A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE ATTITUDES OF AUSTRALIAN VOTERS ON PARTY POLITICAL ISSUES AND THEIR VOTING BEHAVIOUR AT THE 1969 FEDERAL ELECTION

A thesis submitted to The Australian National University in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

by

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I declare that this thesis is all my own work and has been written in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at the Australian National University. All sources used in the thesis have been acknowledged in writing in the following pages.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION - ISSUES AND THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

A common preoccupation of both students and practitioners of politics has for long been the extent to which policy issues are relevant to electoral behaviour in representative systems of government. Although the focus of the debate has shifted over time, political scientists continue to argue whether theories of liberal democracy presuppose that electoral decisions are made on the basis of considered judgements about how a country is to be governed and whether, in fact, people actually do cast their votes with such considerations in mind.

The main concern of this study will be with the behavioural aspect of the controversy. Its aim is to examine the relationships which existed between policy issues and the voting behaviour of the Australian public at a Federal government election. The application of certain logical preconditions for the existence of *"issue voting"*, which have been advanced by American and British researchers, will be tested in the Australian context. Owing to the limitations of the data available for analysis, the results will not support any thorough-going revision of the assumptions implicit in contemporary theories of liberal democracy[1], but the outcome will be of relevance for those interested in establishing whether popular elections present realistic opportunities for rational decision-making.

The debate concerning the place of rationality in voting behaviour has been conducted in the pages of academic journals of political

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1. Indeed, the author is not qualified to undertake such a task. See Pateman's criticism of "political sociologists wearing political theorists' hats", C. Pateman, Participation and Democratic Theory, (Cambridge, 1970), p.3.

science[2] and will not be traced in detail here. An outline of its main themes, however, is necessary to place the subject-matter of this thesis within its conceptual context. The controversy, in its most recent form, was sparked by members of the behaviouralist school of political science, whose research during the 1950's demonstrated widespread ignorance of policy issues and lack of interest in political affairs amongst the American voting public. Their conclusion, that ordinary citizens were incapable of making the rational judgements expected of them by the liberal democratic notion of periodic accountability of the government at popular elections, was hotly debated at both the normative and empirical level. Their assertion was by no means new to liberal democracies. It had appeared in the nineteenth century in the form of opposition to the extension of the franchise by those who feared the rule of the uneducated mob whose irrational prejudices could be played upon by demagogues and unscrupulous orators. But, it was given new status by the behaviouralists' claim to have discovered, in the sample survey technique, a tool which enabled the objective study of public opinion. Their description of the ordinary citizens' approach to electoral decision-making was challenged by those who disputed the validity of their techniques, particularly the notion that survey research was *"value-free"*, and by those who believed that they had misunderstood the normative judgements of theorists as to the ideal form of operation of the liberal democratic system.

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2. For the debate in full, see B.R. Berelson, et al., Voting (Chicago, 1954); W. Berns, "A Critique of Voting". in H.J. Storing (ed.), Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics (N.Y., 1962); L. Davis, "The Cost of Realism: Contemporary Restatements of Democracy", Western Political Quarterly, XVII (1964), pp.37-46; J.L. Walker, "A Critique of the Elitist Theory of Democracy", American Political Science Review, 60,2 (1966), pp.285-95; R.A. Dahl, "Further Reflections on the Elitist Theory of Democracy", American Political Science Review, 60,2 (1966), pp.296-305; V.O. Key, Jr, The Responsible Electorate (Cambridge, Mass., 1966); C. Pateman, *ibid.*

An example of the debate which is of particular relevance to this study followed the publication of Voting by Bernard Berelson and others, one of the initial works on American voting behaviour which used the results of survey research to challenge assumptions the authors believed to underlie expositions of *"classical"* democratic theory[3]. In place of earlier theorists' expectations that voters would be interested, informed and capable of making rational judgements, Berelson erected a "more realistic" theory of democracy which emphasised apathy and low levels of participation in a heterogeneous society as guarantors of a stable and, *ipso facto* successful, liberal democratic system. His theoretical approach was not original, as it relied heavily upon the contribution of Joseph Schumpeter who, prior to the release of the behaviouralists' findings, had advanced a definition of liberal democracy as a political *method*, which he felt to be more in keeping with the realities of representative systems, and which followed on from the elitist theories of government advanced earlier in the century by Mosca and Michels[4]. Schumpeter defined the democratic method as, *"that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote".*[5] In fitting his own research to a functionalist theory of liberal democracy, Berelson assimilated his findings on the characteristics of the *"average"* American voter to Schumpeter's conception that elections were no more than opportunities for the people to choose their rulers.

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3. Berelson, *op.cit.*, Chap.14.

4. J. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, (N.Y., 1947).

5. *ibid.*, p.269.

Berelson and other political sociologists who followed him were criticised mainly for their failure to recognise that their own studies were not *"value free"* and contained normative assumptions about the characteristics of citizens expected in a functioning liberal democratic system[6]. Even survey research techniques were fallible, in that survey results reflected the biases of their designers. Some criticism was also directed at the behaviouralists' misreading of the theorists of liberal democracy and, recently, this was extended to the whole notion of *"classical"* democratic theory which Pateman dismissed as a myth[7]. Political theorists did not, as Berelson had hoped, bring their theories of democracy into line with the findings of American sample survey research. They were sufficiently sceptical of the assumptions underlying the behaviouralists' work not to accept the new model of the unenlightened voter purely on the basis of sociologists' evidence that it corresponded with objective reality. In the mid-1950's, Downs defied the empiricists with An Economic Theory of Democracy, which described voting behaviour as a rational form of decision-making in which voters made their choices from a desire to *"maximise utility incomes"*; in other words, they combined maximum gains with minimum costs (in the form of effort expended)[8]. Although this model could explain voters' apparent lack of involvement and low interest in political affairs, it led Downs to predict behaviour patterns which were often quite contrary to those expected on the basis of survey findings[9].

As time passed, it was the survey researchers who modified their techniques, accepting that alterations in their research design and in

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6. Berns, *op.cit.* and Walker, *op.cit.*

7. Pateman, *op.cit.*, pp.17-20.

8. A. Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (N.Y., 1957).

9. See Chapter 6.

the form of questions they asked could radically alter the results they obtained. The basic finding of widespread ignorance in the electorate about the affairs of government was not altered, but greater emphasis was placed on the ambiguities in information which reached the voters, the strains which were, sometimes deliberately, imposed on their perceptual capacities by political actors[10], and the relatively greater knowledge shared by people on the issues which actually concerned them[11]. Little empirical support was forthcoming, however, for the notion that electors made rational decisions in casting their votes. V.O. Key's Responsible Electorate, in which he presented empirical evidence for his *"perverse and unorthodox argument ... that voters are not fools"*[12], stood very much on its own. It was not until after the introduction of a statistical technique which utilised simultaneous equations to build models of the causal pathways in voting decisions that rationality was again seriously canvassed amongst political sociologists as a feature of voting behaviour[13].

The debate over rationality has been conducted primarily in terms of whether voters consider issues (mainly policy issues, but sometimes issues of style in government) in the course of their voting decisions. *"Issue voting"* has been identified with rational voting. As irrational responses linking issues to the final voting outcome have not been thought to qualify as examples of *"issue voting"*, the assumption of

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10. See Chapter 7.

11. See Chapter 8.

12. Key, *op.cit.*, p.7.

13. For the first published demonstration of the use of this technique see A. Goldberg, "Discerning a Causal Pattern among Data on Voting Behaviour", American Political Science Review, 60 (1966), pp.913-22. For an application of the same technique to the question of rationality in British voting behaviour see M. Just, "Causal Models of Voter Rationality", Political Studies, 21, 1 (1973), pp.45-56.

identity, as far as it goes, is quite legitimate. Most of the literature has, however, overlooked the possibility that it can be completely rational to cast a vote on the basis of considerations other than issues. Partly, this has been due to confusion over the most suitable meaning of *"rationality"* and partly it has arisen from an understandable preoccupation with the influence of socialisation processes on the formation of an individual's political belief system.

The early conceptions of rationality implicit in the writings of Berelson, Angus Campbell[14] and others presupposed a certain type of political system and classified actions as *"rational"* according to whether they fitted the apparent requirements of the system. Thus, in a representative liberal democracy where governments were chosen at popular elections, it was rational for voters to assess the candidates on the basis of their stances on public policy issues. Shapiro pointed out the fallacies in an approach which sought to define rationality as a function of normative judgements about the operative requirements of a political system. He recommended that rationality, as a quality of political man, be conceived of in terms of the calculus employed by the individual in deciding among alternatives.[15] In the same vein of thinking, Downs used an economic calculus which referred to a rational man as one *"who moves toward his goals in a way which, to the best of his knowledge, uses the least possible input of scarce resources per unit of value output"*[16]. The simple requirement for this sort of deductive rationality *"is simply that the individual choose those actions which he believes to be consistent with his desired goals"*[17]. If a voter believed that being

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14. A. Campbell, *et al.*, The American Voter, (N.Y., 1960).

15. M. Shapiro, "Rational Political Man", American Political Science Review, 63 (1969), p.1106.

16. Downs, *op.cit.*, p.5.

17. Shapiro, *op.cit.*, p.1108.

a teetotaller was one of the qualities necessary for governing a country well, and if he cast his vote consistently with that belief, then his action would be quite rational, even if he had been mistaken in that the candidate he thought to be a non-drinker did, in fact, drink alcohol. Clearly, this type of rational decision could precedea voting act with no reference having been made to any of the issues being debated in the public arena at the time.

Whilst economists have restricted themselves to the criteria of deductive rationality, sociologists and psychologists have also been concerned with inductive rationality, the capacity to assimilate information from the evironment and, if need be, to adapt one's belief system to the implications of that new information[18]. Irrational behaviour, according to these criteria, has frequently been observed in the unconscious use of perceptual balance mechanisms, whereby people selectively perceive, or misperceive, information from the outside world which is contradictory to beliefs they already hold in order to avoid the necessity of altering these beliefs. It is precisely this type of behaviour which has led to many of the characterisations of voting decisions as irrational. As an illustration, if the voter in the example used above had ignored a television film report of the candidate drinking beer at an election meeting, because he himself was a teetotaller and had strong feelings of loyalty towards the candidate's political party, then we would have to say that his decision to vote for the candidate, on the groupds of opposition to alcoholic consumption, was irrational according to the criteria of inductive rationality.

Many observations about the irrationality of voting decisions have, quite correctly, been based on the failure of individuals to respond to

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18. A. Goldberg, "Social Determinism and Rationality as Bases of Party Identification", American Political Science Review, 63 (1969), pp.5-25.

information from the environment, preferring instead to be guided by the dictates of strongly held beliefs, such as partisanship. Dependence on partisanship as a cue in deciding how to vote cannot in itself, however, be classed as irrational. Messages from a voter's environment may well coincide with his partisan leanings. Goldberg argues that party affiliations, rooted in group norms absorbed during the process of political socialisation, could be rational guides to action:

> *"If one considers the origins of group norms, one expects that at their inception they were rational means to group ends. It may not then be surprising to find that they continue to be rational guides to action, even when learned on primarily affective bases. It might not be untoward, then, for research to be addressed to a world of rational voters seeking to reduce information costs by following group norms, which have in the past seemed effective, with due allowance made in the analytical model for the learning and adaptative processes incumbent upon the voter in attempting to cope with a changing political environment".*[19]

We should not be led, as were the early behaviouralists, by the deterministic nature of the processes involved in the acquisition of partisan loyalities, to a mistaken conclusion that reliance on partisanship as a guide to voting behaviour is irrational.

Knowledge of the requirements for rationality, in both the deductive and inductive sense, has provided a framework for assessing the voting decisions which will be studied in the Australian data. Although it has been recognised that voting decisions can be rational without having had recourse to the consideration of issues, it is with the existence of *"issue voting"* that this thesis is primarily concerned. Before embarking on the analysis, it is necessary to establish the meaning of such concepts as *"issue voting"* and to fix an operational defintion for the term *"issue"* itself.

A word commonly employed in the English language, the term *"issue"* becomes annoyingly ambiguous when its usage is submitted to

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19. *ibid.*, p.21.

close analysis. The essential meaning of the word is clear: an *"issue"* is a *"dispute over alternatives"* or *"the point in question"*. Confusion has arisen, however, through the indiscriminate use of the term in relation to electoral situations. And it is with the nature of election issues that we are concerned here.

In early discussions of the liberal democratic system and its assumptions of rational decision-making on the part of the voting public, election issues were widely regarded as disputes over matters of government policy. In 1951, David Butler defined issues as *"matters of policy on which people disagree"*[20]. Election campaigns continue to be conducted on the presumption that voters will take into account the differing policy stances of candidates. Under the British system of cabinet government, at least, campaigns are launched with speeches by the party leaders giving detailed accounts of the policies deemed to be attractive to the voters, some of which are taken up by the media and presented as the *"issues"* which differentiate the competing parties.

However, formal policies are often not the only points in dispute at election time. The personalities of candidates or the organisational attributes of political parties may be the subjects of public debate. Berelson and his associates did recognise this possibility in defining the issues of an election as:

> *"... statements that allege differences between the contending parties or candidates with reference to such matters as domestic and international policy, the nature of a party's support, or the capabilities of the nominees".*[21]

Their subsequent emphasis on issues as being articulated by the party leaders, however, ignored the possibility that disputes could exist at some level within the electorate or amongst representatives of the media

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20. U.N.E.S.C.O., Dictionary of the Social Sciences, 1951, p.105

21. Berelson, *op.cit.*, p.182.

which were not mentioned by *any* of the competing candidates. Questions of personality or party unity, particularly, may be studiously avoided by candidates who fear that stressing their differences from their opponents on these matters may bring adverse reactions, in the form of intra-party strife or the dredging up of past indiscretions.

Two questions are immediately raised by Berelson's definition and the objection made as to its scope: firstly, should *all* allegations of differences between the contestants be accepted as issues?; and, secondly, if some matters of contention are not articulated by the candidates, how visible must they be before rating as election issues? In grappling with these and other questions concerning the breadth of dispute necessary for a disagreement to be classified as an election issue, I have opted for a minimally restrictive approach which takes the operative criterion to be the existence of debate at any one of the three following levels: the political actors (candidates or party spokesmen), the mass media, members of the electorate. The possible ways in which issues may be debated at each of these levels will be considered in more detail in the following chapter, when the focus of discussion will be narrowed to those issues of particular relevance to the election chosen for analysis here.

So far, we have raised the possibility that issues may cover a broader field than merely disputes over matters of government policy. The typology most frequently used for classifying issues has been Butler and Stokes' division between *position* issues, involving alternative courses of government action on which different parties took different sides (for example, the introduction of national service) and *valence* issues, which represented common goals or values on which the

parties were in agreement (for example, the elimination of poverty)[22]. With regard to the second type of issue, parties could be expected to stress community consensus and to pursue an issue-matching strategy. The example used may suggest that valence issues comprise common policy goals, but the term would also encompass questions of style in government, for example, the accepted qualities for a good Prime Minister, or the need for the country to be governed by a united party.

Despite the values incorporated in valence issues being, by definition, consensual community goals[23], Butler and Stokes failed to recognise that parties would still be in dispute over the means to achieve agreed ends, if the goals acquired the status of election issues. Although each contestant might try and match the extent of his opponent's commitment to a common goal, there would be no point in the electoral contest unless an element of the *"we can do it better than they can"* dispute remained[24]. Thus, whilst agreeing that the elimination of poverty was a good thing, contestants would disagree over possible strategies to be pursued; and, in agreeing that a Prime Minister should be a strong leader, parties would disagree as to whose candidate fulfilled the criterion. As a conflict situation developed, Butler and Stokes would no doubt change their categorisation from that of a valence issue to a position issue.

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22. D. Butler & D. Stokes, Political Change in Britain (London, 1971), p.218. In a prior work, Berelson advanced a typology of issues which distinguished between position issues, comprising questions of the type: *"In whose interest should the government be run?"* and style issues, comprising questions of the type: *"In whose style should the government be run?"*; Berelson, *op.cit.* p.184. Berelson's typology did not prove suitable for the classification of issues in this study.

23. Butler & Stokes, *op.cit.*, p.235.

24. Goot recognised the possibility of the existence of this type of disagreement on valence issues, but still maintained that, *"there are other issues on which all parties and all voters are in agreement"*, M. Goot, Policies and Partisans (Sydney, 1969), p.158

If this was necessary, however, their typology could no longer be regarded as suitable for the classification of election issues, which always contain an element of dispute.

The presence of conflict as a defining characteristic of an election issue need not necessarily take the form of a cleavage in opinion within the electorate. Although candidates disputed their relative merits to govern in a commonly accepted style, voters might be united in believing that only one candidate possessed the necessary qualities for leadership.[25] Hypotheses associating different types of issues with patterns of cleavage or consensus in electoral opinion have met with varying degrees of success when tested against survey measures of opinion distribution.[26] Berelson's notion that an issue's *"life history"* could be traced through progressive stages reflected in the changing pattern of voter's attitudes has been treated with the greatest scepticism.[27] Berelson believed that issues moved through the political spectrum in a gradual sequence from universal rejection to partisan disagreement (conceived as a political *"gateway"* phase), to universal acceptance.

Apart from questioning the validity of the uni-directional movement that was implied by this model, Goot could find no evidence of the sharp cleavage of opinion along party lines which, according to Berelson, would characterise an issue in the political *"gateway"* between the two phases of rejection and acceptance.[28] In fact, the Gallup Poll data analysed by Goot suggested that bipartisanship was the predominant opinion

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25. This should only be considered as a theoretical example, for conflicting partisan loyalties would ensure that such unanimity within the electorate rarely, if ever, occurred.

26. See Chapter 4.

27. Berelson, *op.cit.*, pp.207-10.

28. Goot, *op.cit.*, pp.97-100.

distribution amongst Australian voters, even when issues came within the category of *"specific proposals hanging in the balance"*.[29]

Butler and Stokes' research into attitude change in Britain also produced powerful arguments against the *"life history"* thesis. They found a marked fluidity in respondents' opinions on Common Market entry and nationalisation of industry over a three year time span. Although overall figures for the sample gave the impression of cumulative changes in opinion, short-term alterations in individual's attitudes did not add up to any meaningful pattern of movement in individual opinions over time such as would be the case if these issues had a *"life history"* of the sort posited by Berelson.[30]

The hypothesis advanced by Berelson that issues are first articulated against a background of public rejection or, at least, apathy, would be almost impossible to test. There have been speculative arguments about the existence of latent opinion[31], but the validity of any efforts to measure attitudes on issues of which the electorate had no knowledge (in Berelson's terminology, before the *"gateway"*) would be highly questionable. The unwillingness of many people to give a *"don't know"* response would be likely to produce an artificial estimation of opinion. It is quite possible, however, that issues debated in the mass media during a campaign (hence, election issues) may be little known to the voters and/or of no relevance to them in their personal lives.

In order to avoid making any assumptions about the conditions governing whether an issue is, or is not, politically relevant[32], the

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29. These are Berelson's words to describe issues in the *"gateway"* phase, as cited by Goot, *op.cit.*, p.97.

30. Butler and Stokes, *op.cit.*, pp.221-7.

31. V.O. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, (N.Y.,1961), Chap.11.

32. See discussion in Goot, *op.cit.*, p.100.

defintion of an election issue to be employed here will not be linked to the appearance of any particular attitude distribution within the electorate. The operational definition most suited to the purposes of this thesis is as follows:

> *"An election issue is a dispute over alternatives (not necessarily policy alternatives) related to the competing claims of the candidates for government office, which occasions some debate amongst the contestants (individual candidates or party spokesmen), representatives of the media, or members of the voting public."*

This definition will be utilised in the next chapter, which will describe the particular issues chosen for inclusion in the analysis.

Before setting out the hypotheses concerning the existence of *"issue voting"* which will be tested in the thesis, it would be as well to be aware of the pitfalls involved in the analytic techniques to be employed. Since the work of the American behaviouralists in the mid-1950's, the relationships between issues and voting behaviour have continued to be studied through the use of sample survey techniques, where the opinions of a sample of voters are obtained, usually in an interview situation, in response to a standardised set of questions. Although the designers of such studies no longer claim that their research has been conducted under conditions of complete objectivity, periodic criticism has been directed at the adequacy of the tools of measurement and at the uses to which survey data have been put.[33] Frequently, follow-up research has demonstrated inconsistencies between predictions derived from measurements of verbal attitudes and subjects' subsequent behaviour.[34] The sample survey itself is notorious for the susceptibility of the resultant data to alterations

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33. For the latter type of criticism see L. Festinger, "Behavioural Support for Opinion Change", Public Opinion Quarterly, 28, 3 (1964) pp.404-17.

34. Most of these observations have been made during research into the effects of ethnic prejudices on overt behaviour, which has not included voting behaviour (this form of behaviour cannot usually be directly observed due to the secret ballot requirements of Western liberal democratic systems). See the literature cited in H. Ehrlich, "Attitudes, Behaviour and the Intervening Variables", American Sociologist, 4 (1969), pp.29-34.

in the wording of questions and to differential emotional reactions of the respondents to their interviewers. Allowances for this type of variability, and for sampling errors, can be made in the analysis of the data, but the researcher must, at all times be aware of the limitations in his measuring tools.

Those who have spoken out in defence of survey techniques recognise the highly complex nature of the attitude construct itself, the existence of many intervening variables between attitudes and overt behaviour[35], and the greater predictive accuracy of opinion measurement where the behaviour concerned takes the form of acting out a tightly structured, institutionalised role.[36] They maintain strongly, however, that the public opinion survey, used with care and discrimination, represents a valuable analytic tool for studying the determinants of overt behaviour, such as the act of electoral choice.

With the above caveats in mind, I propose to utilise in this study data collected in a sample survey of the Australian electorate conducted shortly after the Federal election of 25th October 1969 for research work at the Australian National University. The inclusion in the survey of a number of items which had been the subject of public debate prior to the election, together with a large body of information on the political attitudes, life history and socio-economic background of each respondent, has provided the first opportunity for a study of issues and their impact on an Australian election on the scale of studies already conducted in the United States and Great Britain.[37] The data, comprising interviews with 1,873 voters from all states of Australia, and the questions asked of the

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35. *ibid.*

36. I.Crespi, "What Kinds of Attitude Measures are Predictive of Behaviour?" Public Opinion Quarterly, 35, 3 (1971), pp.327-34.

37. For example, B.R. Berelson, *op.cit.*; A. Campbell, *op.cit.*; D. Butler and D. Stokes, *op.cit.*

respondents will be described in greater detail in the following chapter.

The analysis will proceed on the basis of testing the null hypothesis, that issues raised in connection with the 1969 Federal election had no relationship to the voting decisions of Australian electors. Specifically, it will test the application of certain conditions which have been laid down in the course of earlier research as constituting prerequisites for the existence of issue voting. These conditions are as follows:

(a) voters must be able to express an opinion on the issue;

(b) voters must have some minimal commitment to that opinion;

(c) voters must perceive that one party represents their own position on the issue better than do the other parties.[38]

The ability of voters to express an opinion on each of the issues concerned will be ascertained from replies to fixed-choice questions in the survey (the relevant items are set out in full in Appendix I). Allowance will need to be made for possibly inflated estimates of actual opinion obtained from this type of fixed-choice item where respondents may choose randomly amongst the alternatives, preferring to appear to have an opinion than to admit ignorance by answering *"don't know"*. Items asking voters the intensity of their feelings will be used to test the extent of commitment to opinions. An additional estimate of concern will be obtained from responses to an open-ended item which asked voters to nominate the most important problems they thought the Federal government should do something about. Responses to this type of question have been increasingly used in survey research to assess the salience of issues from the voters' point-of-view.[39] Unfortunately, it will only be possible

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38. See Campbell, *op.cit.*, pp.170-187; Butler & Stokes, *op.cit.*, pp.411-431.

39. D. RePass, "Issue Salience and Party Choice", American Political Science Review, 65 (1971), pp.389-400.

to test for the application of condition (c) with regard to one issue, the Vietnam war. The accuracy of voters' perceptions of party policies on this issue will be assessed, together with their abilities to link their own opinions with the policy of one of the parties contesting the election. A successful demonstration that conditions (a), (b) and (c) had been met, using the techniques described here, would provide necessary, but not sufficient, evidence that voting behaviour had been influenced by the respondents' issue opinions.

A further pre-condition, if issue voting was to affect the outcome of an election in a two-party system, was set out by Butler and Stokes in relation to the British electoerate. They maintained that opinion distributions would need to be skewed, rather than evenly divided, if the existing party balance was to be altered.[40] Although Australia is not strictly a two party system, the proportion of votes regularly obtained by the Labor Party and the Liberal/Country Party coalition[41] is so finely balanced that it would be feasible to apply Butler and Stokes' hypothesis to the distribution of votes at Federal elections. The distribution of opinion on each issue surveyed will therefore be matched against the criterion of skewness in the course of the study. One chapter will be devoted to estimating the degree of partisan cleavage in the electorate on each issue through comparing the distribution of opinions characteristic of respondents voting for opposing parties.

The existence of a correlation between holding a particular opinion on an issue and voting for a particular party at the 1969 election would not, by itself, constitute evidence that that issue had influenced voting decisions. Partisan loyalties, or socio-demographic variables may have

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40. Bulter and Stokes, *op.cit.*, pp.234-236.

41. The reasons for treating these two parties as a single political entity in the analysis of voting behaviour will be outlined in the following chapter.

been the determining factors. In order to account for this possibility, the relationships between issue opinions and party identification, and between opinions and the socio-demographic variables of education level, occupation, age and sex will be examined.

