	91
1989	364	140	102	10	21	91
1990	364	129	109	8	22	96
1991	364	85	122	25	27	105
1992	364	89	111	24	25	115
1993	364	89	111	24	25	115
1994	364	69	118	32	25	120
1995	356	12	158	48	15	123
1996	355	13	166	53	17	106
1997	351	14	163	48	14	112
1998	351	16	161	40	13	121

Source: Local Elections Database

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