Most interest in the explanation of voting behaviour has been centred on the forces prompting change, rather than stability. The stabilising influence of partisan loyalties (see Chapter 6) suggests that the most likely area for the occurrence of issue voting lies with those voters who decided to switch from one party to another between elections. The study will, therefore, examine the issue opinions of those respondents who switched their vote between 1966 and 1969, comparing the relative defection rates from each of the major parties registered amongst those holding different views on the election issues.

Finally, the study will employ a multi-variate analysis technique to ascertain the relative contributions of each issue and of partisan affiliation to voting behaviour at the 1969 election. If a particular issue is found to account for a large proportion of the variance in 1969 vote, then it can be concluded that opinions on the issue were related to voting decisions. However, the techniques employed in the analysis will not permit any conclusions as to the causal processes involved in making these decisions. The term *"issue voting"* in this thesis will be used to indicate merely the presence of a relationship between certain issue opinions and voting behaviour, without inferring that any one issue *caused* the respondent to vote for the party of his choice.

It is unlikely that the analytic procedure outlined so far will provide sufficient information to make a final judgement on the rationality of voting decisions in 1969. Evidence of the operation of perceptual balance mechanisms in respondents' perceptions of party policies on the Vietnam war would enable the classification of decisions which relied upon

misperception of information from the environment relating to this issue as irrational, according to the criteria of inductive rationality. More information than could be obtained within the format of the Australian Survey Project (ASP) questionnaire on the subjective motivations behind individual voting decisions would be needed in order to establish whether voting behaviour met the criteria for deductive rationality. A finding that some degree of issue voting took place in the 1969 election would, however, at least open the way to the possibility that rational decision-making constituted an element in voting choice. Although it is unfortunate that the data available for analysis will not allow any definite conclusion as to the degree of rationality in Australian voting behaviour, the hypotheses which will be tested here should add up to a more comprehensive picture of the role played by issues in the voting decisions of the Australian electorate than has hitherto been produced.

CHAPTER 2

THE ELECTION, THE ISSUES, THE SURVEY

Having posed the problem of issue voting within the context of liberal-democratic theory and practice and having outlined a study designed to test certain relevant hypotheses about Australian voting behaviour, it is necessary to narrow the focus of discussion to the more specific aspects of the study. My basic concern in this thesis is to establish how, and to what extent a set of variables - public policy issues - could be said to have influenced the voting decisions of Australian electors at a particular election, that being the Federal election held on 25th October, 1969. Being unable to study the behaviour of all the voters who participated in that election, I have opted for a representative sample as the subjects of the investigation. The choice of election has been governed solely by the availability of data gathered in the course of the Australian Survey Project. The implications of this choice must be recognised at the outset, however. The circumstances of the particular election chosen for study in themselves constitute a set of variables which influenced the subjects' behaviour at the polls and findings cannot be generalized to cover subsequent, or preceding elections. In addition, the characteristics of each issue included in the study were shaped by the events of 1969 and earlier. Although the issueshave been classified as *"independent variables"* for the purposes of study design, their final form was dependent upon the outcome of political events occurring at both domestic and international levels.

Before proceeding to test the data for hypotheses about issue voting, the nature of each of the variables involved in the study must be clarified. This chapter will therefore be taken up by a description of the circumstances in which the 1969 Federal election was held, of the issues which were in dispute at the time, and of the particular issues chosen for study in the ASP survey. As the nature of the survey's sample of voters was of

vital importance for the reliability of the results, the rationale for its selection will be discussed and its validity as a sample of the total population assessed.

The 1969 Federal Election

The Federal election held in October 1969 at the conclusion of a three year term in office for the Liberal/Country Party coalition was conducted in an atmosphere of unusual concern about the personalities and leadership styles of the main contestants for the role of Prime Minister. Neither the incumbent Prime Minister, John Gorton, nor the Leader of the Opposition, Gough Whitlam, had previously led their parties at a Federal election, although John McEwen, leader of the Country Party, was an experienced campaigner. Gorton had been elected by his party to replace Harold Holt after the latter's disappearance in the sea off Portsea in December 1967. Although a Senator, Gorton had beaten other contestants for the leadership, such as Paul Hasluck, primarily because of a belief within the Liberal Party that his image would be appealing to the electorate. Pressure from the Country Party, together with an incomplete electoral redistribution, had prevented Gorton from confirming this reputation by staging an early election in 1968.

Whitlam's succession to the leadership of the A.L.P. had followed the disastrous electoral defeat inflicted upon Labor in 1966 when the party had been led by Arthur Calwell. As Deputy Leader under Calwell, Whitlam had served a long apprenticeship, during which he had precipitated moves for a reorganisation of the party[1] and begun to work on a series of policy

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1. In 1967, the A.L.P. Federal Conference accepted a proposal from Cyril Wyndham, the party's Federal Secretary to enlarge the composition of both Conference and Executive by the addition of *"ex officio"* representatives of the parliamentary party. The Federal Executive was expanded to include the two House of Representatives and two Senate Labor leaders. Commencing in 1969, the Federal Conference was increased by 10 delegates - the four Federal parliamentary leaders, and the six State parliamentary leaders. For a detailed account of the reorganisation and its effects see S.C. Read, The 1969 Federal Conference of the A.L.P.: Its Impact on the Shape of the Election Campaign and the Outcome of the Election. Unpublished M.A. Qual. sub-thesis, A.N.U., 1971.

initiatives for inclusion within the Federal platform. His tenure of the party's leadership position had not been without drama as he had only narrowly defeated left-winger Jim Cairns in 1968 after laying his newly won leadership on the line in support of right-winger R.W. Harradine's right to speak out against members of the A.L.P. Federal Executive[2].

The Liberal/Country Party was at a high-point in terms of its seats within the House of Representatives when it went to the polls in 1969. The coalition held 81 seats (Liberal 60; Country Party 21) against Labor's 42, with 1 Independent member[3]. Three by-elections during 1969 had not altered the party totals, although strong swings to Labor had been recorded in the Liberal seat of Curtin and the Country Party seat of Gwydir, whilst the A.L.P. had not lost as much ground as expected in Bendigo, where a popular Labor member had retired for health reasons. Although these trends might have been taken as a warning that the Government stood to lose some of its large majority at the forthcoming election, the normal tendency for swings against the governing party to be recorded at by-elections may have prevented the warning being seriously considered.

There were indications, however, that some members of the Liberal Party were worried about the Government's prospects. The personality of the Prime Minister, which had originally won him that role, was beginning to be seen as a handicap to the party. He had acquired a reputation for one-man decision-making which was made particularly offensive by the high-handed

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2. R.W. Harradine, a right-wing Tasmanian trade unionist had accused some members of the Federal Executive of being *"friends of Communists"* in 1968. The ensuing dispute over disciplinary measures to be taken against Harradine rekindled much of the *"anti-Grouper"* hostility of the 1950's within the party.

3. The number of effective seats within the House had increased from 123 to 124 during 1968 by the granting of voting rights to the Member for the Northern Territory, who represented the Country Party. An additional seat, added by a Federal electoral redistribution took the numbers to 125 after the 1969 election.

manner he employed in dealings with Government ministers, senior public servants and Liberal Party officials at both State and Federal levels.[4] Rumours rife in Canberra in eary 1969 about Gorton's personal life-style, particularly his drinking habits and relationships with young women, were exacerbated by the public attack against him by E. St.John, Liberal MP for Warringah, which was prompted by the circumstances of a late night visit Gorton paid to the U.S. Embassy in the company of a female journalist. Although St.John subsequently resigned from the Liberal Party, his allegations of Prime Ministerial indiscretion were widely featured in the mass media. The first indications of a drop in public support for Gorton came in a Gallup Poll taken in August, and the trend had intensified by the time the election campaign was under way.

TABLE 2.1 GALLUP POLL OF PRIME MINISTER'S PERFORMANCE[5]

Extent of approval of the way Gorton was handling his job as P.M.

	% approve	% disapprove	% undecided
April 1969	64	19	17
August 1969	58	25	17
October 4th, 1969	44	32	24
October 18th, 1969	46	32	22

Apart from his personal style of leadership, some of Gorton's beliefs created tensions between himself and supporters of the Government. Relations between the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party's State branches were hampered by his belief that greater power in areas such as education, social welfare and control of natural resources should be concentrated in the hands

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4. These characteristics of Gorton's Prime Ministership were commented upon in Press reports duing the year. As a Research Officer in the Liberal Party Federal Secretariat in 1969, I personally observed reactions of State party officials to Gorton's leadership.

5. Australian Gallup Poll, No.203, April, 1969; No.205, August 1969; No.206, 4 October 1969; No.207, 18 October 1969.

of the Federal Government. Gorton was accused by members of his own party of pursuing a centralist philosophy when he sort to revise the Liberal Party platform on federalism. His experimentation with the idea of abandoning the Government's concept of *"forward defence"* in favour of a *"fortress Australia"* policy aroused the ire of the more traditional Liberals, as well as straining relations with the Country Party and the D.L.P.

Whilst Gorton's personal style and philosophy were imposing great strains on the unity of the Liberal Party and of the coalition as a whole, Whitlam was beginning to reap the benefits of his efforts to weld the Labor Party into a united force which would be acceptable to the public as an alternative government. Apart from his rash gamble over Harradine, Whitlam had been working to convince all factions within the party that the only hope for effecting the ideals of the Labor movement lay in winning Federal office under his leadership. Not only did Whitlam need to gain the allegiance of those party members who had opposed him in the past, but he had also to convince representatives of the mass media that the A.L.P. was a united party equipped with a set of realistic electorally attractive policies.

A measure of Whitlam's success in achieving both of these objectives lay in the media's reception of the A.L.P. Federal Conference, held in July 1969[6]. This was not the first Conference to which representatives of the Press had been invited, but it was unique in not producing the factional in-fighting that journalists had come to expect. The uproar which had been predicted over Harradine's admission as a Conference delegate failed to materialise[7], and compromise solutions were negotiated on such other

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6. For a detailed account of the media reaction to the 1969 A.L.P. Federal Conference see S.C. Read, *op.cit.*

7. Harradine's credentials as a delegate were rejected by the Federal Conference in its first session. Harradine himself did not arrive in Melbourne until the second day, when he was dissuaded from attempting to force an entry to the meeting by other Tasmanian delegates.

contentious issues as State aid to non-government schools and the Vietnam war. The public proceedings of the Conference were dominated by Federal and State parliamentarians,[8] giving a sophistication to the debates which had been absent in the past. The re-writing of a major part of the Federal platform was approved by the delegates, most of the revisions being in keeping with policies which were personally espoused by Whitlam and had been the subject of much personal effort by him on the party's various policy committees.

The spirit of compromise which prevailed at the Conference was undoubtedly attributable to the delegates' concern with the approaching Federal election and their realisation that, in Whitlam, they had a leader who could appeal to the general electorate. The overwhelmingly favourable media response to the Conference assured Whitlam of his party's loyalty, including even the temporary alleigance of the left-dominated Victorian branch. The confidence of the A.L.P. continued to rise as members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery were persuaded by Gorton's inept handling of the Prime Ministership and Whitlam's mastery of his party to show Labor in a more favourable light than ever before.[9] Gallup Polls published as the election approached suggested that the Government was losing public support:

TABLE 2.2 GALLUP POLL - ELECTORAL PROSPECTS[10]

Percentage of electorate favouring each party to win an election

	L.C.P.	A.L.P.	D.L.P.	Other
April 1969	51%	40%	7%	2%
June 1969	50	40	7	3
August 1969	48	43	5	4
October 4th 1969	44	47	6	3
October 18th 1969	44	46	7	3

8. Of 46 credentialled delegates to the Federal Conference, 25 were Members of Parliament (14 Federal and 11 State).

9. G. Freudenberg, Whitlam's Press Secretary, regarded the winning-over of Ian Fitchett from the Sydney Morning Herald as the turning-point in Labor's build-up to the election. Personal interview, Parliament House, Canberra, 11 December 1970.

10. Australian Gallup Poll, Nos.203-207, April-October, 1969.

Neither party waited for the three-week *"official"* election campaign to announce its policies to the voters. Whitlam had been explaining his policies, particularly the complex proposals for a national health and a national superannuation scheme, throughout the year, even prior to their acceptance by Federal Conference, on the presumption that an Opposition, with fewer resources at its disposal, needed more time than a Government to communicate its policies to the electorate. Even if voters were not familiar with the details of Labor's proposals by the time of Whitlam's policy speech, the publicity given to the Federal Conference had shown the party to be equipped with a set of positive proposals for domestic reform.

The 1969 Budget gave a clear indication of the direction in which Gorton intended his policies to be weighted. Government spending on education, health benefits and social welfare was increased, whilst the defence budget suffered a cut. Gorton's desire for a more realistic defence policy in place of the anti-Communist paranoia of the past was reflected in a speech by External Affairs Minister, Gordon Freeth, in August which failed to show alarm at an increase in Soviet naval strength in the Indian Ocean. The D.L.P. and some sections of the Country Party reacted to this speech in such a hostile manner that Gorton was forced to back away from any suggestion that the Government might regard the Soviet Union as contributing to the stability of the Indian Ocean region. The Prime Minister did not back down, however, from his determination that matters of domestic policy should be given prominence in the Liberal Party campaign for the election.

The opening weeks of the *"official"* election campaign saw the two party leaders countering each other's arguments on such domestic issues as government aid for education, schemes for reimbursing medical costs, income tax reform and abolition of the means test on pensions. Although the promises contained in the two policy speeches reflected the differences in underlying philosophy of the opposing parties, the contrasting styles

in which the speeches were delivered caught most of the attention. Whitlam took the initiative, delivering a masterly speech to a boisterously enthusiastic crowd at the Sydney Town Hall on October 1st. Gorton followed a week later with a pre-recorded television address before a small gathering of Liberal/Country Party ministers and their wives who applauded politely in a stiff, formal atmosphere to which Gorton, clearly, was not suited.

Whitlam's confidence in his ability to outshine Gorton, both on television and in public appearances, was substantiated in the course of the campaign. Gorton's concern with domestic policies placed him in the role of continually trying to refute Labor's proposals which, for the first time, were carefully researched and costed. His unhappy relations with the State branches showed through in the poor organisation of the Liberal campaign at the State level. Aided by the reactions of the mass media and the October 4th Gallup Poll findings, Gorton gave in to pressure from his advisers in the last week of the campaign and attempted to regain the initiative by switching the emphasis to defence and foreign policy. Labor's commitment to withdraw Australian troops from Vietnam, to abolish conscription and to halt the stationing of forces in Malaysia/Singapore were painted as pro-Communist and detrimental to the future of both the American alliance and of friendships within the South East Asian region.

By polling day on October 25th the Australian electorate had been bombarded with information on domestic and foreign policy differences between the parties, in addition to journalistic interpretations of the two contestant's personal qualities and styles of leadership. The events recounted in the preceding pages set the parameters of the public debate, determining which issues were given prominence by the party leaders and by the mass media, and which were not. Differing assessments by party leaders, media commentators and the electors themselves as to which, if any, of the issues influenced the election result make it essential that we examine more closely, at this point, the issues which comprise the main focus of the study.

The Issues

According to the criteria established in the preceding chapter, an election issue is a point of dispute between contestants, which occasions some debate amongst the candidates, representatives of the media, or members of the voting public. The fact that competing parties or candidates adopt opposing stances in their policies or attitudes towards government does not necessarily mean that these areas of difference have the status of *"issues"*. They may pass unnoticed within the context of a particular election, whereas issues, being the *"points in dispute"*, arouse some level of public debate.

The debate associated with an election issue may be analysed from three perspectives - that of the politicians contesting the election; the mass media reporting it; or the voters themselves. Because an issue may be the subject of debate at one of these levels and ignored at another, it is particularly hard to make a decisive judgement as to which points of difference between the contestants constituted the issues of an election. The parties, party leaders or individual candidates seeking office choose which points they wish to stress in distinguishing themselves from their opponents. Typically, they initiate debate across a wide range of areas, hoping that different issues will appeal to different sectors of the electorate. By selective reporting of the candidates' activities, the news media may narrow the focus of debate so that some issues receive greater exposure than others. Press editorials and feature articles, together with current affairs programmes on radio and television, have been the arenas for attempts by proprietors and journalists to shift the emphasis towards the points of difference between the parties which they themselves regard as important. At times, the media may emphasise differences in policy or style which the candidates have not attempted to communicate to the voters. This may arise where party leaders fear to stress a particular policy which has aroused dissension within the party in the past, in case it does so again,

or where the leaders, from personal taste, have attempted to conduct campaigns biased towards one type of policy issue to the exclusion of others. The media can be particularly effective in making an issue of the leader's personal abilities, where each leader would hestitate to initiate debate on the capacities of his opponent in case it should back-fire.

There is always a normative quality in the judgements of both the politicians and the media commentators as to which areas constitute the issues of an election. Although they may possess some information on the electorate's tastes (gleaned from opinion research or from pure hunch), the points chosen for debate are those which the participants feel the voters *should* consider in making their choice between the parties.

Whether the points of difference between the parties which the voters regard as important actually coincide with those issues being debated in the political arena is another matter. As voters are dependent on the mass media for their knowledge of political events, they are unlikely to perceive differences between the parties or candidates which have not occasioned the attention of the media[11]. They may, however, allocate different priorities to the range of issues receiving such coverage than would be suggested by the emphasis either of the politicians or the election commentators. A point of contention between the parties may receive virtually no attention from the voters, whereas the circumstances of everyday life may lead the same people to regard some other difference as vital to their future well-being. For this reason, some researchers have identified election issues as those areas of government policy about which the voters themselves express concern[12]. Such a definition may well lead the researcher closer to

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11. Possible exceptions to this would occur if voters had experienced both parties in office so they could form their own comparisons, or if voters were frequent attenders at public meetings staged by both parties.

12. See, for example, D.E. Re Pass, *op.cit.*

finding the particular issues which did influence electoral decisions, but it tends to underestimate the role of the politicians and of the media in setting the parameters of political debate during an election campaign. As I have no wish to pre-judge the nature or even existence of influence processes which may link issues to voting behaviour, I have opted for a wider definition which identifies as an issue any point of difference between the contestants occasioning debate amongst politicians, media commentators and/or the general public.

It became evident during the 1969 Federal election campaign that all those participating in the debate, either as actors or as spectators, did not necessarily agree as to what the election issues were. Gorton and Whitlam, as the two contestants for the office of Prime Minister, were the most visible exponents of party policy. Traditionally, it has been held that the party leaders articulate the issues which will dominate their respective campaigns in their opening policy speeches. An analysis of the speeches delivered by Whitlam and Gorton, respectively, on 1st and 8th October did not, however, prove to be of particular value in isolating those points upon which the leaders wished to base their campaigns. In an effort to attract the attention of as many voters as possible, each speech covered the entire field of Federal government administration and, in addition, included numerous observations on the style of government associated with the competing parties. Promises, or accounts of past achievements, were listed across a broad front, including both domestic and foreign policy areas - the range of problems can be assessed from a breakdown of each policy speech set out in Appendix II. The speeches were intended as much for media consumption as for communication direct to the electorate and should be seen as attempts to enumerate as many areas of difference which might be relevant for electoral choice as possible, in the hope that some, at least, would be taken further by the media.

In their public appearances during the remainder of the campaign, the

two leaders did choose to focus their attention on certain issues which they felt to be their strong points. To varying degrees, they were influenced in this choice by the reactions of the media, their opponent's actions and their adviser's assessments of the way voters would react. Having chosen, from personal conviction, to stress domestic policies in his campaign, Gorton found himself answering the criticisms of Labor spokesmen on the inadequacies of past Liberal/Country Party initiatives in this area. Gorton's preference for making education, health and social welfare the talking-points of the campaign was not, apparently, shared by many Liberal parliamentarians who felt that defence and foreign policy were the vital issues and conducted their local campaigns on this basis[13].

Both prior to, and during the *"official"* campaign, it was evident that some newspaper proprietors and journalists had very different conceptions of which differences between the opposing parties should be given particular emphasis from the tastes of the party leaders. Although the speeches of both leaders on the subject of domestic policies were reported, newspapers such as the Sydney Morning Herald and the Daily Telegraph made use of editorial space and feature articles to stress party differences on defence and foreign policy. The sectors of the media which acted on their own initiative in this fashion were uniformly in support of Liberal/Country Party policy on the issues they canvassed. Labor spokesmen, Whitlam in particular, were anxious not to highlight the party's defence policies as they had been the subject of so many delicate compromises that the risk of sparking further intra-party conflict was too great[14].

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13. D. Aitkin, "The Federal Election", Politics, V,1, (1970), pp.45-53.

14. This fear proved to be well-grounded as the only element of disunity during Labor's campaign was provided by Arthur Calwell on the subject of the Vietnam war. Calwell spoke out against the official party policy of withdrawal after the United States had been notified, and called for public demonstrations in favour of the *immediate* withdrawal of troops. However, Calwell's outburst had little impact as it was promptly repudiated by the left-wing Victorian branch which publicly expressed its support for the policy enunciated by Whitlam.

However, the attention of the Press ensured that differences in the government and opposition approaches to defence and foreign affairs could be classified as issues in relation to this election. A content analysis of five daily newspapers (Australian, Age, Sydney Morning Herald, Daily Telegraph and Canberra Times[15]) during the three weeks of the official campaign showed the areas receiving most frequent mention to be defence (including Vietnam, conscription, troops in Malaysia, Soviet influence in the Indian Ocean and the U.S. alliance), health schemes and government aid to education, with the Daily Telegraph being the only newspaper to devote considerable space to the cost of Labor's election promises[16].

The contrast between the issues as seen by the party leaders and the issues canvassed in the Press did not persist unaltered throughout the election campaign. On the insistence of his advisors, Gorton changed the emphasis of his campaign in the last week to attack Labor's defence and foreign policies through use of the *"Red scare"* tactics which he, personally, had not wished to employ. His action illustrated the persuasive power of the Press over a party leader at a time of apparent decline in the popularity of that politician and his party. The Press, in particular, had made it clear that Gorton was not handling the debate over domestic policy with the ease that Whitlam displayed. Gorton's relatively lack-lustre performance as leader of the government coalition had itself become a point

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15. These newspapers were chosen because of their large circulation and because of their availability at the time the research was carried out. The list did not, unfortunately, provide a cross-section of all the main newspaper proprietors (although the Fairfax, Packer and Murdoch groups were represented), nor did it include representatives of the daily Press in the smaller States.

16. The fact that the Daily Telegraph was the only newspaper to devote much space to the possible costs of Labor's election promises represented a significant advance in the party's public relations. In previous elections, campaign promises had not been carefully costed beforehand, so that exorbitant costs to the taxpayer were quickly seized upon by the Press as a major issue.

of difference between the parties and threatened to become a prominent issue in the media campaign, without any overt help from Whitlam.

The resultant change in the nature of the Liberal campaign demonstrated the degree of interaction existing between politicians and the media in their respective attempts to set the issues for an election. In this case, a party leader responded to a fear that his opponent was beating him on the policy issues he had himself chosen by introducing different issues to the debate and thus also avoiding the possibility that his own leadership style might become an issue harmful to his prospects at the election.

The particular choice of issues by the party leaders and by the media in the 1969 election campaign involved assumptions about the nature and the extent of electoral reaction. The party organisations and Members of Parliament each in their own ways collected information about the problems which were concerning voters throughout Australia[17]. Gallup Polls conducted in June, August and October attempted to identify the issues as seen from the voters' perspective. The results of these polls showed that the Vietnam war, education and pensions were most frequently nominated as election issues, whilst health attracted very few spontaneous responses[18].

Too much weight should not be assigned to these findings, as the design of the Gallup Polls did not compare favourably with other research attempts (in the U.S., studies conducted by the University of Michigan and in the A.N.U.'s Australian Survey Project) to assess the level of voters' concern with particular areas of policy dispute. The question of

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17. The Federal Secretariat of the Liberal Party conducted pre-electoral sample surveys with the assistance of the Morgan-Gallup research organisation in 1969. Restricted funds and lack of research staff prevented the A.L.P. from carrying out anything other than fairly rudimentary attempts to survey public opinion.

18. Australian Gallup Poll, No.204, June 1969; No.205, August 1969; No.206, 4 October 1969.

identifying the issues as the voters saw them in 1969 is sufficiently complex to warrant a chapter of its own at a later stage in the thesis. However, the Gallup Poll findings are sufficient at this stage to indicate that the issues with which the mass media and the candidates were preoccupied did not necessarily correspond exactly with the views of the voters. The apparent lack of concern with health matters is particularly notable in the light of D. Aitkin's speculation as to whether the mass public absorbed anything of the debate between the parties over their rival health schemes[19]. Although the Vietnam war appeared to have aroused the concern of a significant proportion of the electorate, the Gallup finding that the opinions of these voters favoured the withdrawal of Australian troops may indicate that Gorton was right in his judgement and the newspaper proprietors wrong[20].

Viewing the issues of the 1969 election from the perspective of the contestants, the media and the voters, in turn, has left a wide variety of differences in party policy and style of leadership which may each have qualified as an election issue according to the definition set down in Chapter 1. Obviously, no study could hope to encompass all the possible issues, so that some sort of restriction would need to be imposed by the researcher. In this case, the restriction on the nature of the issues studied was implicit in the choice of data for analysis, as those designing the Australian Survey Project had their own criteria for the inclusion of

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19. Aitkin, *op.cit.*, p.48.

20. Australian Gallup Poll (AGP) No.204, June 1969 - the Vietnam war was nominated as the chief election issue by 14.5% of the sample.
AGP Nos. 205, 206:

	15 August '69 (205)	4 October '69 (206)
% who chose Vietnam from a series of issues	10.6%	12.1%
Continue to fight	2.5%	2.9%
Bring forces back	8.1%	9.2%

some issues and the omission of others. The questionnaire design has meant that I have not been able to include examples of each different type of issue discussed in the previous chapter, nor has it been possible to study some of the issues which most clearly suggest themselves as being particularly relevant to the 1969 election.

The issue items covered in this analysis have been restricted to policy issues on which different stances were adopted by the opposing parties. Although the ASP questionnaire did ask its subjects to evaluate the parties and their leaders, in terms which encouraged references to style as well as policy, each respondent was requested to list both positive and negative aspects in his evaluation. As a result, responses could not be easily classified as representing opinions on any *"style of government"* issue. This was particularly unfortunate, in view of suggestions in the Press that Gorton's capacities as Prime Minister had constituted an election issue for some voters.

The final selection of questionnaire items for inclusion in this study was made on the basis that each question should present alternatives which could be related to differences in government and opposition policy stances even if there was not a direct one-to-one correspondence. Eight items were chosen in this manner - the Vietnam war; conscription, State aid, migration; censorship; Communist China; foreign investment; relations with the United States. All were closed questions, some offering four alternatives, whilst others gave respondents only a binary choice (see Appendix I). The questions differed in the ease with which they could be linked with party policy stances, as will become apparent in the next chapter when the items, and responses to them, are studied in more detail.

The most frustrating feature of the questionnaire design for attempts to test hypotheses about issue voting in 1969 was the omission of such issues as health, education and pensions, which occupied much of the election campaign. It was possible to identify those issueswhich were of greatest

concern to the voters from responses to an open-ended question which asked subjects to nominate the most important problems requiring Federal government attention. However, the inadequacy of the list of closed-format issue items prevented any comparisons being made between the contributions to voting behaviour of these issues which were important to the voters and the issues (for example, health) which had dominated the attention of politicians and the mass media.

Each of the eight issue items selected for analysis received some mention in the parties' policy speeches or in the Press publicity for the campaign. The merits of party policies towards the Vietnam war, conscription and State aid were debated in the media, although the wider issue of education received more coverage than was allotted to the specific aspect of State aid to non-government schools. Gorton spoke in favour of government policies which allocated grants to independent schools on the basis of a fixed sum for each pupil, whilst Whitlam stressed the desirability of a *"needs"* formula for assessing Commonwealth financial aid, and independent DOGS (Defence of Government Schools) candidates opposed any form of government aid. Despite the party leaders' avoidance of the topics of Vietnam and conscription in the initial stages of the campaign, media commentators contrasted Labor's promises to withdraw Australian troops from the war and to abolish conscription, with the Government's continued commitment of troops and retention of national service by ballot.

Questions of Australia's future attitudes towards Communist China, the U.S. alliance and foreign investors entered the public debate indirectly, as components of the type of approach to foreign relations which would be likely to be adopted by a Liberal/Country Party government on the one hand, or a Labor government on the other. Journalists, joined by Gorton himself late in the campaign, accused the A.L.P. of being *"soft"* on Communist China, willing to jeopardise future relations with the U.S., and ready to stop the inflow of foreign money for development. Although Labor policy,

in reality, was none of these things - the platform supported the continuation of the U.S. alliance, a more realistic approach to Communist China and greater caution in dealing with foreign investors - the party's stance was open to misinterpretation by those who feared that its left-wing members would support a pro-Communist and anit-American line in foreign policy.

Differences in party stances on censorship and immigration, although mentioned in Whitlam's and Gorton's policy speeches, respectively, were not taken up by the media during the campaign. As there was a clear difference in party policies towards censorship, with the Labor party advocating its abolition except for the protection of people from exposure to unsolicited material, it could not be assumed that censorship had ceased to be an issue purely because there was no visible public debate. The A.S.P. item on censorship was, therefore, included in the analysis with the proviso that later evidence might show it to have been of no relevance to members of the voting public.

Immigration was in a slightly different category. Its failure to emerge as a significant item of dispute in the nation-wide media campaign did not indicate that it was ignored at the local level. Every candidate competing for a seat with a significant migrant population could be relied upon to contrast his party's immigration policy favourably with that of his opposition. The difficulty with this issue was that it was hard to pin down, in an objective fashion, the difference in party policies. Gorton went on record in his election policy speech promising a continued expansion of the migrant intake. Although the Labor Party policy platform gave no hint of his intentions, Whitlam was known to favour a more selective approach to immigration from Southern Europe, together with a relaxation of some restrictions on Asian immigration. Conflict within the A.L.P. on this latter point made it difficult to assess how the public would have perceived Labor policy.

Despite these discrepancies between the A.S.P. items and the issues which were the subject of public debate at the time of the 1969 election, the Australian Survey Project has offered a unique opportunity to test hypotheses which have been advanced in America and in Britain about the nature of linkages between voter's opinions on policy issues and their voting decisions. Past attempts to study these links using Australian Gallup Poll data have been hampered by the restricted nature of the questions asked in polls designed for quick release on the commercial market[21].

The advantage of the A.S.P. questionnaire lies in its detailed study of the application of a wide range of variables to each individual respondent. Where Gallup Poll data can be used for correlating broad movements in opinion with voting patterns and socio-demographic characteristics of the sample, the data from this project allow closer study of the variables which may underlie voting decisions. In addition to socio-demographic variables, this study will make use of information about respondents' interest in politics, their knowledge of party policies, their party identification and their voting habits. Although the issue items selected for analysis do not completely fit the conceptual framework of this thesis, they represent a necessary compromise with the exigencies of finance which plague any attempt to quantify public opinion.

The Sample

The data for this study comprise the responses of a representative sample of 1,873 Australian electors interviewed in their homes during November 1969. The interviews formed the second wave of a two-part study of the Australian electorate designed by D. Aitkin and M. Kahan of the Australian National University and commenced in 1967. Many of the respond-

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21. M. Goot, *op.cit.* made very effective use of a wide variety of Gallup Poll items to study opinions of Australian voters over a series of time intervals.

ents to the second wave were part of a panel which had already been interviewed two years previously. A full analysis of the panel data has been performed by Aitkin and will appear in his Stability and Change in Australian Politics, due for publication shortly.

In order to ensure the selection of a proportionate number of respondents from all six States and from both urban and rural areas in each State, Aitkin and Kahan used a stratified sampling technique which relied upon random selection within each stratum[22]. Federal electoral divisions were the basic sampling units and the Commonwealth Electoral Roll provided the sampling frame. 80 constituencies were selected to provide approximately 2,000 interviews, a sample size considered large enough to allow the study of small sub-groups within the main sample. The primary strata were the six States, within which sub-strata were created (the most common being a simple urban/rural dichotomy) to allow for diversities in the nature of the population within each State. Divisions were chosen within each State in proportions which matched the actual differences in State populations. Within each division, electors to be interviewed were chosen by random selection of names from the Commonwealth Electoral Roll for that area. The compulsory nature of electoral enrolment in Australia ensured that the Electoral Roll provided a near-accurate record of the entire population of Australian voters. Adjustments were built into the sample design to take account of population movements which had occurred since the last revision of the Electoral Roll for each division sampled.

The 1,873 interviews which were actually obtained during field work did constitute a representative sample of the total population of Australian voters[23]. The demographic makeup of the sample was sufficiently close to

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22. For a full description of the sampling procedure, see M. Kahan and D. Aitkin, Drawing a Sample of the Australian Electorate, Occasional Paper No.3, Department of Political Science, RSSS, A.N.U., 1968.

23. For an analysis of the validity of the same, see Methodological Appendix in D. Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics, forthcoming.

the Bureau of Census and Statistics' estimates of Australia's adult population in 1969 for the survey's designers to have confidence in the representativeness of the sample. Whether the sample matched the population on a further criterion, that of voting behaviour at the 1969 Federal election, was a matter of prime concern for this study. The distribution of votes amongst those respondents who reported the way they had voted in the previous month was, therefore, compared with a percentage breakdown of the actual votes recorded at the election:

TABLE 2.3 COMPARATIVE 1969 VOTING ESTIMATES

	ASP Sample		Total Australian[24] Electorate	
	%		%	
Liberal Party	37.1		34.8	
Country Party	9.2		8.6	
Liberal/Country		46.3		43.4
Labor Party (A.L.P.)	46.1		47.0	
D.L.P.	5.2		6.0	
Other	2.4		3.7	
N	1,873		6,114,118	

As can be seen from the table, Liberal Party voters were over-represented in the sample at the expense of D.L.P. and other party voters. The inaccurate representation of those who voted for the smaller parties was to be expected in sampling such a large population unless special provisions were made to ensure their inclusion. Country Party voters, whose clustering in rural electorates had led Aitkin and Kahan to stratify the sample along an urban-rural dimension in each State, were, in fact, slightly over-represented in the sample.

As the numbers of respondents who voted for the smaller parties were

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24. M. Mackerras, Australian General Elections, (Sydney 1972), p.221.

too low for any reliable examination of their reasons for voting, this study will be restricted to those who voted for one or other of the major party groupings. Its reliability will therefore not be affected by the failure of the sample to include sufficient respondents in the D.L.P. and other categories. The major deficiency of the sample, which will need to be kept in mind throughout this analysis, is the over-representation of the Liberal Party. For this reason, the Labor Party voters will form the main focus of attention, where possible.

A further difficulty in analysing the behaviour of those respondents who voted for the Liberals, as well as those who supported the Country Party, lies in the two parties' coalition status. Although they existed as distinct parties in terms of their organisational structures (except in South Australia and Tasmania), the coalition between them extended to an agreement that, in most electorates, neither party would field candidates against sitting members of the other party. A result of this electoral co-operation was that some of the survey respondents recorded a Liberal vote in the 1969 election where, in fact, the only non-Labor candidate standing for their constituency belong to the Country Party. Other answers, when examined in the course of coding the data, indicated that certain respondents regarded the Liberal and Country parties as interchangeable entities.

For these reasons, Aitkin and Kahan chose to combine the voting figures for the two parties into a joint Liberal/Country Party vote for the purposes of analysis. The same practice has been followed in this study, although some reservations about its use need to be expressed as the characteristics of the two parties' blocs of voting support were by no means identical. Different issues were likely to have had different priorities for rural and urban electors who voted for government candidates. Their opinions on the issues may also have varied systematically on the basis of an urban-rural distinction - a common hypothesis in Australian politics is that Country Party supporters are more conservative on foreign policy

issues than their counterparts in the cities. In conceptual terms, the amalgamation of the two parties' supporters into a common group must be regarded as of dubious validity. However, it has provided a way of compensating for the responses of an unknown number of voters who did not discriminate between the parties, which would otherwise have had to be classified as errors in the data.

A feature of the interview design which had implications for the accuracy of the data should be noted at this stage. In an effort not to duplicate information, questions about religion, education level, place of birth, membership of organisations, perceptions of class behaviour and parent's occupation were not asked of the panel respondents in 1969. The respondents' 1967 answers were incorporated in the data for the second wave, although the situations of some of the respondents might conceivably have altered in the intervening period. The practice should not have introduced any significant degree of error into the data to be analysed in this study except, possibly, with regard to one variable, that of education level. As all respondents were at least 21 years of age, it was unlikely that there had been any variation in their education level between 1967 and 1969, but the possibility of error should be kept in mind as some respondents have been undertaking part-time or full-time mature-age studies.

Apart from sampling error, which seems likely to be minimal in view of the closeness with which the sample approximated the Australian electorate, other errors in the data may have arisen from inaccuracies in the coding of responses. As far as possible, coding errors were tracked down through random checking, or editing, at the stage of creating the data file on the A.N.U. computer. Attempts were made to reduce the likelihood of interviewer bias through careful selection and training of field staff, but the possibility that some responses were affected by the interviewer's presentation could not be completely controlled. A certain level of bias and error within the data was to be expected in a sample survey of this size and complexity, and

statistical procedures have been designed which make allowances for this type of error in data analysis. Where necessary, results will be subjected to statistical tests of significance in order to identify the degrees of confidence which can be attached to the reliability of the findings.

Before proceeding to the main subject-matter of the thesis, which is the analysis of opinions on issues relevant to the 1969 Federal election, it will be necessary to describe the socio-demographic makeup of the sample and to identify any significant relationships which exist between the 1969 voting patterns of respondents and their education, occupation level, age and sex.

The educational backgrounds of respondents (incorporating 1967 data for panel members) could be broken down into three main categories, in the following proportions:

TABLE 2.4 EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF A.S.P. RESPONDENTS

		%
None/Primary Level Only	527	28.1
Some Secondary/Completed Secondary	1209	64.5
Tertiary/University	123	6.6
No Answer	14	0.8
	1873	100.0%

After the elimination of those respondents who failed to answer either question and those who supported smaller parties in 1969, a statistically significant relationship was identified between education level and the likelihood of voting for Labor or for the Liberal/Country Party coalition at the election. As the following table illustrates, higher education was associated with an increasing tendency to vote Liberal/Country Party. The relationship was significant at the 1% level and the correlation, as measured by Cramer's V,[25] was moderately strong.

25. Cramer's V correlation coefficient provides a measure of the strength of association between variables which are not necessarily expressed in

TABLE 2.5 1969 VOTE x EDUCATION

	None/Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Lib/CP	39.3	54.3	55.6
Labor	60.7	45.7	44.4
	100% (471)	100% (1066)	100% (99)

Chi square with 2 degrees of freedom = 30.8 $p < .01$

Cramer's V = .14

The sample was evenly split between those with white-collar and those with blue-collar jobs[26] - 48.7% could be classified as *"white-collar"* and 46.9% as *"blue-collar"*. The more detailed occupational classifications were as follows:

TABLE 2.6 OCCUPATION OF A.S.P. RESPONDENTS

		%
Professionals	168	9.0
Managers, semi-professionals	490	26.2
Office and sales	253	13.5
Skilled workers	287	15.3
Semi-skilled workers	299	16.0
Unskilled workers	292	15.6
No answer	84	4.4
	1873	100.0%

25. (cont) continuous form. It has been used in this thesis as a summary statistic for all relationships involving 1969 vote, except in cases where the variable has had to be assumed to be continuous (and re-coded in a 1-0 format) for analytic purposes. N.H. Nie, *et.al.*, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (N.Y., 1970), p.224.

26. In all cases of people not engaged in paid employment, the respondent has been classified according to the occupation of Head of Household.

When cross-tabulated with 1969 vote, a very strong relationship was apparent between the two variables, with members of lower status occupations increasingly likely to vote for the A.L.P.

TABLE 2.7 1969 VOTE x OCCUPATION

	Unskilled workers	Semi-Skilled workers	Skilled workers	Office & Sales	Managers; Semi-professionals	Professionals
Lib/CP	35.9	34.2	39.8	58.0	64.1	69.0
Labor	64.1	65.8	60.2	42.0	35.9	31.0
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(259)	(275)	(256)	(219)	(426)	(142)

Chi square with 5 degrees of freedom = 118.6 $p < .01$

Cramer's V = .27

Men outnumbered women amongst the A.S.P. respondents, but the balance was sufficiently close to that of the total population for Aitkin to have confidence in the sample's respresentativeness. 52.1% (975) of the sample was male and 47.9% (898) was female. The sex of respondents was related to the direction in which they voted in 1969, with women more likely to support the Liberal/Country Party government:

TABLE 2.8 1969 VOTE x SEX

	Male	Female
Lib/CP	45.7	54.8
Labor	54.3	45.2
	100%	100%
	(852)	(797)

Corrected Chi square with 1 degree of freedom = 13.5 $p < .01$

Phi = .09

The age distribution of the sample, in keeping with Australian population figures, was slightly skewed towards the younger age groups[27]:

TABLE 2.9 AGE DISTRIBUTION OF A.S.P. SAMPLE

		%
21 - 23 years	175	9.3
24 - 35 "	418	22.3
36 - 45 "	404	21.6
46 - 55 "	344	18.4
56 - 75 "	378	20.2
76 - 95 "	63	3.4
No answer	91	4.8
	1873	100.0%

There was no consistent relationship between age and voting behaviour in 1969. The Liberal/Country Party coalition gained higher proportions of the vote than did Labor at the two extremes of the age spectrum - both amongst the 21-23 year old first voters, and amongst the 76-95 year olds. Apart from these two age groupings, however, there was no significant variation in the voting patterns of respondents of different ages.

The relationships observed between voting decisions in 1969 and the educational, occupational and sexual makeup of the A.S.P. sample were those which would be expected on the basis of earlier studies of the Australian electorate. More complex inter-relationships amongst these variables, and their associations with attitudes towards public policy issues will be traced in the course of later chapters. It has been the

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27. The age groupings as outlined here are not of an equal interval size, but have been adapted to suit special purposes of analysis. Figures in the table cannot, therefore, be used to produce a true frequency distribution of the age variable. The 21-23 year age group has been kept separate in order to identify new voters in 1969. 20 year age groupings have been used to classify all those respondents over 55, so that cell sizes in later cross-tabulations will be sufficiently large for reliable analysis.

intention, at this introductory stage, to provide only a preliminary description of the sample within the context of the 1969 Federal election and its associated policy issues. Despite various possibilities for error, we can be confident that the Australian Survey Project data provided a reliable picture of the views held by a cross-section of the Australian electorate in 1969.

CHAPTER 3

ELECTORAL OPINIONS AND PARTY POLICIES

The A.S.P. survey has provided a large body of data which purport to measure the opinions of Australian voters on a range of policy issues in 1969. Before analysing this data, however, it would be as well to take heed of earlier researchers' findings which point to the complexities in the nature of electoral opinion and the consequent difficulties in measurement.

The enormous difficulties confronting the objective study of public opinion have for long been recognised both amongst academic researchers and the professional pollsters. Studies of the electorate initiated in the 1950's in the United States and taken up more recently in Great Britain clearly revealed the tenuous nature of voters' policy preferences and the restriction of information about political issues to a narrow sector of the electorate. In response to suggestions that surveys may be measuring a non-existent 'public opinion', their designers incorporated into the questionnaires various devices to ensure that respondents actually possessed some information on which to base their attitudes. The professional opinion poll organizations, however, being sensitive to the money needed for such refinements, have largely contented themselves with the simplest and most blunt instrument of opinion measurement, the fixed choice question offering two or three alternatives.

Figures currently available on the extent of information on political issues in Australia and the degree of voter involvement in public affairs suggest that any accurate assessment of opinion levels or trends in opinion over time would be as difficult an undertaking for the Australian electorate as it has proved to be overseas. Although a substantial proportion of voters claim to follow politics in the newspapers or on television (41% of a Brisbane sample read political

news in the press every day and 30% followed politics in the same way on radio and television[1]), the general level of political information has remained low. Policy issues receive their greatest exposure through the media at election time, but the contending politicians cannot be sure whether the voters as a whole have absorbed the information or whether they have any real concern with the issues being debated. The inadequacy of media publicity itself as an indicator of public familiarity with an issue is underlined by the fact that only 27% of the sample cited above admitted to paying 'much attention' to campaigns during State or Federal elections[2], times when it might reasonably be expected that levels of political information would be at their highest.

If we are to speak of opinion on issues of public policy as a variable in the voters' decision-making at the polls, we must be confident that voters can associate political parties with the issues. Yet it is by no means certain that issue stances form a common component of the electorate's image of the parties in Australia. An indirect measure of this was obtained from the Australian Survey Project by analysing the likes and dislikes of respondents in relation to the two main parties. Approximately a third of these responses could be said to have had some issue content:

TABLE 3.1 IMAGES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

RESPONSES TO PARTIES	% WHO MENTIONED FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES	% WHO MENTIONED DOMESTIC POLICY ISSUES	TOTAL	N
Pro-Liberal	15.1%	16.1%	31.2%	1,373
Anti-Liberal	11.2	25.9	37.1	1,817
Pro-Labor	7.0	27.8	34.8	1,653
Anti-Labor	19.7	8.8	28.5	1,703

1. J.S. Western and P.R. Wilson, "Politics: Participation and Attitudes", in H. Mayer and H. Nelson (eds), Australian Politics: a Third Reader (Melbourne, 1973), p. 319.

2. *ibid.*, p.319.

These figures do provide some support for the contention that the Liberals in 1969 were unpopular for their domestic policies (or lack of them) and that Labor was disliked for its foreign policies, but liked for its domestic policies. They do indicate that *some* members of the electorate judged the parties in terms of their policy stances, but we have no knowledge of the proportion of the electorate to which this applied as the total number of responses, in each case, included up to five likes and dislikes from each respondent[3]. The remaining replies covered a variety of popular and unpopular features of the parties, with categories such as *"management of government"*, *"people in the party"*, *"philosophy and goals"* and group-related or party-related responses receiving as much overall coverage as policy issues.

The coding of actual survey responses into broad, summary categories for ease of analysis hides the variety in the levels at which people perceive policy issues. For the politician intent on communicating with as broad a sector of the population as possible, this variation in the level of conceptualization must pose immense problems. It is yet another factor which hinders the study of *"public opinion"*. Research carried out under the auspices of the University of Michigan in the mid-1950's gave some indication of the different levels at which people verbalise their opinions. Campbell and his associates isolated at least four levels of conceptualization in voters' assessments of the political parties in the United States[4]:

A. evaluations which contained abstract conceptions associated with ideology

B. evaluations in terms of concrete, short-term group interests

C. simplistic associations between 'goodness' and 'badness' of the times and the party in power

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3. In fact, the total number of responses recorded for each of the four questions in no case reached the total sample size of 1873 (see Table 3.1). Although some respondents may have given multiple replies, large numbers did not.

4. Campbell, *op.cit.*, pp.222-3.

D. evaluations *"without recourse to issues that might fairly be related to debates over domestic public policy"*. (Campbell's examples - observations on mud-slinging, graft, or personal characteristics of candidates).

Campbell and his colleagues noted that differences in the level of conceptualization occurred with education and with motivation to involve oneself in political activity. Although they acknowledged the existence of many environmental barriers to the acquisition of political information, the researchers concluded that there were certain *"cognitive limitations"* which affected the mode of political thought of many voters[5].

It is not the subject matter of this thesis to investigate the differential cognitive capacities of individuals, but we can take up the point of the barriers which confront electors in the acquisition of knowledge about political issues. This was the approach taken by Converse and others in another University of Michigan study conducted in 1968[6]. The authors, understandably, preferred to treat the low levels of political information in the electorate as stemming from the high costs involved in acquiring this type of knowledge, rather than implying that the mass electorate in the United States suffered *"innate and hence incorrigible cognitive deficiencies"*[7].

Where a voter rarely sees the stakes involved as very high (he may not care about the outcome of an election; see little difference between the contending parties or candidates; or expect his single vote to have little influence) the costs involved to him in obtaining relevant information may be prohibitive. Although the media may be saturated with political material which has a high issue content during election time, inattention is likely to be less costly to the voter, unless the

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5. *ibid.*, p.253

6. P.E. Converse, et al. "Continuity and Change in American Politics: Parties and Issues in the 1968 Election", American Political Science Review, 63 (1969), p.1099.

7. *ibid.*, p.1099

communication also provides him with entertainment, either as a function of the communication itself, or as a result of some intrinsic motivation to acquire political knowledge. In a discussion of rationality in voting behaviour, Downs defended the sometimes totally uninformed status of some voters as a rational division of labour stemming from their delegation of part or all of their political decision-making to others[8]. Downs was of the opinion that voters would only pay the costs involved in acquiring political information if they expected it to change their party loyalty - the more a voter favoured one party over another the less likely he would be to make the effort to acquire new political knowledge[9].

A probable result of the low levels of information voters are motivated to acquire as a basis for formulating opinions, is the tenuous nature of the electorate's policy preferences over a period of time. Butler and Stokes' work in Great Britain has demonstrated the way overall measurements of opinion distribution may camouflage considerable fluidity in individual's opinions.[10] On an issue that had been the centre of political controversy over a generation, the nationalization of British industry, surveys conducted in 1963, 1964 and 1966 showed apparently stable levels of opinion. Yet when individual responses were examined, it was clear that the overall figures had masked a considerable turnover of voters' opinion in the three year period.

More significant evidence on the tenuous nature of public attitudes was provided by the same researchers on the issue of Britain's nuclear weapons policy, again from interviews conducted in 1963, 1964 and 1966. By comparing the changing correlations between voters' opinions in the two pairs of closer interviews (1963-4 and 1964-6) with the changing

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8. Downs, *op.cit.*, p.221

9. *ibid.*, p.243

10. Butler and Stokes, *op.cit*, p.222

correlations in the more distant pair of interviews in 1963 and 1966, Butler and Stokes showed that the fluidity in opinions could not add up to any meaningful pattern of cumulative attitude change. A *"substantial short-run reshuffling of views had failed to yield the longer-run movement of individual position"* which might have been expected from the overall figures[11].

The preceding discussion has demonstrated both the ephemeral qualities of *"public opinion"*, and the difficulties encountered in its study. No matter how blunt an instrument, however, the sample survey remains the only tool for studying the opinions of the electorate on a large scale. Despite the difficulties, opinion polls have continued to provide broad indications of the state of electoral opinion, with varied success in the accuracy of their predictions.

The tools themselves can be refined through various methodological devices. Some survey researchers have attempted to avoid measuring a nonexistent opinion by first asking their respondents whether they have *"heard or read about"* the issue concerned; others ask for opinions in an open-ended format, so that it can readily be seen whether the respondent was, in fact, familiar with the subject. In allowing the greatest freedom for the respondent, the latter is the preferable method, but is has the disadvantage of producing data which are time-consuming, and thus expensive, to process and which are susceptible to variations in interpretation.

A measure most recently used to assess opinion is based on the presumption that a basic minimum of knowledge of a subject is necessary before an opinion can be considered valid - in addition to giving his opinion, the respondent is asked to nominate the government's stance on the issue. This approach runs the risk of confusing two separate concepts, *"information"* and *"opinion"*. Although some basic knowledge is

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11. *ibid.*, pp.225-227.

necessary in order to formulate an opinion, the requisite amount and nature of this information is infinitely arguable[12].

A further method for refining the measurement of opinion consists of incorporating answers to fixed-alternative opinion items with self-assessments of the importance of the issue concerned to the respondent. This, too, has its problems as the perceived importance (salience) of an issue is, in reality, a separate dimension on which the issue can be classified rather than a measure of the validity of the respondent's opinion.

Except in one instance, the items on the Vietnam War, the A.S.P. survey did not make use of any of these refinements. Its designers, however, did attempt to provide a greater range of alternatives on most of the issue questions than the Australian Gallup Poll, the only professional organization carrying out large-scale opinion surveys at the time. The eight issue items chosen for analysis here from the A.S.P. questionnaire were all fixed-choice questions, the number of alternatives available ranging from five on migration to only two on censorship and Communist China. The questions were arranged so as to provide a graduated series of alternative opinions from which respondents could choose the one closest to their own views. This gradation was not validated as an attitude scale for any item, however, and there is no guarantee that the alternatives were equidistant from each other in relation to any underlying common dimension.

The Vietnam War

Presented with four alternative opinions on the desirable extent of Australian troop commitment in the Vietnam War, the survey's respondents answered in the following manner:

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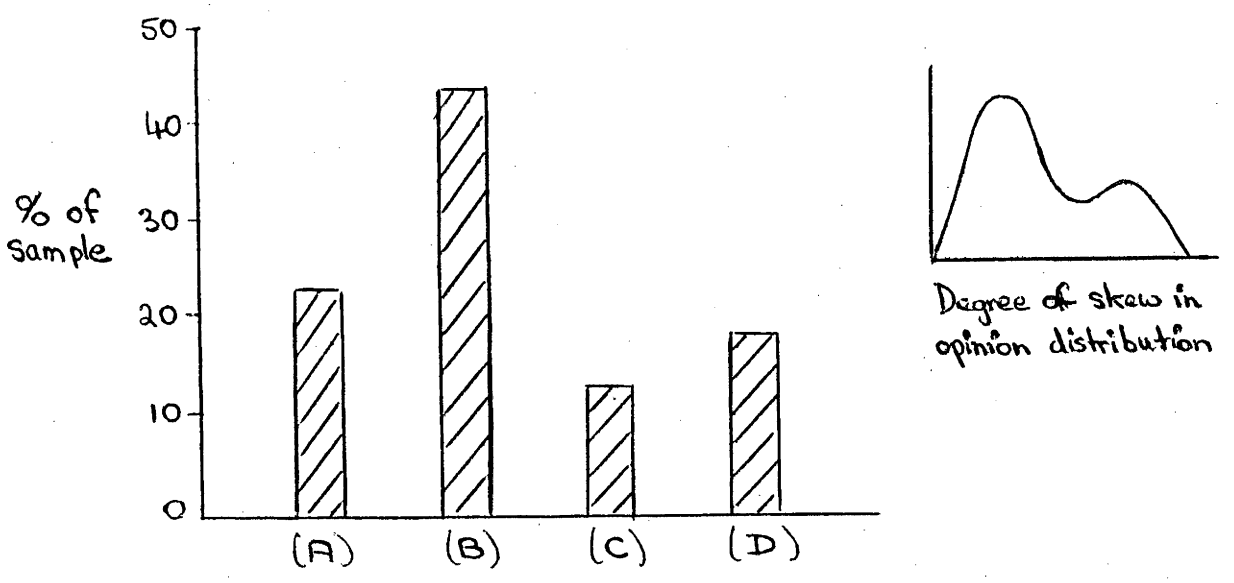
12. See R.E. Lane and D.O. Sears, Public Opinion (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964), Chapter 6 for survey evidence that opinions can exist without supporting information and for a discussion of the interactive processes linking opinion-formation and factual knowledge.

TABLE 3.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS VIETNAM

			%
(A)	We should have troops fighting in Vietnam, including conscripts	442	23.6
(B)	We should have troops in Vietnam, but only volunteers	813	43.4
(C)	We shouldn't have any troops in Vietnam, and only send civilian experts	233	12.4
(D)	We should stay out of Vietnam altogether	335	17.9
	Don't know; no answer	50	2.7
		1,873	100.0%

The actual situation in November 1969 was represented by (A), which was Liberal/Country Party policy at the time. Labor's official policy called for the withdrawal of troops, with the possibility of retaining civilian experts in Vietnam to provide *"medical, economic and technical assistance"*[13]. However, most Labor spokesmen,(particularly those who wished to move their party's policy on Vietnam in a more radical direction) and media commentators described Labor's stance in terms of *"staying out of Vietnam altogether"*.

FIGURE 3.1 DISTRIBUTION OF OPINIONS ON THE VIETNAM WAR



13. Australian Labor Party, Official Reports of the 27th and 28th Commonwealth Conferences, 1967 and 1969, p.72.

Although the results showed a substantial body of opinion in favour of total disengagement from the Vietnam War, the commitment of some Australian troops was clearly the opinion of a majority of the sample (67% chose (A) or (B)). The frequency distribution in Figure 3.1 displays a marked skew towards the involvement of troops in the war.

The large proportion of respondents (43.4%) who chose alternative (B), the use of volunteer troops only in Vietnam, suggests that the survey may, in addition, have been tapping opinions on another related issue, the use of conscripts for overseas service. The results of earlier surveys of the Australian electorate have indicated the existence of a strand of opinion which objected, not to the general question of involvement in the Vietnam war or to conscription itself, but to the use of national servicemen in Vietnam. H.S. Albinski reported that the majority approval for the involvement of combat troops registered in polls taken before the stationing of conscripts in Vietnam was nearly reversed when the Gallup Poll asked in 1966 and 1967 whether the public approved of the decision to involve conscripts in the war[14]. On the subject of conscription, J.S. Western and P.R. Wilson found that a favourable attitude towards national service amongst a small sample of Canberra voters did not necessarily imply approval of the government's policy of sending troops (including conscripts) to Vietnam[15].

Whatever the reasons for the popularity of alternative (B), we are faced with a situation where nearly half of the sample supported an option which did not correspond with the policy of any major political party in 1969. Whether respondents were aware of this lack of correspondence will be dealt with in a later chapter. It suffices to say at the moment that the A.S.P. results do not appear to indicate a sharp

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14. H.S. Albinski, Politics and Foreign Policy in Australia (Durham, North Carolina, 1970), p.195.

15. J.S. Western and P.R. Wilson, "Attitudes to Conscription", Politics, II, 1 (1967) pp. 48-56.

polarization of views within the electorate on the question of troop commitment in Vietnam. Although there were substantial numbers of people in favour of the two most extreme alternatives, who may have held these views with great intensity (see Chapter 4), the bulk of respondents opted for the middle ground. The overall distribution of opinion was clearly biased in favour of some degree of troop involvement, but the significance of this skew in terms of electoral support for party policies cannot be estimated until we know how the respondents perceived the parties' stances.

The only other measure of Australian opinion towards Vietnam taken at approximately the same time in 1969 which is readily available is that of the Gallup Poll. Presented with only two choices, to continue fighting in Vietnam or to bring the forces back, the Gallup Poll respondents appeared to take a more radical stance than their ASP counterparts. According to the Gallup figures of October 1969, 50.9% of the electorate opted for bringing the forces home and only 39.4% wanted to continue fighting (see Table 3.3). It is notable that a much higher proportion confessed to being undecided in this poll, with two alternatives available, than had chosen not to give an answer or said they didn't know in answer to the ASP survey which had offered four choices.

The discrepancy in the two surveys may be entirely a result of the different form of questioning. Previous research by psychologists and sociologists has shown that answers to attitude surveys are notoriously susceptible to variation according to changes in the level of specificity of the question, the number of alternatives offered, etc. For this reason, the results of the two surveys are not strictly comparable.

The work of the Gallup Poll organisation is useful, however, as it can add a time dimension to our knowledge of the electorate's opinions on the Vietnam War. In the twelve month period preceding the October 1969 Federal election, the Gallup Poll had conducted five surveys offering its

respondents virtually the same alternatives towards Vietnam on each occasion. Although Butler and Stokes' British findings caution us against being too confident of the individual movements in opinion behind overall measurements of change, the following table shows the first signs of a collective change in opinion within the Australian electorate:

TABLE 3.3 OPINIONS ON VIETNAM AS MEASURED BY GALLUP POLLS

	Oct. 1968	Dec. 1968	April 1969	Aug. 1969	Oct. 1969
N	2706	1580	2092	1964	2580
Continue to fight in Vietnam	54.4	49.0	48.1	39.7	39.4
Bring forces back	37.5	37.2	40.0	54.8	50.9
Undecided	8.1	13.8	12.0	5.5	9.7
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Weighted N	6134	6153	6152	6319	6318

The table shows a decrease in support for the continuation of fighting in the period December 1968 to April 1969, with an increase in the numbers who were undecided on the question rather than any strong movement of opinion towards troop withdrawal. By August 1969, the indecision appeared to have crystallized into a majority opinion in favour of bringing the troops home, for the first time since Menzies' commitment of troops in Vietnam in 1965. The figures suggest a slight backtracking from this position by the time of the elections in October.

That we should be wary of making a hasty conclusion that half of the electorate had come to favour Labor policy by August 1969, however, is clear from the results of the ASP survey which showed that divisions in opinion were by no means as clear-cut as they may have seemed from the Gallup Poll.

Conscription

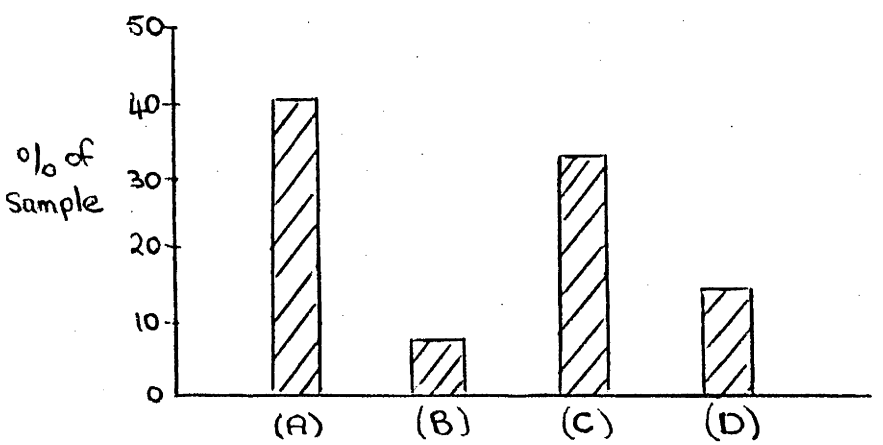
The four possibilities on conscription offered by the ASP questionnaire were answered as follows:

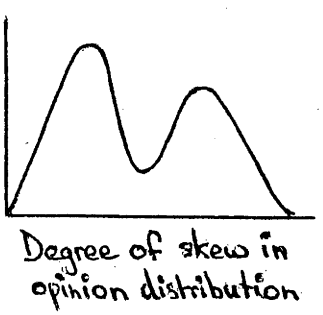
TABLE 3.4 OPINIONS ON CONSCRIPTION

			%
(A)	We should have conscription for military service and it should be for all young men, not just some	765	40.8%
(B)	The present system of the ballot for conscription should be continued	132	7.0%
(C)	We should have conscription, but those who are opposed to fighting should be allowed to do their national service in other ways	617	32.9%
(D)	We shouldn't have any form of conscription at all	316	16.9%
	Don't know; no answer	43	2.3%
		1,873	100.0%

Government and opposition policies in 1969 were clearly included in this range of alternatives. Liberal/Country Party policy was to continue the existing system of a ballot for national service; whilst A.L.P. policy was to abolish conscription, except in the case of *"a threatened attack on Australia and her overseas territories"*.[16]

FIGURE 3.2 DISTRIBUTION OF OPINIONS ON CONSCRIPTION





16. A.L.P. *op.cit.*, p.214.

As is readily apparent from the frequency distribution in Figure 3.2, opinions on this issue were almost equally divided between those who favoured conscription for all young men and those who opted for the provision of civilian alternatives. There was clearly a great deal of disagreement amongst those who were of the opinion that conscription, in some form, should be retained. Taken together, these respondents comprised a massive 80.7% of the sample.

The lack of agreement registered by the ASP survey as to the most desirable form of conscription provides an illustration of the pitfalls which can be encountered in attempting to measure opinion. If respondents had been presented with only the two alternatives of retaining or abolishing national service, and if we could assume that they would have answered in approximately the same manner as they have done here (which is not necessarily valid, as the change in the form of questioning alone might lead to a different result), then we would gain the impression of an overwhelming support in the sample for the continuation of conscription. In a situation where the Liberal/Country Parties and Labor were advancing diametrically opposed policies, the former wanting to retain national service (with selection by ballot) and the latter seeking its abolition, it would be but a short step to interpreting such a result as a demonstration of strong electoral support for the government on this issue. Yet, provided with the option of continuing the present ballot system of conscription, only 7.0% of the ASP sample actually proffered an opinion which was in line with government policy.

The ASP results appear to indicate scant support in the electorate for either the government or the opposition stance on conscription in 1969. It is unfortunate that the questionnaire does not provide an opportunity for us to see whether the 1,382 (73.7%) respondents who chose alternatives (A) or (C) were aware of the discrepancy between their views and those of the political parties.

As was the case with the Vietnam War, Gallup Polls conducted at approximately the same time as the ASP survey showed voters as being more radical in their approach to conscription:

TABLE 3.5 OPINIONS ON CONSCRIPTION AS SHOWN BY GALLUP POLLS

	Aug. 1969	Oct. 1969
N	2106	2527
Continue conscription	63.3	57.6
End conscription	31.9	32.4
Undecided	4.8	10.0
	100.0%	100.0%
Weighted N	6319	6318

Although we can make no direct comparisons between these figures and the ASP results, the distribution of opinion registered by the Gallup Polls was not sufficiently different to be of great concern. The apparently greater support for ending conscription may well have been substantially reduced if respondents had been offered a number of alternative forms of national service from which to choose.

A comparison between the August and October Gallup Poll figures shows little overall change in the levels of support for and opposition to conscription in the months immediately preceding the Federal election. This apparent stability may, however, mask considerable fluidity in individual opinions, especially as the October poll registered a substantial increase in the numbers who were undecided on the issue.

United States - Australian Alliance

The ASP question on the relations between Australia and the U.S. was worded as follows:

> *"Do you think Australia's links with the United States should be very close, fairly close, or not very close?"*

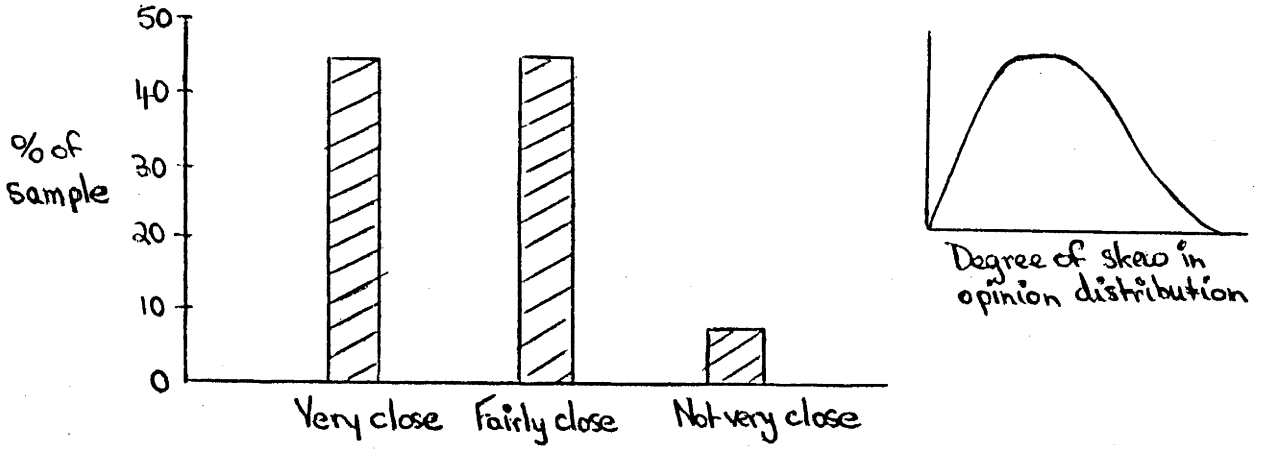
This item was not very satisfactory as a measure of opinion because it required a subjective estimation of variations in 'closeness' which was likely to differ for each respondent. Also, the three alternatives were not particularly meaningful in terms of party policies in 1969. Most political discussion on the subject had been linked to such concrete features of the alliance as joint participation in the Vietnam conflict, the ANZUS treaty, U.S. defence bases on Australian soil and the inflow of American capital. There had been considerable debate between the parties and within the Labor party over the nature of the alliance in these terms, and it is possible that the electorate had gained an impression of one party favouring closer ties with the U.S. from this debate, even though there was very little difference spelt out in the official party policies. Making a subjective judgement here (which would not necessarily have been shared by the question's respondents), I would choose the Liberal/Country Party views as being most nearly represented by the 'very close' category, whilst Labor's position varied between 'fairly close' and 'not very close', the latter being favoured by the more radical members of the party.

The question was answered in the following manner:

TABLE 3.6 OPINIONS ON CLOSENESS OF LINKS WITH THE U.S.

Very close links	829	44.3%
Fairly close links	843	45.0%
Not very close links	171	9.1%
Don't know; no answer	30	1.6%
	1,873	100.0%

FIGURE 3.3 DISTRIBUTION OF OPINIONS ON THE U.S. ALLIANCE



Although the disadvantages in the wording of this item made it a very blunt instrument for measuring opinion, the results were such as to leave little doubt over the popularity of a close alliance with the United States. With only 9.1% of the sample opting for 'not very close' links, the frequency distribution in Figure 3.3 is clearly skewed towards the 'closer' end of the spectrum.

Communist China

The survey veered slightly away from current issues of political debate in its item on Communist China, which was prefaced with a request that respondents should try and envisage a future situation. Only two alternative opinions were provided from which to choose:

1. Australia will have a lot to worry about in regard to Communist China
2. China probably won't be much of a problem for us

It is most likely that the survey's designers were attempting to tap attitudes towards the 'Red scare' which had occupied such a central place in discussions of Australian foreign policy in the 1950's and 60's without using the emotive words and phrases which had come to be associated with the idea of a Communist threat from the north. As such, this item can only be taken as an indicator of respondents' general attitudinal orientations to Communist China, and not as a measure of opinion on a policy issue. The question of diplomatic recognition of the Peking

government by Australia, although official Labor policy in 1969, had not received much public airing by the time of the Federal election.

Although not an accurate representation of party policy differences towards Communist China, the two alternatives could be said to correspond roughly with the parties' differing assessments of the Republic's future position in relation to Australia. It was clear from the government's commitment to fight in Vietnam and its fear of a spreading Communist influence throughout South East Asia that China loomed as a present and future problem in Liberal/Country Party calculations. As a socialist party with a trade union base, the A.L.P. was commonly regarded as being 'softer on Communism' than the government. Labor's spokesmen denied the validity of the domino theory in S.E. Asia and did not see Communist China as posing a future threat to Australia. The party supported this attitude through its policy of extending diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China.

Answers to the question were distributed as follows:

TABLE 3.7 ATTITUDES TO COMMUNIST CHINA

		%
China will give us a lot to worry about	992	53.0
China will not be a problem	642	34.3
Don't know; no answer	239	12.7
	1,873	100.00%

A majority of respondents did not appear to share the Labor Party's optimism, with 53% of the sample saying they thought Communist China would give Australia 'a lot to worry about' in the future.

The high proportion of 'Don't know's recorded in answer to this question (12.7% was the highest for all the issue items analysed here), together with the restricted number of alternatives available, should caution us against placing too much reliance on the reliability of the

results as an estimate of electoral opinion. It is highly probable that a much larger segment of the sample had no firm attitude towards Communist China, but opted for one of the two alternatives rather than appear undecided or ignorant. This tendency to over-estimate the existence of an opinion could also have applied with the issue items previously analysed, but is more likely in a situation where the respondents had only to make a single choice between two very general statements. That opinion on this matter had not crystallised is hardly surprising when we recall that the questionnaire had asked respondents to *"look into the future"*. The Gallup Poll conducted in April 1969 also found a very high proportion of its sample was undecided about Communist China (20.7%), but this was in answer to a more specific question about Australian recognition of Peking.[17]

Foreign Investment

Again, with the item on foreign investment, the ASP questionnaire asked respondents to *"think about the future"* in answering the question. Two very general statements on Australian attitudes towards would-be foreign investors were offered, together with an *"it depends"* category for those who were uncertain. The alternatives, and the responses they evoked, were as follows:

TABLE 3.8 OPINIONS ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT

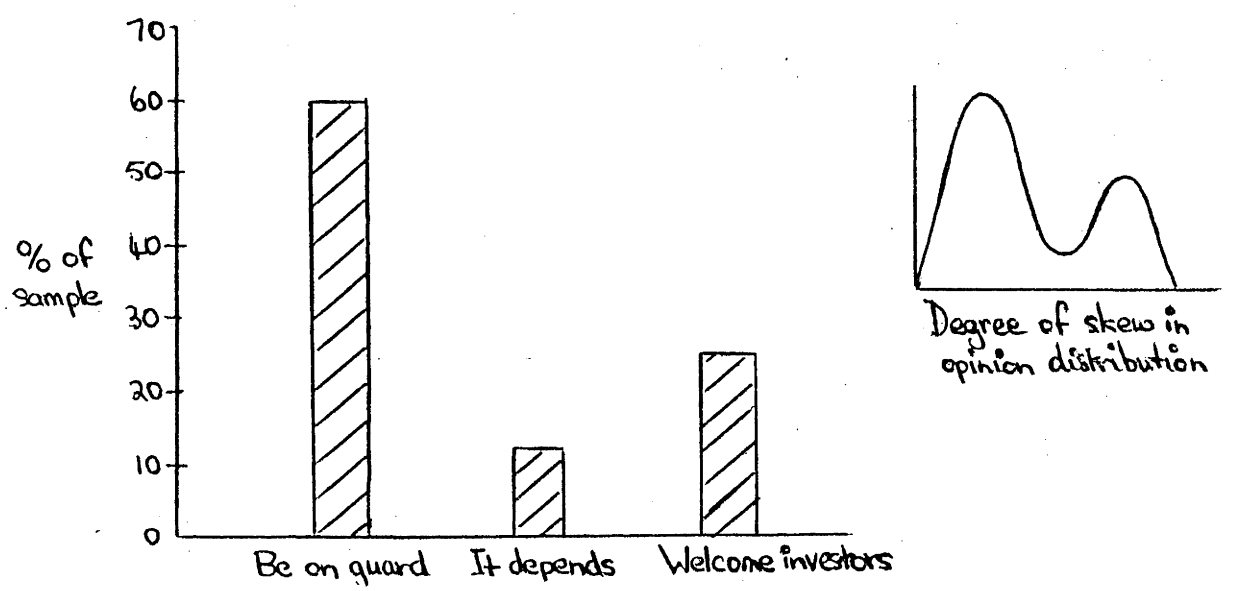
			%
1.	Australia needs to be on its guard against foreign investors	1,130	60.3
2.	We should welcome anyone who wants to invest in Australia	460	24.6
3.	It depends	218	11.6
	Don't know; no answer	65	3.5
		1,873	100.0%

17. Australian Gallup Poll, April 18th 1969.

In view of the very broad nature of the two opposing statements offered, it is hardly surprising that 11.6% of the sample opted for *"it depends"*. It is impossible to know in what proportions this group was divided between those for whom the available alternatives were too simplistic and those who simply could not make up their minds on the question. If the latter predominated, there was likely to have been considerable overlap between the *"it depends"* category and the *"don't know"*s.

This is again a question where the options available did not correspond closely with actual party policies. Both the Liberal/Country Party coalition and the A.L.P. officially 'welcomed' foreign investment to aid in the development of Australia's resources. The parties' general attitudes were by no means identical, however, as Labor spokesmen had been prominent in calling for greater restrictions to be placed on the financing of projects using foreign capital. The opposition had been critical of ventures which appeared to be exploiting the country's natural resources and siphoning-off profits overseas, without ensuring the participation of Australian enterprise. In view of this, Labor may have projected an image of hostility towards foreign investment to the electorate, although this would not be an accurate interpretation of party policy.

FIGURE 3.4 DISTRIBUTION OF OPINIONS ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT



As is illustrated by the frequency distribution in Figure 3.4, a large majority of the sample (60.3%) agreed that Australia needed to be *"on its guard against foreign investors"*. For many respondents this choice may have been an expression of patriotic feeling or even ethnocentric prejudice, rather than a considered opinion on the merits of foreign investment. The nature and phrasing of the question would certainly have encouraged an emotional response.

A more specific, policy-oriented question asked by the Gallup Poll earlier in the year produced an even more decisive result. Asked, *"When international companies establish big new projects in Australia should they be allowed to do it on their own, or only if Australians may participate?"*, the poll's subjects replied as follows:

TABLE 3.9 OPINIONS ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT ACCORDING TO GALLUP POLL

	Gallup Poll June 1969
N	2106
Only with Australian participation	87.2%
On their own	9.7%
Undecided	3.1%
	100.0%
Weighted N	6318

The results of both surveys suggest that feelings of national pride formed a component of electoral opinion on the issue of foreign investment in 1969. Both parties stood to gain from such sentiments as Prime Minister Gorton, as well as the Labor opposition, had endeavoured to establish a more independent, nationalistic approach to Australia's defence and foreign relations since taking up office in 1968.

Migration

Respondents chose from five alternatives on migration:

TABLE 3.10 ATTITUDES TOWARDS ASIAN MIGRATION

			%
(A)	Asians should be allowed to enter Australia as migrants just like people of European descent	431	23.0
(B)	There should be a small quota of Asian migrants	778	41.5
(C)	Asians should not be allowed to enter Australia as migrants	88	4.7
(D)	We should only allow people from Britain and northern Europe to enter Australia as migrants	310	16.6
(E)	We should not have any more migrants at the present time	203	10.8
	Don't know; no answer	63	3.4
		1,873	100.0%

Clearly, the question was primarily directed at ascertaining people's attitudes towards a *"white Australia"*. Government policy in 1969 allowed for the intake of a small quota of Asian migrants under more restrictive conditions of entry than were applied to Europeans.

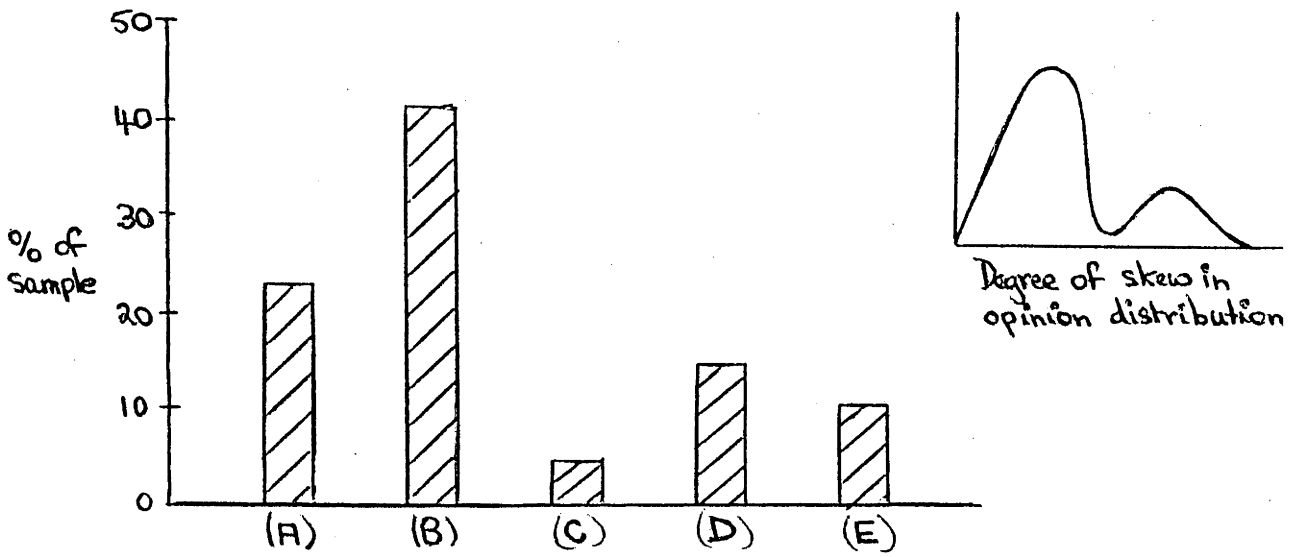
The A.L.P.'s position was not so clear. Official party policy was deliberately vague and avoided any mention of race. It supported *"a vigorous and expanding immigration programme administered with sympathy, understanding and tolerance"*; one of the bases of the policy, however, being *"The avoidance of the difficult social and economic problems which may follow from an influx of peoples having different standards of living, traditions and cultures"*.[18]

At least three other strands of opinion had found support within the party from time to time - that Asians should be treated in the same way as all other intending migrants; that no coloured people should be allowed to settle in Australia; and that the government should bring a

18. Australian Labor Party, Platform, Constitution and Rules, 1969, p.25.

total halt to migration. In this situation it is difficult to identify any one of the above alternatives as Labor policy, although it is probable that (B) would most closely approximate the party's official position.

FIGURE 3.5 DISTRIBUTION OF OPINIONS ON MIGRATION



The most popular opinion, favoured by 41.5% of the survey's respondents was that a small quota of Asians should be allowed to settle in Australia; a policy which was, in fact, being implemented by the Liberal/Country Party government at the time. 23.0% admitted to the more liberal opinion that Asians should be allowed to migrate in the same way as Europeans. Only a very small proportion of the total sample (4.7%) chose alternative (C), that Asians should not be admitted as migrants. This may have been a valid measure of a lack of discriminatory opinion against Asians. The much higher response in favour of restricting immigration opportunities to Britain and northern Europe (16.6%) makes it more likely, however, that (C) was avoided by people who did not want to appear overtly racist. Alternative (C) should therefore be regarded as suspect as a valid measure of attitudes towards coloured migration.

The final option (E) appeared to measure a rather different aspect of attitudes towards migration than the other alternatives. Although the

complete halting of immigration may seem the logical final step in a scale which progressively restricts the range of migrants, the motives behind such a policy are likely to be rather different. Those who advocated the cessation of immigration in 1969 did so, at least publicly, for reasons related to the conservation of natural resources in anticipation of a future situation of scarcity. This approach may well have contained elements of racial prejudice, but it stemmed primarily from the arguments of conservationists. It was not an option which attracted much support from the survey's respondents.

Taken as a whole, despite the queries raised in relation to alternatives (C) and (E), the results demonstrated considerable support for the entry of Asian migrants in some form, as the distribution of opinion set out in Figure 3.5 was clearly weighted towards alternatives (A) and (B).

State Aid for Education

The issue of government aid to independent and church schools was covered in the ASP survey by an item which offered four alternative policy options:

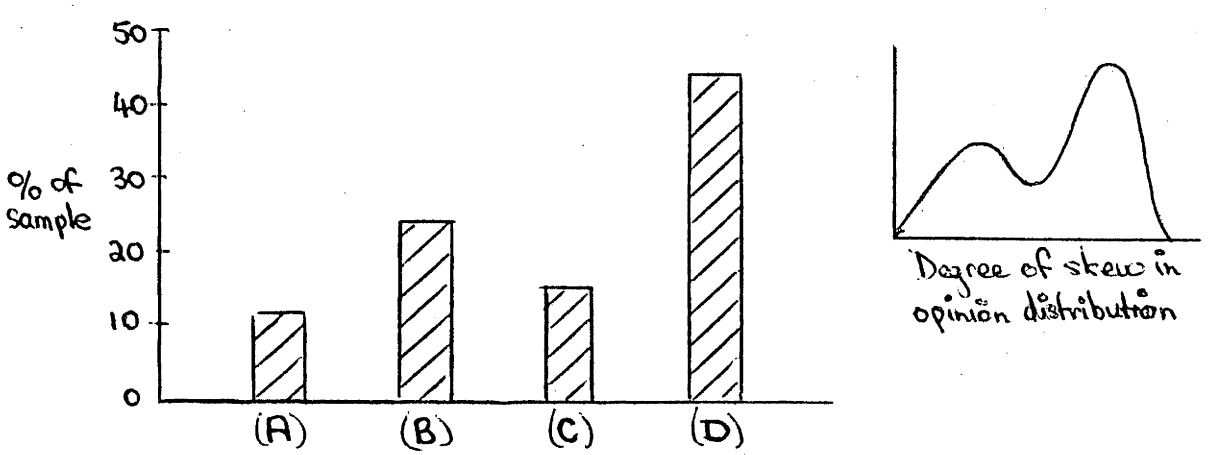
TABLE 3.11 ATTITUDES TOWARDS STATE AID

			%
(A)	The government should not give any financial aid at all to private or church schools	218	11.6
(B)	The government should not give any financial help to these schools until state schools have been brought up to date	474	25.3
(C)	The government should give help, but only to really needy church schools	293	15.6
(D)	The government should give as much help as possible to both private and church schools	846	45.2
	Don't know; no answer	42	2.3
		1,873	100.0%

None of these alternatives was exactly in line with the Liberal/ Country Party position on State aid in 1969. The government was giving money to private and church schools for particular facilities (e.g. libraries, laboratories) as well as allocating funds on the basis of a fixed sum per student, regardless of the financial position of the schools involved; but it was not necessarily providing *"as much help as possible"*.

The A.L.P. had been rent by conflicts between opponents and proponents of State aid in the years preceding 1969. Its policy was to *"bring all schools up to acceptable standards"*, whilst acknowledging its *"primary obligation"* to the government school system[19] - this was not identical with alternative (B). There was still conflict which surfaced within the party from time to time between those who advocated the abolition of State aid (A); those in favour of as much government aid as possible to private and church schools (D); and those who saw the adoption of a *"needs principle"* (C) as providing the best solution. The survey's respondents could hardly be blamed for thinking that each alternative had some application to A.L.P. policy.

FIGURE 3.6 DISTRIBUTION OF OPINIONS ON STATE AID



The sample was clearly in favour of some form of government aid to independent and church schools, although one quarter of the respondents

19. *ibid.*, p.12 (my underlining)

felt that no such aid should be allocated until state schools had been modernized. The frequency distribution shown in Figure 3.6 was markedly skewed towards giving as much help as possible to non-government schools. Only 11.6% of the sample were of the opinion that State aid should be completely abolished.

The results of Gallup Polls conducted in August and October 1969 serve to confirm the picture of substantial electoral support for a high level of government spending on church schools, although the ASP findings should caution us not to place too much confidence in the Gallup estimate of approximately 60% wanting the government to give more in State aid (see Table 3.12). A larger proportion of the Gallup sample was in favour of ending State aid, but this difference between the surveys could easily be accounted for if it was assumed that the restricted choice offered by the Gallup Poll would have forced respondents who wanted to postpone State aid into opposing it altogether or saying they were undecided, rather than supporting its increase. The only alteration in the overall distribution of opinions between August and October appeared to be an increase in the number of respondents who were undecided.[20]

TABLE 3.12 OPINIONS ON STATE AID ACCORDING TO GALLUP

	August 1969	October 1969
N	2106	2527
Give more State aid	62.4	59.9
End State aid	32.5	29.1
Undecided	5.1	11.0
	100.0%	100.0%
Weighted N	6319	6318

20. The high proportion of respondents saying they were "Undecided" in answer to questions on election issues was a feature of the Gallup Poll conducted on October 4th, 1969. This may have been a function of the particular sample interviewed by the Gallup organisation on that day; but more significantly, it may have been a reflection of increasing indecision in the electorate as polling day approached.

Censorship

The ASP questionnaire provided only two options on the issue of censorship. Respondents were asked, *"Do you think that there should be some censorship of books and films, or do you think that people should be able to read and see what they like?"*

TABLE 3.13 ATTITUDES TOWARDS CENSORSHIP

			%
1.	Some censorship of books and film	1058	56.5
2.	People should be able to read and see what they like	784	41.9
	Don't know; no answer	31	1.6
		1,873	100.0%

The two opposing viewpoints corresponded, respectively, to Liberal/Country Party and Labor policy in 1969. At its Federal Conference in July 1969, the A.L.P. had adopted the report of its Legal and Constitutional Committee which recommended that censorship laws should *"conform with the general principles that adults be entitled to read, hear and view what they wish in private or public"*.[21]

Opinions were fairly evenly divided on the censorship issue, with a slim majority (56.5%) favouring some form of censorship in preference to none at all (41.9%). Although it is possible that the restricted choice forced respondents who did not hold either position into expressing a false preference, most political debate on the issue had been conducted in the terms in which the question was worded. The fact that much larger *"Don't know"* response rates had been recorded for most other issue items in the survey suggested that subjects were capable of making a valid choice here.

In order to observe the overall shape of the opinion distribution

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21. A.L.P., Official Reports of the 27th and 28th Commonwealth Conferences, p.170.

for each of the preceding items, it is necessary to assume that the alternative policy positions from which respondents made their choice represented interval points along an underlying attitudinal continuum.[22] The series of graphic illustrations which accompany each histogram show that the issues of Vietnam, foreign investment, migration and State aid were associated with markedly skewed distributions of opinion, whereas the sample was almost equally split on such issues as conscription and censorship.

Although the assumption of continuity was questionable in some cases, particularly that of migration, it was advanced for the purpose of testing a hypothesis which has linked certain shapes in patterns of electoral opinion to the political party balance. Butler and Stokes, in their analysis of the determinants of electoral change in Britain, maintained that the distribution of opinions on an issue needed to be skewed if that issue was to have any possibility of affecting the overall balance of party strengths at the polls.[23] If opinions were evenly balanced, the parties would be unlikely to gain or lose much support by favouring one policy alternative over the other. The issues in the ASP survey with the greatest *potential* for altering the party balance would thus be those which displayed markedly skewed opinion distributions - Vietnam, foreign investment, migration, State aid.

Unfortunately, the hypothesis was not readily applicable to all of these items as Butler and Stokes pointed out that its most fruitful application would be to the case of an issue that posed only two clear alternatives, corresponding with opposing parties' policy stances. On only

22. This is an assumption I have made in accompanying the distributions of opinion displayed in histogram form in the text with continuous curves which are intended as illustrative estimates of electoral opinion on each issue. It is an assumption based solely on the logical sequence in the alternatives offered to respondents, however, and may not have been upheld in testing customary for the validation of attitude scales.

23. Butler and Stokes, *op.cit.*, pp.234-5.

one time in the questionnaire could it be said that Labor and Liberal/ Country Party policies were situated at opposing ends of the spectrum, that being the issue of troop commitment to the Vietnam war. Thus, although Butler and Stokes' hypothesis suggested that opinions on some issues could have been utilised by one or other of the political parties to gain electoral advantage, neither side in 1969 had adopted policy positions on the issues studies in the ASP project which allowed it to exploit the electoral situation, except perhaps for the Liberal/Country Party's stance on the Vietnam War.

At least two objections can immediately be raised against any attempt to apply Butler and Stokes' hypothesis to the results of the 1969 Federal election in Australia. Firstly, the hypothesis itself is a cause-effect interpretation of the links between issues and election outcomes which has been deliberately over-simplified for analytic purposes.[24] Bulter and Stokes have wisely used the skew hypothesis as only one of a number of indicators of issues which may have the potential to influence voting behaviour. Its relevance to any one issue could be completely negated by the simple demonstrction that people did not cast their votes on the basis of that issue. The issue-vote linkage forms the prime concern of this thesis and will be studied in detail in later chapter

A second objection to the hypothesis is that its usefulness depends on the accuracy with which the shape of opinion distributions is described. The ASP survey may be criticised in this regard. As the questionnaire made little use of the methodological refinements which have been used in similar research projects, it needs to be ascertained whether

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24. Butler and Stokes recognised the possibility that the intensity with which minority opinions were held could invalidate their hypothesis if an intense minority was more likely to vote according to its issue preference than an apathetic majority. Further refinements are, however, necessary to their hypothesis. It is the *change* in the distribution of opinions relative to party strengths over time which is the vital factor in determining the likelihood of effect on the overall party balance, rather than the degree of skew in the distribution alone.

the issue items actually performed their function of measuring the opinions held by members of the sample.

Comments have already been made on the questionable validity of the alternatives available to respondents on some of the issue items - the U.S. alliance, Communist China, foreign investment, migration. We can have greater confidence in the validity and reliability of results for those items which offered respondents four or five specific alternatives (the Vietnam War, conscription, State aid) than in those where respondents were forced to choose from only two very general statements of opinion (Communist China, foreign investment, censorship). Some of the former type elicited higher proportions of *"Don't know"* responses than did the latter, but they were likely to be truer estimates of the level of uncertainty in the sample as the cost to a respondent with no fixed opinion of choosing amongst a large number of fairly specific alternatives would, in all probability, have been higher than that incurred by admitting ignorance. The validity of the results for items which offered only two very broad options but which, nevertheless, registered a high level of *"Don't know"* responses (Communist China, foreign investment - both of which asked respondents to speculate about the future) must be regarded as particularly suspect.

Where the results of Gallup Polls have been utilised in the discussion of individual survey items they have been intended to amplify the ASP findings, in some cases through adding a time dimension, rather than to serve as a standard for direct comparison. On some of the issues, substantial differences in the results obtained by the Gallup organisation and by the ASP survey were indicative of the degree to which opinion measurement is a function of the nature of the sample and the question format. Butler and Stokes' findings on the instability of issue opinions (as elicited by opinion survey techniques) over time should also serve as a reminder that the attitudes identified in the Australian Survey

Project are specific to both the time and circumstances of the survey.

In addition to the instability of people's attitudes, opinion research in the early 1960's demonstrated that there was little internal consistency in the structure of public opinion.[25] In his seminal work on the subject, Converse showed that belief systems common amongst the mass public were *not* comprised of opinions logically interwoven into coherent ideological outlooks.[26] Only a small proportion of the American electorate could be classified as having an ideological approach to politics, even when the widely-known *"liberal-conservative"* dimension was used as a benchmark. There was little evidence of internal constraint in attitude structures and only moderate correlations between party policy stances and the issue opinions of even those who were highly interested in the knowledgeable and political affairs.

Since Converse's work, the demonstration of statistical inter-relationships between different opinions has become the standard method for establishing whether attitudes are incorporated into wider ideological stances or coherent belief systems. The application of techniques of factor and cluster analysis to series of opinion items has surpassed the more primitive approach adopted in *"The American Voter"*, whereby the authors subjectively classified evaluations of political objects according to whether or not they were expressed in *"ideological"* terminology.[27]

Unfortunately, the number of issue items in the ASP questionnaire was insufficient to perform a factor analysis which could be expected to isolate a smaller number of underlying dimensions. It was thus not possible to investigate whether respondents took their opinions from (or incorporated them into) an ideological framework which guided their

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25. A. Campbell, et al. *op.cit.*, Chapter 10; P.E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics" in D.E. Apter (Ed), Ideology and Discontent, (New York, 1964); D. Butler and D. Stokes, *op.cit.*, Chapter 9.

26. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics".

27. A. Campbell, et al. *op.cit.*, pp.222-223.

responses to politics. Having a large number of issues with which to work, Butler and Stokes were able to study the structure of those opinions which were stable over time and to review the applicability of *"left-right"* as a framework for issues. They found the *"left-right"*model to be of little utility in explaining the responses of most British voters to their political paries. Although individual political issues could be expected to have an impact on voters, attitudes on issues were characteristically *not* organised into *"embracing ideological structures"*.[28]

Although the question of ideology could not be pursued with regard to the ASP sample, it was possible to obtain a broad picture of the inter-relationships between opinions through use of inter-item correlation coefficients (Kendall's Tau, in this case[29]). Attitudes on some issues were correlated with those on others, as illustrated in Table 3.14*but the relationships were much weaker than expected. The only inter-item correlations of a size worth commenting upon[30] were those in the upper left-hand corner of the matrix. Except for conscription, these issues could be classified as foreign policy issues and thus it could be expected that attitudes on them would bear some relationship to each other. In fact, the only substantial relationships were those between opinions on Vietnam and the three issues of conscription, Communist China and the U.S. alliance, with correlation coefficients of +.23, +.27 and +.27, respectively.

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28. D. Butler and D. Stokes, *op.cit.*, p.264.

29. Kendall's Tau is a rank-order correlation coefficient which is suitable for ordinal data, the only necessary assumption being that each of the two variables can be ranked. This assumption has been applied to the ASP issue items and would appear to be valid, with the possible exception of migration.

30. Kendall's Tau varies between -1.0 and +1.0, but rarely can a value of tau be obtained which approaches unity. Its numerical value is usually somewhat lower than that obtained by other rank-order methods of correlation, such as Spearman's r_s. See H.M. Blalock, Social Statistics, (New York, 1960), pp.317-324.

* See page 81.

Relationships amongst the remaining issues in the matrix were so small that at least half of them were not statistically significant. These results may be a reflection of the selection of the ASP items and their wording, rather than an indication of a low level of constraint amongst attitudes towards domestic policy within the Australian electorate.

It was unfortunate that the narrow range of issue items available did not allow a comprehensive study of the degree of consistency of attitudes within issue *"domains"*[31] in Australian public opinion in 1969. Results of research carried out in the United States in the late 1960's have indicated an increasing degree of structuring in political opinions over the years since Converse's initial findings of low levels of constraint amongst attitudes.[32] This research culminated in the University of Michigan analysis of the 1972 Presidential election, in which Democrats and Independents registered markedly high levels of issue attitude constraint, thereby displaying a more ideological approach to political issues than was characteristic of Republicans at the same election.[33]

Although disappointing from the point-of-view of understanding the structure of political belief systems in Australia, the finding of very low inter-item correlations did at least facilitate the interpretation of linkages between voting behaviour and opinions on individual issues, which will form the latter part of this thesis. If opinions on the issues had been closely inter-related, it would have been extremely difficult to isolate any one issue as having influenced voting behaviour

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31. A term applied to a cluster of inter-related issues identified by factor analysis as having loadings on a common factor.

32. See N. Nie and K. Andersen, "Mass Belief Systems Revisited: Political Change and Attitude Structure", Journal of Politics, 36, (1974) 540-591; G. Pomper, Voters' Choice, (New York, 1975), Chap.8.

33. A.H. Miller, et al., A Majority Party in Disarray: Policy Polarization in the 1972 Election (paper prepared by the Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, 1973), p.32.

in a particular direction.

An integral part of investigating the relationships between voting decisions and opinions on the ASP issue items will be a study of the degree of consistency between the attitudes of voters and the policy stances of the political parties they supported. The work of Converse, who found greater consistency between party stances and the opinions of political *"elites"* than of the mass public,[34] and of H. McClosky, who showed that the policy attitudes of party activists were more partisan than those of rank-and-file supporters,[35] will be of relevance to discussions of partisan cleavage and of party identification in the two following chapters.

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34. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics".

35. H. McClosky, "Issue Conflict and Consensus among Party Leaders and Followers", American Political Science Review, 54 (1960), pp.406-27.

TABLE 3.14 INTER-ITEM CORRELATION MATRIX FOR ISSUE OPINIONS

(Kendall's Tau)

* = correlation coefficient not significant at 1% level (p>.01)

	Vietnam	Conscription	Communist China	Relations with United States	Foreign investment	Censorship	State aid	Migration
Vietnam								
Conscription	+.23							
Communist China	+.27	+.15						
Relations with United States	+.27	+.10	+.18					
Foreign investment	-.06	-.03*	-.03*	-.10				
Censorship	+.12	+.03*	+.05	+.05	.00			
State aid	+.03*	.00	-.06	-.05	+.03*	-.01*		
Migration	+.03*	+.01*	-.04	+.01*	-.07	-.02*	-.06	

CHAPTER 4

OPINION CLEAVAGES

In studying the distribution of opinions on issues of public policy within the electorate we are looking at one aspect of the cleavages which differentiate its members one from another. Cleavages have been defined as *"the criteria which divide the members of a community or subcommunity into groups".*[1] There are commonly thought to be three general classes or types of cleavage: (1) ascriptive or *"trait"* cleavages; (2) attitudinal or opinion cleavages and (3) behavioural or *"act"* cleavages.[2] In setting out this typology, D.W. Rae and M. Taylor recognised that the boundaries within it were very loose, as one class of cleavage would, in reality, differ from another only according to its distance away along a common continuum. An ascriptive cleavage along lines of social class could readily shade into a corresponding attitudinal division, particularly if the standard of measurement used was that of *"subjective class".*[3]

The three way typology is a useful concept for this study as it can be readily applied to the data from the ASP survey. In the preceding chapter the distribution and extent of some attitudinal cleavages within the sample were studied. The survey also provides a relevant measure of cleavage along behavioural lines, in this case the distinction amongst respondents according to the party they voted for at the 1969 Federal election. An idea of the pattern of ascriptive cleavages within the sample can be gained from an analysis of respondents' differing educational and occupational backgrounds, as well as their age and sex.

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1. D.W. Rae and M. Taylor, The Analysis of Political Cleavages (New Haven, 1970), p.1.

2. *ibid.*, p.1.

3. One measure of *"social class"* consists of asking a person what class he thinks he belongs to. Differences in this subjective assessment are as fruitful in indicating attitudinal differences as are the objective characteristics which go to define a person's *"social class"* (e.g. education, occupation, income).

In a random sample of the size interviewed for the ASP survey, we would hope that divisions along socio-demographic criteria would match those found within the electorate as a whole. If the survey was to be of value in explaining the results of the 1969 Federal election, respondents' votes would need to be divided amongst the parties in the same proportions as those recorded at the actual poll. As we saw in an earlier chapter, the sample of 1,873 voters did roughly match up to the overall Australian electorate in regard to these criteria.

Amongst the eight issue items chosen for study, the patterns of opinion distribution ranged from those which approached consensus (U.S. alliance; foreign investment) to those where the sample was almost equally divided (conscription; censorship). It is the purpose of this chapter to examine whether the lines of cleavage in issue opinion were underpinned by corresponding divisions in party support and/or socio-demographic backgrounds. Earlier research work into the conflict patterns within democratic societies[4] would not lead us to expect such a situation of mutually reinforcing cleavages. Instead, we would anticipate that the lines of division within the sample would overlap, indicating the existence of a multiplicity of cross-cutting cleavages.

This pattern has, in the past, been thought to be both a characteristic of pluralist democracies and a guarantor of the stability of their political systems. Where the members of a community are bound together by their over-lapping group allegiances and their opinions, the system is unlikely to face sustained and conflicting demands for change; but where ascriptive, attitudinal and behavioural cleavages coincide and act to reinforce one another, the society is likely to be split by intense conflicts and the political system placed under strain.

The validity of this hypo thesis has not gone unchallenged[5], but it

4. See Rae and Taylor, *op.cit.*, p.87.

5. *ibid.*, p.89.

is not the purpose of the present study to investigate its application to the Australian political system. We are concerned here, to study the degree to which cleavages in opinion and party support reinforced each other, as an observed correspondence between direction of vote in 1969 and respondents' attitudes might provide the first clues as to the part issues played in voting decisions. Such a correspondence could not, however, be taken as evidence of any causal links, in either direction, between issue opinion and vote.

It would have been surprising if the ASP survey had uncovered clear lines of division in opinion between those who voted for the governing parties and those who voted for the opposition in 1969. Students of American electoral behaviour have failed to find such polarization, although they have observed greater consensus across party lines in some periods than in others.[6] Given the nature of the American political system, Key maintained in 1961 that overlapping distributions of opinion were exactly what should be expected:

> *"(The) opinion patterns show varying degrees of approach toward concurrent consensus between the parties. On all the issues a shadow of conflict remains, and the shades of difference between the parties are sharper on some issues than on others. In a regime that proceeds in considerable degree by the attempt to achieve common consent, we should expect agreement gradually to develop across party lines on major issues."*[7]

Australian electoral opinion does not appear to constitute an exception to Key's findings. In a study of responses to Gallup Polls conducted in Australia between 1941 and 1968, Murray Goot found bi-partisan agreement on 80% of all the issues covered, with the extent of agreement differing according to the type of issue.[8]

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6. Analysis of the 1972 U.S. Presidential election results suggested that policy cleavages within the American electorate were deeper than in previous years and did not correspond to traditional partisan alignments. A.H. Miller, et al., *op.cit.*

7. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, p.445.

8. Goot, *op.cit.*, p.83.

Some researchers, like Berelson[9] and Kirkpatrick and Jones[10] in the United States, and Blondel[11] in Great Britain have hypothesized that certain types of issues are consistently more likely to attract partisan dispute than others. In addition, Berelson postulated a *"life history"* for issues, at a certain stage of which partisan conflict would be greatest.[12] Although not ascribing to Berelson's model, Key believed that differences between party supporters would be most marked in the *"developmental or agitational stage"* of an issue.[13]

Writers have differed on the extent to which a political system needs to display opinion cleavages along party lines for an election to have involved a meaningful choice in terms of public policy. Having demonstrated the existence of consensus between the Republican and Democratic party supporters on the *"general rules of the game"* and on issues involving style of government in 1948, Berelson and his associates were adamant that disagreement on some things was necessary to make an election important:

> *"... without some central matters of cleavage, political institutions would have stability, true, but it would be the stability of a monolithic state or the trivial survival of a purely 'political' contest irrelevant to the larger society".*[14]

Writing a number of years later, Key was less inclined to see the situation in such black-and-white terms. He maintained that parties could

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9. Berelson, et al, *op.cit.*, claimed that partisan cleavages were more common on position issues than on style issues, pp.185-202.

10. S.A. Kirkpatrick and M.E. Jones, "Vote Direction and Issue Cleavage in 1968", Social Science Quarterly, 51 (1970), pp.689-705, found that issue cleavage was lower for foreign affairs than for domestic affairs within the American electorate.

11. J. Blondel, Voters, Parties and Leaders (Harmondsworth, UK, 1969) concluded that British electors were partisan on social and economic matters only.

12. Berelson, *op.cit.*, pp.207-12.

13. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, p.445.

14. Berelson, *op.cit.*, p.194.

still appeal in different ways to the voters in situations of near-consensus, through the question becoming one of which party was better equipped to lead the country in agreed policy directions.[15]

Key's approach is similar to that I have already adopted in arguing in an earlier chapter that valence issues, as well as position issues, can be items which arouse partisan dispute. The pattern of opinions on two of the issues covered by the ASP survey approached a distribution characteristic of consensus (the U.S. alliance; foreign investment). If similar opinions were held by supporters of all parties on these issues, then we would be in a position to test Key's hypothesis that the electoral choice would be over which party was best suited to achieve the consensual goal.

As the ASP questionnaire offered its respondents a range of alternatives on most items, the degree of difference between opinions of government and opposition supporters on each issue was difficult to quantify. Attitudes towards some issues, such as Vietnam and conscription, divided clearly along party lines on the alternatives which corresponded with the parties' policy stances, but not on the remaining alternatives. In this situation it was not possible to construct a simple index which summarised the extent of cleavage in opinions, as had been done by Goot in obtaining a measure of partisanship on Gallup Poll items.[16] On the few issues where respondents chose from only two alternatives, such an index (obtained by averaging the difference in percentage points between the proportion of A.L.P. and Liberal/Country Party voters supporting each alternative) could be meaningfully applied. This procedure would have masked the existing differences on questions which offered a multiple

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15. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, p.446.

16. Goot constructed an index of partisanship by averaging the differences between the percentages of Labor and non-Labor voters in favour of a Gallup Poll opinion item and the percentages of Labor and non-Labor voters against the opinion. Goot, *op.cit.*, p.8.

choice, where a more accurate assessment of cleavages could be gained from examining the percentage differences on each alternative.

Partisan Nature of Opinions on the Vietnam War

On the basis of Gallup Poll results, D.W. Rawson drew attention to the clear division of opinion on Vietnam along party lines during the years 1966-69.[17] Goot's conclusions, using the same data, were similar:

> *"Up until 1965, the Vietnam commitment was endorsed by both sides; until the end of 1966, the sending of national servicemen to Vietnam was opposed by both sides. On most of the Vietnam questions there were, nevertheless, moderate to strong differences between Labor and non-Labor opinion."*[18]

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show the differences in Labor and non-Labor attitudes as measured by the Gallup Polls, which persisted throughout 1969; along with a general movement amongst the supporters of all parties in favour of withdrawal which was particularly marked between April and August.

A similarly partisan distribution of opinion[19] was measured by the ASP survey, with the exception of alternative (B) which expressed opposition to the inclusion of conscripts amongst the troops:

TABLE 4.1 1969 VOTE x VIETNAM OPINION

	Lib/CP	Labor	
Troops fighting in Vietnam, including conscripts	82.5	17.5	100% (377)
Troops fighting in Vietnam, but only volunteers	49.0	51.0	100% (736)
No combat troops in[20] Vietnam	26.7	73.3	100% (501)

17. D.W. Rawson, "The Vietnam War and the Australian Party System", Australian Outlook, 23 (1969), p.60.

18. Goot, *op.cit.*, p.153.

19. The measures of partisanship employed in this chapter have been calculated on the basis of respondents' actual 1969 vote as reported to the ASP interviewers. The concept of *"party identification"* and its usefulness as a measure of psychological support for the parties will be studied in a later chapter.

20. I have combined the two questionnaire alternatives *"civilian experts only"* and *"stay out of Vietnam altogether"* into a single category for the purposes of this table. Evidence presented in Chapter 7 suggests some confusion amongst respondents over the distinction between these two options, particularly in regard to the A.L.P.'s policy stance.

Those respondents who favoured the commitment of troops, including conscripts, to the war were highly likely to vote Liberal/Country Party in 1969, whereas the reverse was true for those who wanted the withdrawal of troops. Those in favour of a volunteer fighting force were equally likely to support the government or opposition parties.

The cleavages in opinion found in response to the ASP question between supporters of the contending parties can be illustrated in histogram form (see Figure 4.3). The differences in percentage points are as follows:

FIGURE 4.3 PARTISAN CLEAVAGE ON VIETNAM

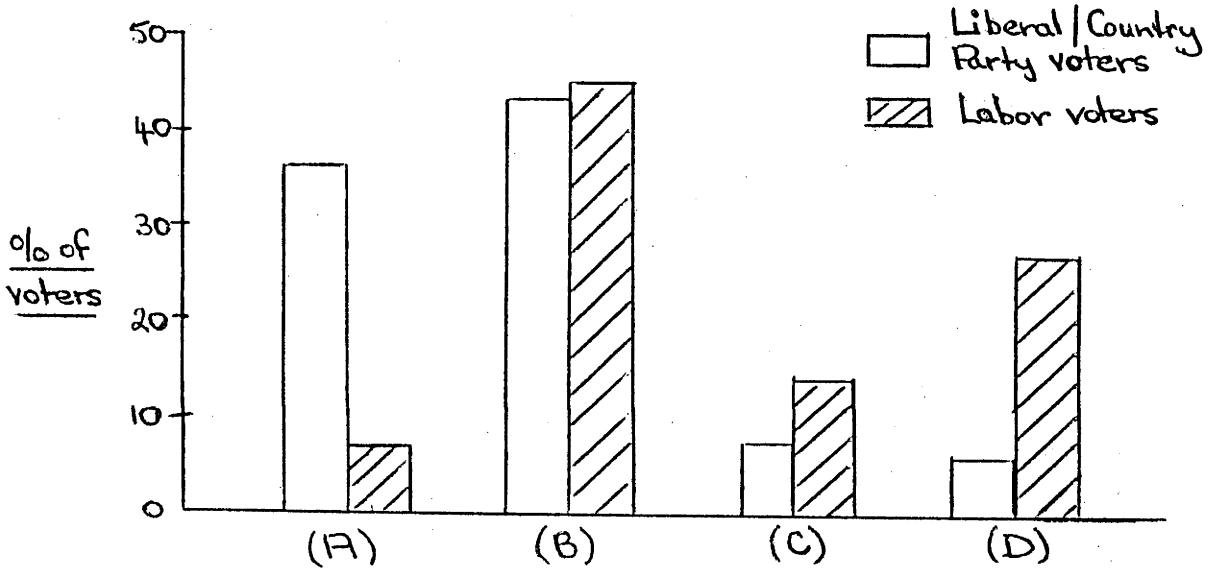


TABLE 4.2 DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS BETWEEN LABOR AND LIBERAL/COUNTRY PARTY VOTERS ON THE VIETNAM WAR

(A)	Troops, including conscripts	29.7
(B)	Only volunteer troops	1.9
(C)	Only civilian experts	7.6
(D)	Stay out of Vietnam altogether	20.8

The highest degrees of cleavage along party lines were registered on alternatives (A) and (D) which could be said to correspond with the opposing parties' policies on Vietnam. Alternative (C), which represented the most accurate expression of Labor policy could not be used to distinguish

clearly between the two groups of voters. It can be seen from Figure 4.3 and from Table 4.3 however, that this particular option was not chosen by many respondents, regardless of party allegiance.[21]

TABLE 4.3 1969 VOTE BY VIETNAM OPINION (4 alternatives)

1969 Vote	(A) Troops + Conscripts	(B) Volunteer Troops Only	(C) Civilian Experts Only	(D) Stay Out Altogether	(E) Don't know; No Answer	
Liberal/Country Party	37.7	43.7	8.7	7.5	2.4	100% (826)
Labor	8.0	45.6	16.3	28.3	1.8	100% (823)

Although there were clear differences of opinion between party supporters on the more extreme options, the high level of support for alternative (B) observed within the sample as a whole was replicated amongst both Labor and Liberal/Country Party voters. This situation suggests that there was a 'middle-ground' on Vietnam in 1969 which was not taken up by any of the major parties, and which failed to show up in the Gallup Polls. The pattern elicited by the ASP survey was one of polarisation on the extremes, moderated by a large area of common agreement between the parties' supporters.

Conscription

The results of Gallup Polls conducted in 1969 conveyed a rather different message on the nature of government and opposition supporters' attitudes towards the retention of national service than did the ASP survey. The opinions of Liberal/Country Party voters appeared to remain stable (in terms of the net distribution only), whilst there was a drop in the level of support for conscription amongst Labor voters between the months of August and October. Table 4.4 shows near-consensus within the government camp, but a polarisation of opinion amongst the A.L.P.'s

21. The retention of civilian experts only in Vietnam, which was official A.L.P. policy, received little attention in media reports during 1969, which stressed the commitment to disengagement in Labor's policy.

supporters:

TABLE 4.4 1969 VOTE BY ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONSCRIPTION

(1969 GALLUP POLLS)

	15 August 1969		4 October 1969	
	Lib/CP	Labor	Lib/CP	Labor
Weighted N	2889	2561	2650	2842
Continue conscription	74.0	53.7	72.6	44.3
End conscription	22.2	41.8	20.2	44.9
Undecided	3.8	4.6	7.2	10.8
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	963	854	1060	1137

By averaging the percentage differences in party support over the two alternatives, partisanship indices of 19.9 for August 1969 and 26.5 for October 1969 were obtained. These could be classified, respectively, as 'slight' and 'moderate' partisan differences in Goot's terminology.[22] They compared with Goot's finding (again based on Gallup Polls) that items dealing with *"compulsory military training and the possibility of overseas service"* provoked *"moderate discord"* between Labor and Liberal/Country Party voters in the years 1960-68.[23]

As was the case with the Vietnam war, the availability of four options on the issue resulted in a more complex pattern of cleavages within the ASP sample. Although interviews were undertaken in the same month as the second of the two Gallup Polls cited above, the support expressed for conscription was of a much more equivocal nature and the distribution of

22. Goot, *op.cit.*, p.68.

23. *ibid.*, p.74.

opinions was remarkably similar amongst the two groups of party supporters. The only alternative on which partisan dispute could be said to have existed was (D), that *"we shouldn't have any form of conscription at all"*. A substantial cleavage in opinion might have been expected here, as this option corresponded with Labor Party policy, but, in reality, the extent of difference was small. Continuation of the ballot system of conscription (government policy) was uniformly unpopular amongst Labor and Liberal/ Country Party voters:

TABLE 4.5 1969 VOTE BY OPINIONS ON CONSCRIPTION (ASP)

1969 Vote	(A) Conscription for all young men	(B) Continue ballot system	(C) Provide civilian alternatives	(D) No form of conscription	Don't know; no answer	
Lib/CP	44.3	9.7	36.0	7.9	2.1	100% (826)
Labor	36.9	5.0	29.5	25.9	2.7	100% (823)

The cleavages in opinion noted in the total sample were reproduced within each group of party supporters, a clear indication that attitudes on this issue were not of a partisan nature. The differences and similarities between the parties are portrayed schematically in Figure 4.4 and by percentage point differences in Table 4.6.

FIGURE 4.4 PARTISAN CLEAVAGE ON CONSCRIPTION

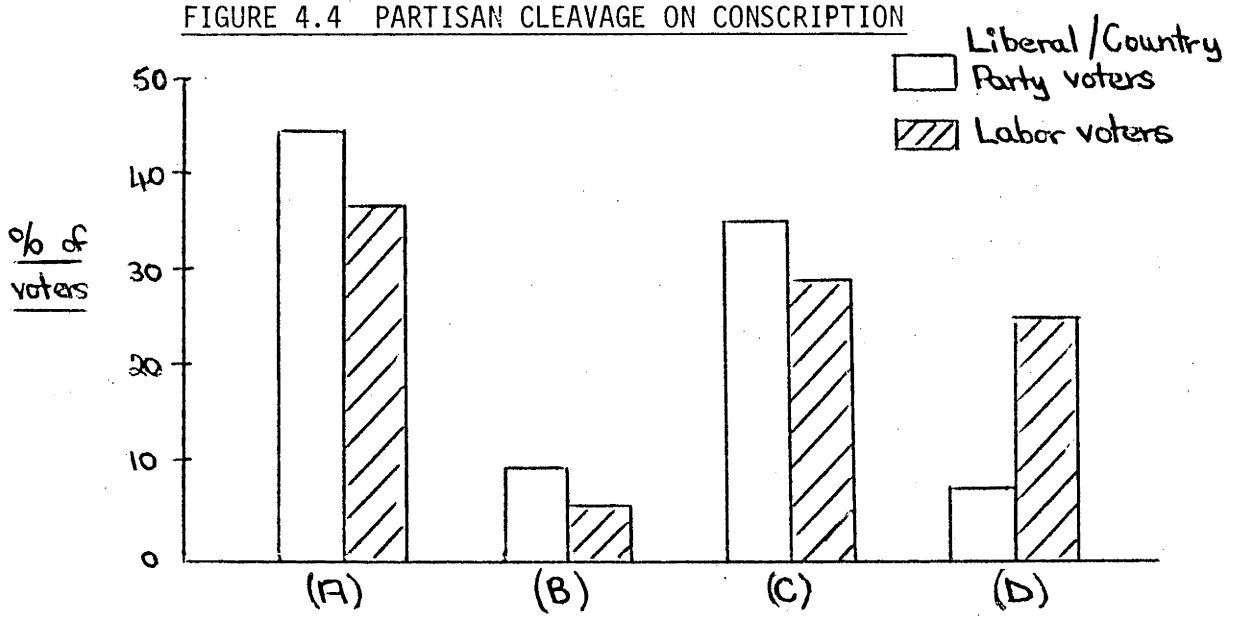


TABLE 4.6 DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS BETWEEN LABOR AND LIBERAL/ COUNTRY PARTY VOTERS ON CONSCRIPTION

(A)	Conscription for all young men	7.4
(B)	Continue ballot system	4.7
(C)	Provide civilian alternatives	6.5
(D)	No form of conscription at all	18.0

United States-Australian Alliance

Although Labor voters in the ASP sample were more likely than Liberal/Country Party voters to opt for the more distant of relationships with the United States, partisan differences in opinion on this question could not be regarded as anything more than slight:

TABLE 4.7 1969 VOTE BY OPINIONS ON RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

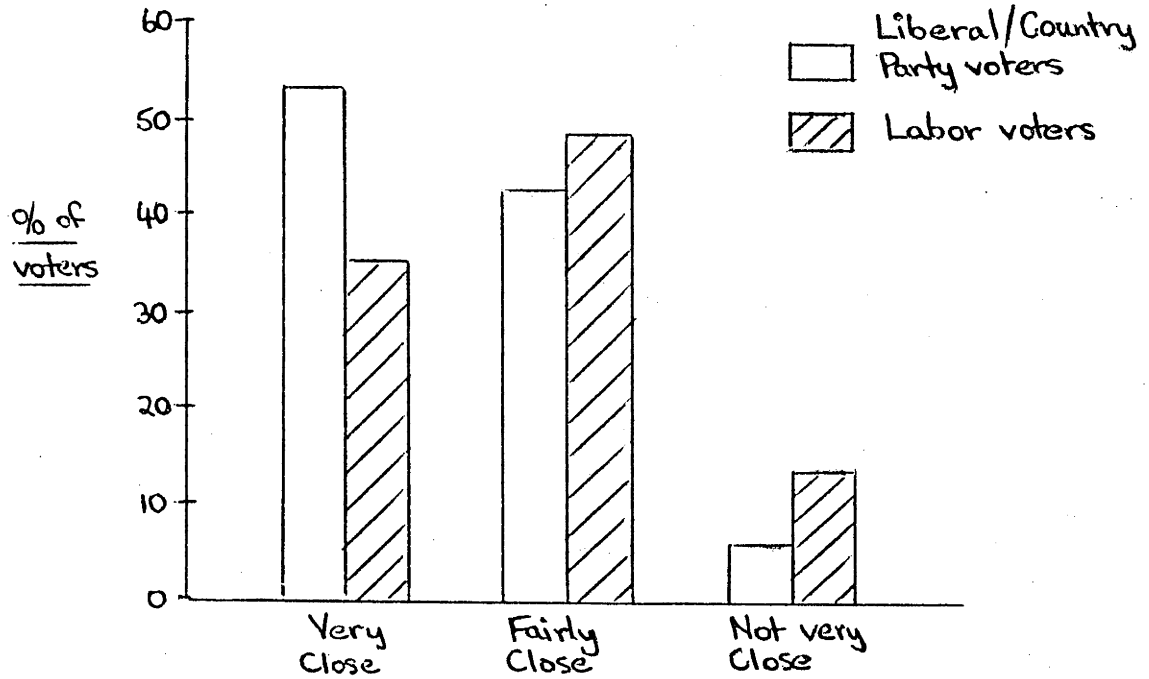
1969 Vote	Very Close	Fairly Close	Not Very Close	Don't know; No Answer	
Lib/CP	52.8	41.4	5.2	0.6	100% (826)
Labor	35.2	49.3	12.9	2.6	100% (823)

It has already been noted in the previous chapter that the alternatives provided on this question were unsatisfactory, owing to the likelihood that respondents would differ in their interpretation of the distances involved. On the assumption that *"fairly close"* could be regarded as the mid-point of a scale ranging from *"very close"* to *"not very close"*, the response levels were rearranged (by dividing the percentage of Liberal/Country Party and Labor voters who opted for *"fairly close"* in two and allocating half to each of the remaining alternatives) to transform the results into binary form. The resultant index of partisanship was calculated to be 12.7, indicating only a slight level of disagreement between the two sets of voters.

The overall consensus in attitudes observed in the previous chapter was magnified amongst government supporters and nearly approached amongst

those who voted for the opposition, as illustrated in Figure 4.5.

FIGURE 4.5 PARTISAN CLEAVAGE ON U.S. ALLIANCE



Communist China

Of all the issue items in the ASP questionnaire, this provoked the highest *"Don't know"* response rate, with only 87.3% of the sample able to give an opinion. Amongst those who chose one of the two alternatives and who voted for either of the major party groupings at the election, there did appear to be a relationship between attitudes towards Communist China and voting preference:

TABLE 4.8 1969 VOTE BY OPINIONS ON COMMUNIST CHINA (1)

	Lib/CP	Labor	
China will give us a lot to worry about	60.3	39.7	100% (868)
China will not be a problem	36.0	64.0	100% (570)

A substantial majority of government supporters felt that Communist China would give Australia a lot to worry about in the future, whereas Labor voters split fairly evenly on the question:

TABLE 4.9 1969 VOTE BY OPINIONS ON COMMUNIST CHINA (2)

1969 Vote	China will give us a lot to worry about	China won't be a problem	Don't know; no answer	
Lib/CP	63.3	24.8	11.9	100% (826)
Labor	41.9	44.3	13.8	100% (823)

The above figures in Tables 4.8 and 4.9 indicate a moderate degree of partisan division on this issue (index of partisanship = 20.5), but the large number of respondents who were undecided should give cause to question whether opinion had crystallized sufficiently for the issue to assume any importance in voting decisions.

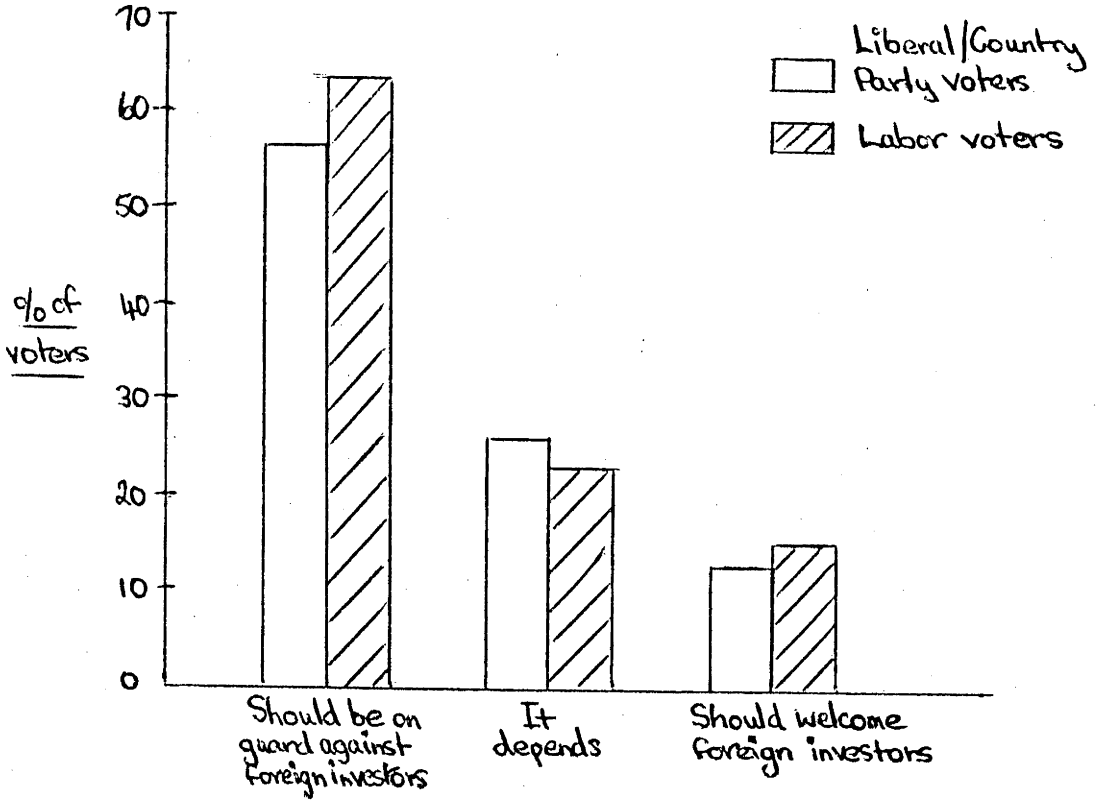
Foreign Investment

Opinions on the general approach Australia should adopt towards foreign investors were clearly bi-partisan, according to the ASP results. Labor voters were slightly more likely to favour a cautious approach than were those who supported the government parties, but the difference here was virtually insignificant. The distribution of attitudes within each set of voters mirrored the consensus evident for the sample as a whole - as shown in numerical form in Table 4.10 and in histogram form in Figure 4.6.

TABLE 4.10 1969 VOTE BY OPINIONS ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT

1969 Vote	Should be on guard against foreign investors	Should welcome foreign investors	It depends	Don't know; no answer	
Lib/CP	57.5	26.9	12.7	2.9	100% (826)
Labor	63.9	22.6	9.8	3.7	100% (823)

FIGURE 4.6 PARTISAN CLEAVAGE ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT



Collapsing the three alternatives into binary form, on the assumption that *"It depends"* represented the mid-point of a scale, resulted in a partisanship index of only 5.4. The similarity between the two blocks of voters on this issue received support from the results of a Gallup Poll conducted in June 1969 which obtained a bi-partisan response to a related question on Australian participation in development projects financed by foreign capital.[24]

Migration

No clear pattern of difference in attitudes towards migration emerged when comparing Liberal/Country Party voters in the ASP sample with Labor voters. Labor voters were slightly more likely to favour halting the immigration flow altogether and less likely to opt for a continuation of present practice which allowed for a small quota of Asians. The overall pattern, however, was one of a bi-partisan approach to the issue. This is clearly shown in the low percentage differences between

24. Australian Gallup Poll, June 21, 1969.

voters for the opposing parties support of each option in Tables 4.11 and 4.12 and in the close approximation of each party block's attitudinal profile in Figure 4.7.

TABLE 4.11 1969 VOTE BY OPINIONS ON ASIAN MIGRATION

1969 Vote	(A) Asians on same basis as Europeans	(B) Small quota of Asians	(C) No Asian Migrants	(D) Only UK and N.European migrants	(E) No more migrants at present	Don't know; No Answer	
Lib/CP	20.2	45.9	4.2	18.6	7.9	3.1	100% (826)
Labor	24.2	37.2	4.9	16.3	14.2	3.3	100% (823)

FIGURE 4.7 PARTISAN CLEAVAGE ON ASIAN MIGRANTION

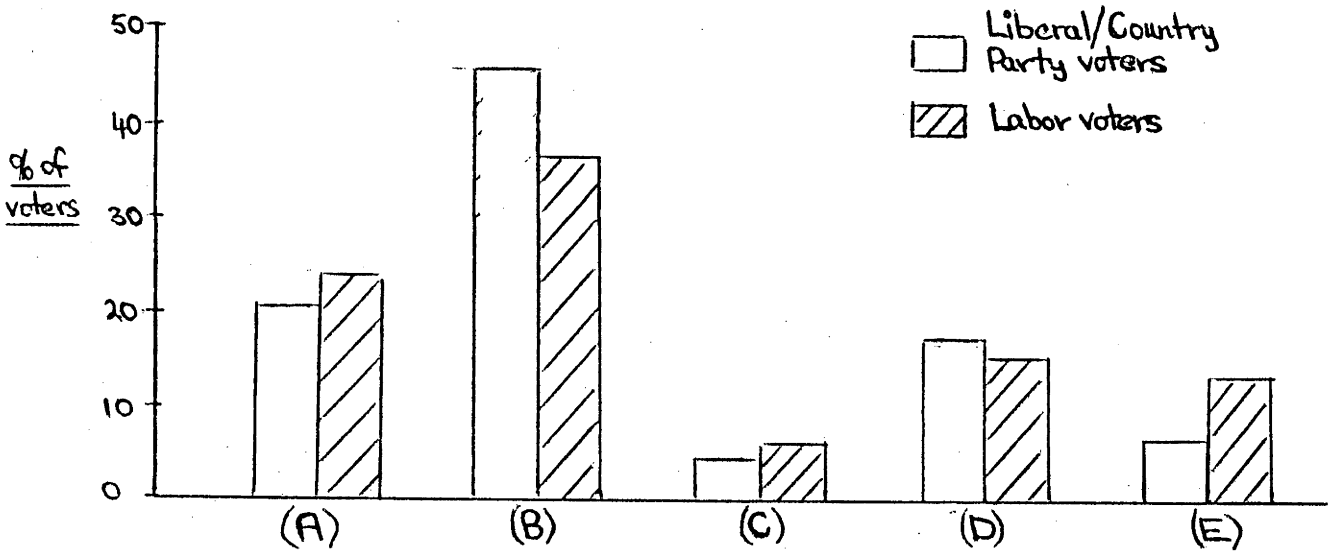


TABLE 4.12 DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS BETWEEN LABOR AND LIBERAL/ COUNTRY PARTY VOTERS ON MIGRATION

(A)	Asians on same basis as Europeans	4.0
(B)	Small quota of Asians	8.7
(C)	No Asian migrants	0.7
(D)	Only U.K. and N. European migrants	2.3
(E)	No more migrants at present	6.3

State Aid for Education

Responses to the A.S.P. item on State aid produced the most clearly bi-partisan pattern of all the eight issues in this analysis. Differences between Labor and Liberal/Country Party voters did not exceed 2.7 percentage points on any of the four alternatives available - see Tables 4.13 and 4.14. The distribution of opinions within each group of party supporters mirrored that for the main sample and closely resembled each other (see Figure 4.8).

TABLE 4.13 1969 VOTE BY OPINIONS ON STATE AID

1969 Vote	(A) No help at all from government	(B) No help until state schools improved	(C) Help only to needy church schools	(D) As much government help as possible	Don't know; No Answer	
Lib/CP	11.5	26.6	17.6	42.5	1.8	100% (826
Labor	11.7	25.3	15.2	45.2	2.7	100% (823

FIGURE 4.8 PARTISAN CLEAVAGE ON STATE AID

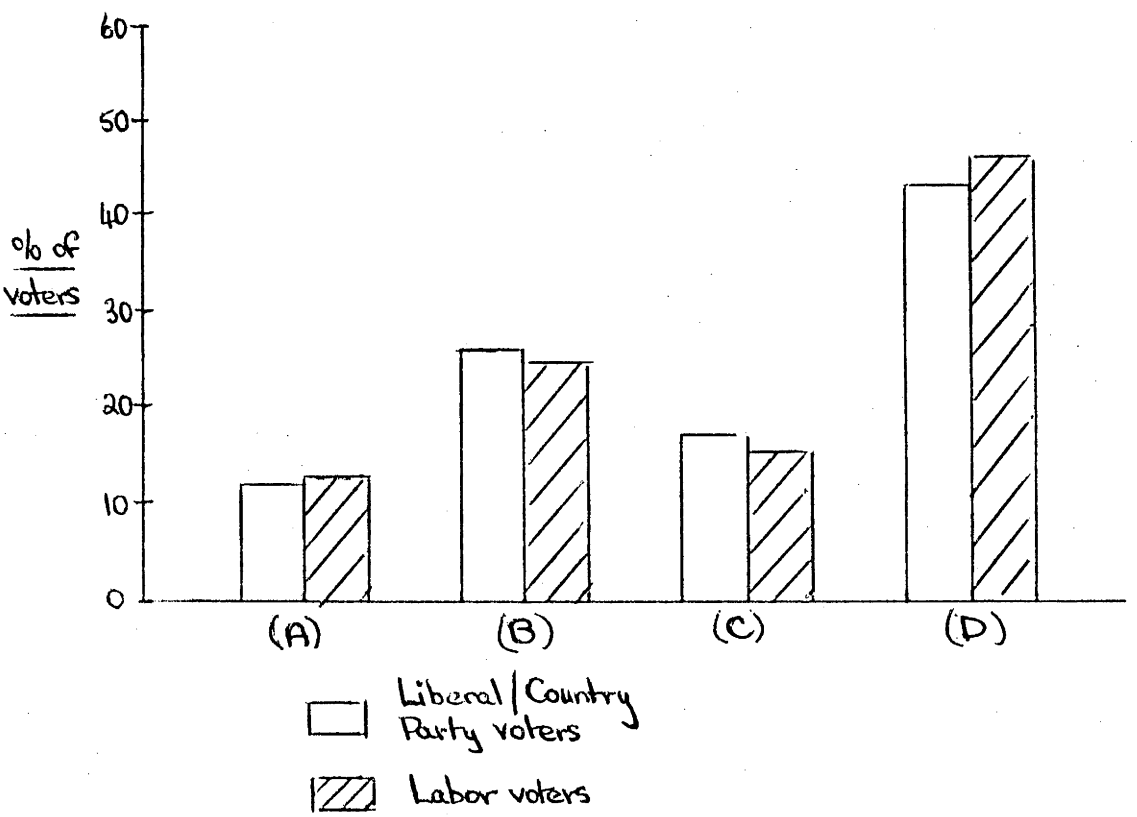


TABLE 4.14 DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS BETWEEN LABOR AND LIBERAL/ COUNTRY PARTY VOTERS ON STATE AID FOR EDUCATION:

(A)	No government help at all	0.2
(B)	No help until State schools improved	1.3
(C)	Help only to needy church schools	2.4
(D)	As much government help as possible	2.7

The bi-partisan nature of the electorate's attitudes towards government aid for private schools in 1969 was confirmed by the results of two Gallup Polls carried out very near to the time of the ASP survey. In August and in October the Gallup respondents were asked whether they favoured giving more in State aid or ceasing this form of government support. In both cases, substantial majorities of voters from both parties opted to increase the level of State aid.[25] The indices of partisanship were trivial - 2.4 for August 1969; 4.8 for October 1969.

Censorship

Some degree of partisanship was apparent in the ASP survey on the issue of censorship, when the alternatives posed were *"some censorship"* or that people should be able to *"read and see what they like"*. The sample of Labor voters was evenly split on the question, whereas a substantial majority of Liberal/Country Party voters favoured some censorship:

TABLE 4.15 1969 VOTE BY OPINIONS ON CENSORSHIP

1969 Vote	Some Censorship	Read and See Anything	Don't know; No Answer	
Lib/CP	63.1	35.2	1.7	100% (826)
Labor	49.3	49.3	1.4	100% (823)

25. Australian Gallup Polls, August 15, 1969; October 4, 1969.

The partisanship score obtained by averaging the differences in the levels of Liberal/Country Party and Labor support for each alternative was 14.0 - indicative of a *"slight"* degree of partisan dispute on Goot's scale.

In general terms, the ASP results were indicative of very low levels of partisan discord within the sample on the eight issues analysed. No more than *"moderate"* partisanship was registered on any item, and the responses to six items (conscription; the U.S. alliance; foreign investment; migration; State aid; censorship) could be classified as bi-partisan.[26] Only the Vietnam war and Communist China resulted in opinion levels which differed by more than 20 percentage points according to the voting background of the respondent. For the most part, therefore, opinion cleavages within the ASP sample were not reinforced by cleavages in party support.

Although the issues analysed here were few in number, the results obtained support findings by Goot[27] and by C.A. Hughes and J.S. Western[28] that the distribution of opinions on most issues in Australia assumed a similar pattern for Liberal/Country Party and Labor voters. Unfortunately, the restriction in the breadth of this analysis means that it is not possible to draw any general conclusions about the types of issues which are more likely to provoke partisan conflict.

On the basis of the ASP survey alone, however, we can refute several hypotheses which have been advanced in the prediction of cleavages along party lines amongst voters overseas. In relation to public opinion in Britain, Blondel hypothesized that electors were *"partisan on social and economic matters only"*.[29] Although Australian voters may have been

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26. Goot classified responses as "bi-partisan", if there were no more than 20 percentage points separating Labor from non-Labor voters, *op.cit.*, p. 83. His practice has been followed here.

27. *ibid.*, p.83.

28. C.A. Hughes and J.S. Western, The Prime Minister's Policy Speech (Canberra, 1966), pp82, 171.

29. Blondel, *op.cit.* p.77.

partisan on other issues in this category, the items which could be classified as *"social"* or *"economic"* in the ASP survey (conscription; foreign investment; migration; State aid; and censorship) recorded bi-partisan responses.

Similarly, Kirkpatrick's observation that partisan cleavage on issues was lower for foreign affairs than for domestic affairs in the United States[30] did not hold in relation to the Australian data. Two of the three foreign policy items (the Vietnam war and Communist China) were the only issues which registered moderate levels of partisan discord; whereas opinion patterns were clearly bi-partisan for all the domestic issues.

Berelson's hypothesis that style issues were associated with consensus and position issues with partisan dispute[31] was harder to test here as there were no style issues included in the analysis. The distribution of opinions in a bi-partisan manner for six out of the eight position issues, however, suggests that this hypothesis would not be valid for Australia, a conclusion also reached by Goot on the basis of Gallup Poll data.[32]

Intensity

So far in this analysis, discussion of attitudinal cleavages has been restricted to a single dimension, that of the direction of a voter's opinion. Attitudes, however, have affective as well as cognitive components. The emotional commitment of a person to his opinion, reflected in the intensity with which he prefers his view to other possible alternatives, assumes particular importance in the study of public opinion as it may affect the likelihood of political action on the part of the person concerned, or of governmental action in response to a

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30. Kirkpatrick and Jones, *op.cit.*, p.696.

31. Berelson, *op.cit.*, pp.185-202.

32. Goot, *op.cit.*, p.84.

perception that some members of the electorate attach particularly strong feelings to their opinions.[33]

Democratic theorists and students of electoral behaviour have considered the possible effects of certain patterns in the distribution of opinions and their intensities on the stability of the political system. Key speculated in this vein:

> *"Offhand observation makes it clear that a regime that must deal with opinion blocs of high intensity may be beset by periodic revolutions, driven to dictatorial methods if its decisions are to prevail, or perhaps paralyzed by the intractability of conflicting views of high intensity. On the other hand, a government whose people harbour less intense opinions confronts different kinds of problems in the management of affairs."*[34]

R.A. Dahl considered several possible types of distribution of intense opinions in his discussion of democratic theory.[35] Potentially the most explosive situations for a political system were those in which conflicting opinions were about evenly divided and held with high intensity on both sides, and those where an intense minority was opposed to an apathetic majority. In both situations, the prospects for stability would presumably be lowered if the divisions in opinion were reinforced by other cleavages (i.e., in a situation where cross-cutting cleavages were not in evidence). Dahl's feeling that most political controversies in stable democracies would not be of this type was given support by Key's examination of opinion intensities in the United States in relation to a variety of domestic and foreign policy issues in 1956, in which most opinion distributions approached consensus and were characterised by low intensities.[36] Lane and Sears, in analysing 1952 and 1956 data obtained by the University of Michigan, could find only one instance of an intense minority and a relatively indifferent majority - that of attitudes towards

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33. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, p.208.

34. *ibid.*, p.228.

35. R.A. Dahl, A Preface to Democratic Theory (Chicago, 1956) pp.90-119.

36. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, p.228.

Senator Joseph McCarthy - and even here the differences in opinion and intensity were still not very great.[37]

There is a common assumption that voters with opinions of high intensity are more likely to act to put their opinions into effect than those who are relatively indifferent. This predisposition to political action may, however, result as much from social situations or personal characteristics which themselves encourage a high level of emotional commitment to opinions as from the commitment itself. Key suggested that intensity of opinion could be derived from the immediacy in impact of a policy on a class of people; or from group pressures on individuals; or from the general community situation.[38] The degree of intensity might also depend on the information available to the persons concerned, itself often a function of education level. Another hypothesis suggests that those who have a strong interest in politics and are accustomed to participate are also likely to feel strongly about their opinions. Key found some support for the operation of each of these factors in relation to his 1956 data, but warned that his measurements of intensity might not be construed as having *"the same meaning from person to person, situation to situation, or issue to issue"*.[39]

Reservations about the validity of procedures employed to measure intensity were expressed by Rae and Taylor, who felt that the concept itself contained ambiguities.[40] To illuminate these ambiguities, three questions needed to be asked of the term *"intensity"* - *"Intensity compared to what? Intensity compared to whom? Intensity in what sense?"*. The common method for measuring intensity in opinion surveys, a simple Likert scale asking respondents to say whether they feel *"very strongly, fairly*

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37. Lane and Sears, *op.cit.*, pp.111-113.

38. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, pp.218-225.

39. *ibid.*, p.227.

40. Rae and Taylor, *op.cit.*,pp.45-62.

strongly, or not very strongly" about their opinions, does not usually specify the particular alternative against which respondents are meant to make their comparison (unless the opinion question only presents two choices); does not guarantee that the self-ratings are comparable in value; and does not specify the exact meaning to be attached to strength of feeling. Possible variations along each of these three dimensions were thought by Rae and Taylor to provide the source for ambiguities in the concept, both as a tool of measurement and of theory.

A number of different meanings can be implied in the statement that a person holds his views with high intensity. As a self-rating of intensity of opinion involves an implicit judgement on the part of a person as to how much he prefers his own view to a possible alternative, ratings are likely to differ qualitatively unless the researcher has specified a single standard for comparison. The adjectives employed to describe strength of feeling may also simply mean different things to different people. Further, Rae and Taylor pointed out that an expressed strong preference for a policy might imply a variety of possible reactions if that policy was not adopted, ranging from mere displeasure, all the way to action to overthrow the regime.[41]

The ASP questionnaire can be criticised for its failure to resolve any of these ambiguities in its attempt to assess the intensity with which respondents held their opinions. Nor did it provide a complete coverage of the issue items, as questions on intensity were asked in reference to only four of the eight issues. On only one item, censorship, can we be sure that all respondents were making a comparative judgement between the same two alternative opinions. A multiplicity of different comparisons could have been involved in a single statement of intensity of preference on any of the remaining items, which offered up to five possible alternatives. In interpreting the results, we cannot safely

41. *ibid.*

assume that all respondents assigned the same values to such measures as *"very strong"* or *"fairly strong"*; thus, the interpersonal comparisons inevitably involved in aggregating responses must be regarded as highly suspect.[42]

Keeping in mind the crude nature of the data, some observations can be made about the intensity with which different opinions appeared to be held by members of the ASP sample. By comparing the percentages of *"very strong"* responses in each opinion category in Table 4.16, it can be seen that the more extreme opinions did tend to attract more intense feelings on the issues of the Vietnam war and conscription. This relationship between extremity of opinion and intensity of feeling has become such a well-established pattern in public opinion research that its existence is used to determine the validity of attitude scales.[43] Its occurrence here suggests that the survey's designers were successful in constructing a series of alternative opinions on Vietnam and conscription which approximated a graduated attitude scale for each item.

The results for migration did not fit this pattern as a majority of the small number who favoured keeping Asians out of Australia altogether said they felt *"very strongly"* about their view. Logically, however, this particular attitude could be considered an extreme position; which suggests that the question on migration was not measuring respondents' comparative positions along a single attitudinal dimension.

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42. According to Rae and Taylor, *op.cit.*, p.54, no operational procedures have yet been devised for making reliable interpersonal comparisons of intensity. In this respect, the A.S.P. survey is no less sophisticated than more recent attempts to measure the intensity of opinions of voters in the United States.

43. See H. Cantril, "The Intensity of an Attitude", Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 41 (1946), pp. 129-135; V.O. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, p. 209; Lane and Sears, *op.cit.*, p. 105; Rae and Taylor, *op.cit.*, p.61.

TABLE 4.16 INTENSITY OF OPINIONS ON FOUR ISSUE ITEMS

	Number feeling *"very strongly"*	% of this opinion feeling *"very strongly"*	Total number with this opinion
Vietnam war			
(A) Troops, including conscripts	224	50.9	442
(B) Only volunteer troops	330	40.7	813
(C) Only civilian experts	118	50.9	233
(C) Stay out of Vietnam altogether	218	65.5	335
Conscription			
(A) Conscription for all young men	456	60.0	765
(B) Continue ballot system	35	26.9	132
(C) Provide civilian alternatives	270	44.3	617
(D) No form of conscription at all	211	66.8	316
Migration			
(A) Asians on the same basis as Europeans	157	36.5	431
(B) Small quota of Asians	175	22.6	778
(C) No Asian migrants	56	63.6	88
(D) Only U.K. and N. European migrants	139	45.0	310
(E) No more migrants at present	107	52.7	203
Censorship			
Some censorship	522	50.2	1058
People should read and see what they like	386	50.6	784

When the differential intensities with which respondents said they held their opinions were compared across the lines of partisan cleavage, an association between increased strength of feeling and the direction of vote in 1969 became apparent for some opinions, but not for others. These effects can best be illustrated on the opinions where partisan conflict was the greatest - alternatives (A) and (D) on Vietnam; and

alternative (D) on conscription.[44]

Intensity of feeling appeared to make little difference to the voting pattern amongst those who were of the opinion that troops, including conscripts should be in Vietnam, but it slightly increased the likelihood of a Labor vote amongst those who felt Australia should stay out of Vietnam altogether:

TABLE 4.17 INTENSITY OF OPINIONS TOWARDS THE VIETNAM WAR

		Lib/CP	Labor	
(A) Troops and conscripts in Vietnam	Very Strongly	81.7	18.3	100% (191)
	Not so Strongly[45]	83.2	16.8	100% (184)
	Total	82.5	17.5	100% (377)

		Lib/CP	Labor	
(D) Stay out of Vietnam altogether	Very Strongly	18.8	81.2	100% (192)
	Not so Strongly	25.7	74.3	100% (101)
	Total	21.0	79.0	100% (295)

The relationship between strength of feeling and direction of vote was stronger amongst those in favour of abolishing conscription:

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44. Although the difference of 18 percentage points which separated the proportions of Labor and Liberal/Country Party voters who favoured no form of conscription at all (D) was still within Goot's classification of 'slight' partisanship only, the cleavage here was more than twice as large as that registered for any other alternative opinion on conscription, and larger than the percentage differences recorded with respect to any other item except Vietnam.

45. The two categories of intensity, 'fairly strongly' and 'not very strongly', have been combined here as it was felt that the differentiation of 'very strongly' as a distinctly higher level of intensity would have been easier for subjects than the classification of their feelings into one or other of these two 'lower' categories.

TABLE 4.18 INTENSITY OF OPINIONS ON CONSCRIPTION

		Lib/CP	Labor	
(D) No form of conscription at all	Very Strongly	18.1	81.9	100% (177)
	Not so Strongly	32.7	67.3	100% (101)
	Total	23.4	76.6	100% (278)

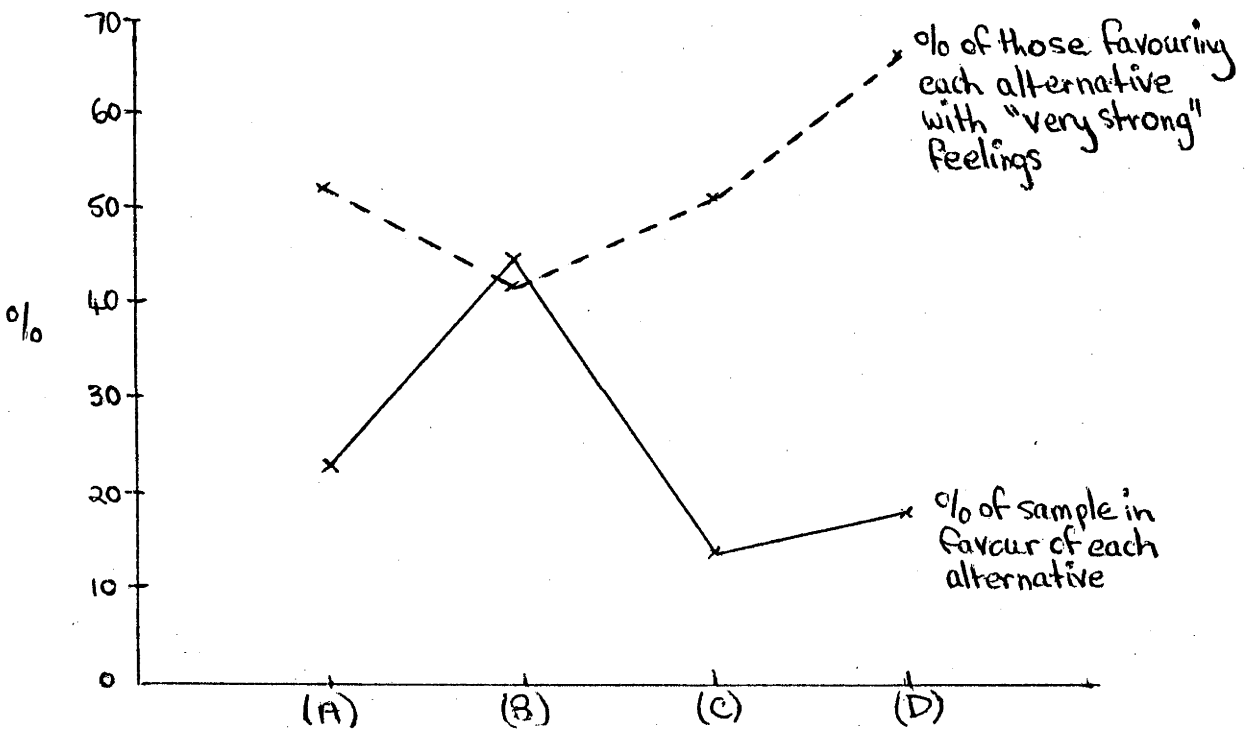
Despite the possible ambiguities inherent in the data presented here, it may be feasible to make some tentative observations on the patterns of intensity associated with certain opinions present within the sample, especially as these related to divisions in voting support.

On censorship, where only two conflicting views were possible, the sample was fairly evenly divided, with half of each side saying they felt very strongly about their opinion. The situation was unlikely to generate much conflict for the political system, however, as only a slight level of partisanship was recorded, i.e. the division in opinion was not matched by a cleavage along party lines.

The Vietnam war, conscription and migration presented instances where minorities with intense opinions were opposed by majorities with less strongly felt views. This contrast is illustrated graphically in Figures 4.9 - 4.11. As a variety of opinions were expressed on each issue, none of the situations could be said to represent extreme polarization. The conflicts over migration were unlikely to have repercussions which would affect the party balance in 1969 as divisions were evident amongst Liberal/Country Party and Labor voters alike. There were two instances, however, where minorities with intense opinions supported one party at the polls more than the other - alternative (D) on Vietnam (65.5% felt *"very strongly"*; 79.0% voted A.L.P.) and alternative (D) on conscription (66.8% felt *"very strongly"*; 76.6% voted A.L.P.). In both cases, the tendency to favour the Labor Party increased with increases in the level of emotional commitment to the opinion. The results suggest that Australia's

involvement in Vietnam and the debate over conscription were the two potentially most divisive issues,[46] amongst the eight analysed here, for the electorate in 1969. But hasty conclusions would be dangerous at this stage in the analysis. The necessity for caution in regard to the measurement of intensity of feeling has already been noted: there are further dimensions of opinion such as the salience of issues to the voters, which must also be considered.

FIGURE 4.9 DISTRIBUTION OF OPINIONS ON VIETNAM AND COMPARATIVE INTENSITIES OF FEELING ASSOCIATED WITH OPINIONS



46. The "division" mentioned here is visualised only in terms of the degree of correspondence between opinion cleavages and the pattern of party support, as expressed in the distribution of votes within the sample. No attempt has been made in this chapter to estimate the strength of relationships between issue opinions and the direction of the individual's vote at the 1969 election. Although coefficients of correlation could be obtained which would provide summary measures of the degree of association between the issue and voting variables, they would give only a superficial description of the issue-vote linkage. Such summary statistics could be misleading at this early stage of the analysis as they could mask the contribution of other variables to the influence processes which culminate in the voting act. Correlation coefficients have been included in the course of a multivariate analysis of 1969 vote which is reported in Chapter 10.

FIGURE 4.10 DISTRIBUTION OF OPINIONS ON CONSCRIPTION AND COMPARATIVE INTENSITIES OF FEELING ASSOCIATED WITH OPINIONS

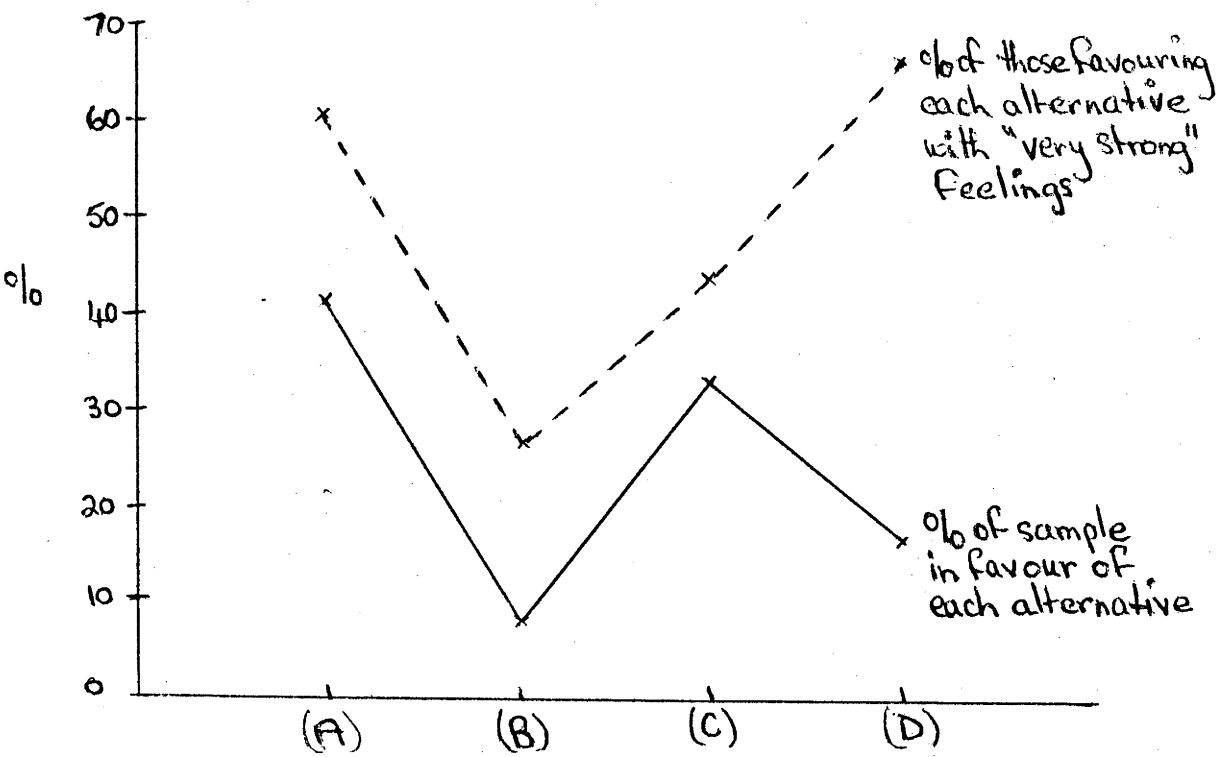
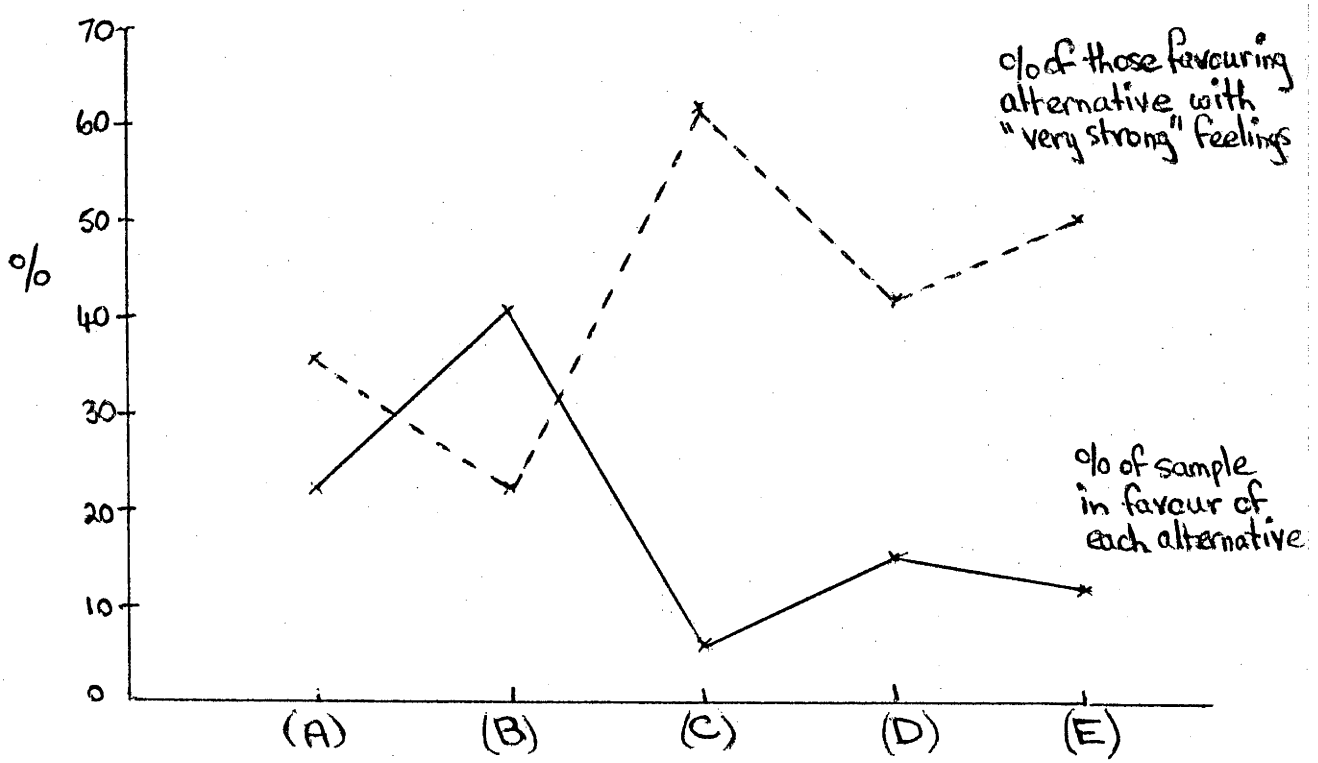


FIGURE 4.11 DISTRIBUTION OF OPINIONS ON ASIAN MIGRATION AND COMPARATIVE INTENSITIES OF FEELING ASSOCIATED WITH OPINIONS



CHAPTER 5

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES - DEMOGRAPHICS AND ISSUES

Differences in social and demographic attributes, such as occupation, education, age and sex, constitute cleavages within society which may or may not be related to differences in opinion and/or party preference. Any study of the relations between opinions and voting behaviour must take into account differences in the makeup of the sample of electors chosen for study. Observed variations in the direction of vote might well be due to the operation of social factors alone, or to their interaction with voters' attitudes.

A person's social characteristics, in addition to his age and sex, have generally been considered prior, determining factors in the formation of attitudes towards public policy. Variations in level of education and occupation are certainly indicative of different experiences in the socialisation of an individual. Campbell and his associates maintained that differences in opinion could arise from voters in different social categories being exposed to different types of politically relevant experiences, and being provided, according to their social roles, with varying prescriptions for appropriate behaviour patterns.[1] The position of individuals in relation to different socio-demographic criteria, could, on occasions, result in their membership of community sub-groups (such as those possessing a private school educational background belonging to an *"old school tie"* grouping) which would exert pressures on members to conform to certain attitudinal and behavioural standards.

Various hypotheses have been advanced in the past to explain apparent links between opinions and the possession of certain social or demographic characteristics. Perhaps the most persistent assumptions about political behaviour in Western liberal democracies have been those which attributed

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1. Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp.474-5.

greater *"conservatism"* to older people, and to females, in comparison with males. A more conservative outlook on life, reflected in attitudes which supported the preservation of the *status quo* and rejected such *"socialistic"* innovations as the welfare state was presumed to characterise these types of people. The overt expression of this conservatism was thought to be found in a preference for political parties located towards the *"right"* of the ideological spectrum. Recent studies have pointed to fallacies in some of the empirical and logical bases for these assumptions.[2]

In another theory linking social characteristics to political attitudes, early work on the distribution of authoritarian views in the United States was taken as evidence that authoritarianism was related to low socio-economic status and arose out of sentiments of thwarted aspiration, frustration and resentment.[3] These findings, too, have since been called into question.[4]

In view of the failure of such generalised hypotheses to stand up to scrutiny, V.O. Key suggested that a more profitable approach to explaining the differences in opinions on specific issues which undoubtedly did exist would lie in a pragmatic attempt to analyse the relationships between social characteristics and attitudes, issue by issue.[5] This chapter

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2. M. Goot and E. Reid, Mindless Matrons or Sexist Scientism?, a paper presented at the 15th Annual Conference of the Australian Political Studies Association in August 1973, pointed out the fallacies and superficialities characteristic of the argument that "women are more conservative than men". In a series of articles in The Australian, October 1969, M. Kahan and D. Aitkin argued that, on the basis of the 1967 A.S.P. results older Australians were not more conservative in their choice of political parties than younger voters, but they were less likely to change their party preferences.

3. M. Janowitz and D. Marvick, "Authoritarianism and Political Behaviour", Public Opinion Quarterly, 27 (1953), pp.185-201.

4. V.O. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, p.137, suggested that these findings stemmed from the indisposition of working class respondents to argue with the suggestions of their *"lady interviewers"*.

5. *ibid*, p.137.

will be devoted to an analysis of opinion differences amongst members of the A.S.P. sample according to their relative educational and occupational status, age and sex and, additionally, a measure of their interest in politics. It will also endeavour to discover the extent to which differences on these socio-demographic variables can explain variations, or simliarities in opinion across party lines.

Separate measures of respondents' education and occupation have been used in preference to a composite index of *"social class"*. Although these two variables constitute the main socio-economic indicators of a person's class, they do not necessarily cover the subjective elements of class membership. The scope of this thesis does not allow a full discussion of the relations between objective class divisions, subjective perceptions of class, community status patterns and opinions on public policy within the A.S.P. sample.[6] As this has been undertaken elsewhere, the present study will confine itself to an analysis centred on the two variables of education and occupation. When respondents' educational backgrounds[7] were cross-tabulated against their levels of occupation[8], the expected strong association between the two variables was observed. The relationship can most easily be seen by comparing the cell percentages vertically across the three levels of education in Table 5.1.

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6. For a full analysis, see D. Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics, forthcoming.

7. When panel respondents were re-interviewed in 1969 they were not asked whether the level of education they had reached in 1967 had altered in the intervening two years. The likelihood of further education in adulthood, although small, may have resulted in incorrect estimations of education level for some respondents in 1969.

8. As in most sociological surveys, occupation is actually that of the Head of the Household, whether or not that person was the interview respondent. This means that all married women, unless they were the sole income earners, were given the occupational status of their husbands. See Goot and Reid, *op. cit.*, pp.31-32 for criticism of the implications of this practice.

TABLE 5.1 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND OCCUPATIONAL STATUS (ROW PERCENTAGES)

Education	Unskilled	Semi-Skilled	Skilled	Occupation: Office & Sales	Semi-Profess.; Managers	Professional	No Answer	
None/ Primary	25.0	25.4	13.9	8.9	17.8	2.7	6.3	100% (527)
Sec-ondary	12.8	13.3	17.1	15.7	27.4	9.8	3.9	100% (1209)
Tertiary	2.4	3.3	4.9	11.4	46.3	29.3	2.4	100% (123)
	(292)	(299)	(287)	(253)	(490)	(168)	(84)	

The Vietnam War

Opinions on Vietnam did appear to differ according to the voters' educational attainments. The most popular option, that volunteer troops only should be fighting in Vietnam, suffered a considerable loss in support amongst the tertiary educated respondents. The popularity of alternative (C), that civilian experts only should remain in Vietnam, increased with education. The greatest support for total disengagement from the war was found amongst those respondents who had completed only the primary level, or lower:

TABLE 5.2 VIETNAM OPINION x EDUCATION LEVEL

	Troops & Conscripts (A)	Only Volunteers (B)	Only Civilians (C)	Stay Out Altogether (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
None/ Primary	19.9	41.9	8.3	26.0	3.8	100% (527)
Sec- ondary	25.2	46.0	11.9	14.6	2.3	100% (1209)
Tertiary	21.1	27.6	35.0	16.3	0.0	100% (123)

It was noted in the preceding chapter that differences in opinion between Labor and Liberal/Country Party voters were most marked on the two most extreme options, the commitment of troops, including conscripts, and total disengagement. The interaction of educational influences with differences in opinion according to 1969 vote was apparent here, as tertiary educated Liberal/Country Party voters were more likely than their fellow voters with less education to favour staying out of Vietnam altogether, whereas this option was less popular amongst Labor voters with tertiary education than amongst those with primary education (although the absolute levels of support for this alternative were, of course, lower for government voters than for those whose 1969 vote favoured the opposition). In simplified terms, support for total withdrawal from Vietnam *increased* slightly with education amongst Liberal/Country Party voters, and *decreased* with education amongst Labor voters. The reverse pattern was evident for the commitment of troops, including conscripts to the war.

Education appeared to have two main influences, independent of vote. Whichever party they supported in 1969, tertiary educated respondents were less likely to favour the most popular overall alternative, (B), than those with less education. In contrast, support for the retention of civilian

experts only, (C), increased with education, irrespective of vote.

Similar patterns in the variation of opinions towards Vietnam were noted within the sample when different occupations were considered - see Table 5.3. The drop in the popularity of restricting combat troops in Vietnam to volunteers with tertiary education, observed above, was matched by a corresponding decrease in its popularity amongst those with professional occupations. Support for alternative (C) increased with occupational level, whereas support for alternative (D) decreased with occupational level. Alternative (A), also, showed a slight increase in popularity with higher occupational levels.

TABLE 5.3 VIETNAM OPINION x OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

	Troops & Conscripts (A)	Only Volunteers (B)	Only Civilians (C)	Stay Out Altogether (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
Unskilled	22.6	40.4	9.9	22.9	4.1	100% (292)
Semi-skilled	20.7	45.2	10.0	22.7	1.3	100% (299)
Skilled	21.6	43.6	11.8	21.6	1.4	100% (287)
Office & Sales Clerks	24.9	45.1	11.1	16.2	2.8	100% (253)
Semi-Professional Owners/ Managers	25.3	47.1	13.9	11.4	2.2	100% (490)
Professional	28.6	36.9	20.8	11.3	2.4	100% (168)

When direction of 1969 vote was also considered, some of the trends in opinion observed with variations in education were replicated, whilst others were not. Most of the trends were restricted to one of the two groups of voters, suggesting that occupation was less effective

than direction of 1969 vote as a predictor of stance towards Vietnam. The popularity of retaining civilian experts only in Vietnam increased with occupational level amongst Labor voters, but not amongst Liberal/Country Party voters. The drop in support for keeping only volunteer troops in Vietnam amongst professional people recorded above was replicated for 1969 Labor voters, but not for Liberal/Country Party voters, where a drop in support occurred amongst the unskilled workers at the opposite end of the occupational scale. The popularity of alternative (D) decreased with occupational level amongst Labor voters; as did the popularity of (A) amongst Liberal/Country Party voters.

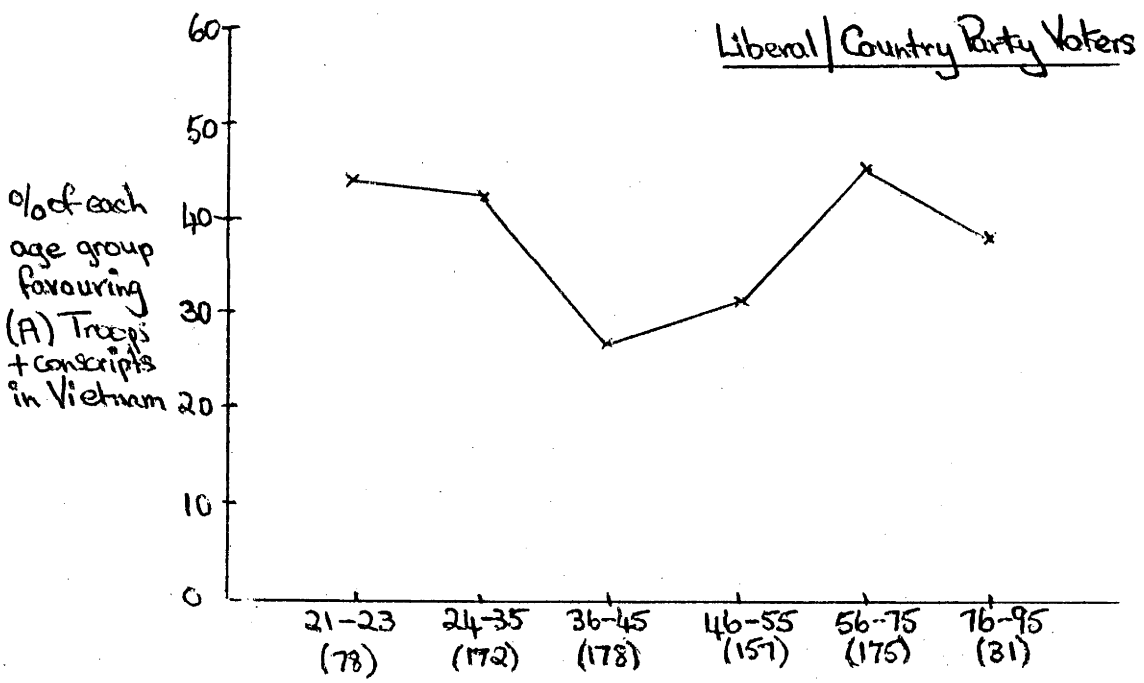
An examination of opinions held by respondents of different ages resulted in a rebuttal of the thesis that older people, by virtue of their age alone, tend to oppose the notion of radical change (see Table 5.4). Support for total withdrawal from Vietnam, (D), *increased* as the age levels of respondents increased. The other extreme, commitment of troops which included conscripts, (A), drew its main support from those aged 35 and under, and 56 and over. The restriction of involvement to volunteer troops, (B), was consistently popular amongst respondents aged 55 and under, and lost some support in the older age groupings.

TABLE 5.4 VIETNAM OPINION x AGE

Age	Troops & Conscripts (A)	Only Volunteers (B)	Only Civilians (C)	Stay Out Altogether (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
21-23	25.1	46.3	13.1	15.4	0.0	100% (175)
24-35	27.8	44.3	12.0	14.8	1.2	100% (418)
36-45	19.1	46.5	15.1	16.6	2.7	100% (404)
46-55	19.5	48.3	10.2	19.8	2.3	100% (344)
56-75	24.9	36.2	11.9	22.0	5.0	100% (378)
76-95	27.0	31.7	6.3	23.8	11.1	100% (63)

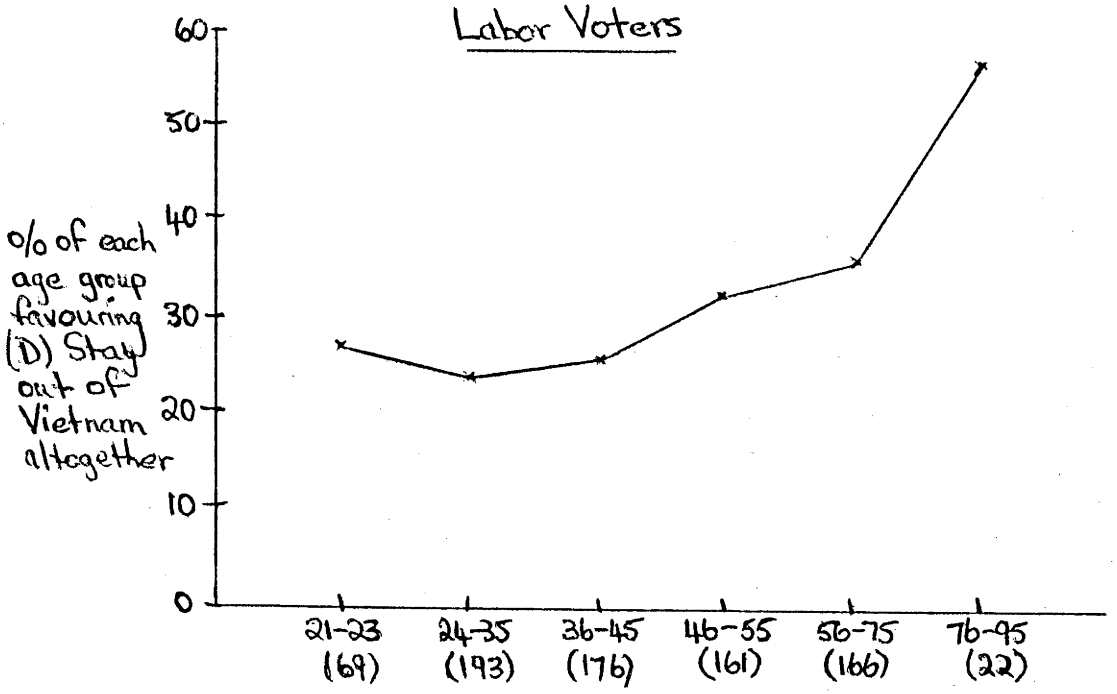
The general pattern of support for alternative (B) found within the whole sample was reproduced amongst both Labor and Liberal/Country Party voters. No clear trend with age was evident for alternative (C) amongst either group of voters. Liberal/Country Party voters showed clearly the drop in support for committing conscripts, as well as volunteers, to fight in Vietnam amongst those aged 36 to 55 years which was noted within the main sample. As the graph in Figure 5.1 illustrates, the younger and older Liberal/Country Party voters were more likely than those in the middle age groups to have an opinion in line with party policy (an opinion which could be classified as the most *"conservative"* of the alternatives offered by the A.S.P. questionnaire).

FIGURE 5.1 AGE LEVELS OF RESPONDENTS FAVOURING (A) ON VIETNAM



Staying out of Vietnam altogether (D) became more popular with Labor voters as age increased. The same trend was evident, although to a much smaller extent, amongst Liberal/Country Party voters. Breaking the general trend with age amongst Labor voters were the 21-23 year olds, who were slightly more likely to favour (D) than those Labor voters aged from 24 to 45 years - see Figure 5.2.

FIGURE 5.2 AGE LEVELS OF RESPONDENTS FAVOURING (D) ON VIETNAM



On the whole, there was very little difference recorded in the A.S.P. survey between male and female opinions on Vietnam. Female respondents were a little less likely to favour the commitment of troops, including conscripts (A) and more likely than males to prefer the restriction of troops to volunteers (B):

TABLE 5.5 VIETNAM OPINION x SEX

	Troops & Conscripts (A)	Only Volunteers (B)	Only Civilians (C)	Stay Out Altogether (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
Male	25.8	41.1	12.2	18.5	2.4	100% (975)
Female	21.2	45.9	12.7	17.3	3.0	100% (898)

The tendency for males, rather than females, to adopt the most *"conservative"* viewpoint on Vietnam was clearly observable for both Liberal/ Country Party and Labor voters when direction of 1969 vote was taken into

account. Liberal/Country Party women were less likely than men to choose alternative (A) (42.2% of males; 33.6% of females) and more likely than men to favour restricting the Australian commitment to volunteer troops (B) or even to civilian advisers (C). Labor women were similarly less likely to favour (A) and more likely to choose (B) than men, but they were also more likely than men to be of the opinion that Australia should stay out of Vietnam altogether (D). Alternative (C) did not appeal to as large a proportion of female Labor voters as male.

The finding that women were more in favour of some sort of reduction in Australia's commitment to the war than men corresponded with the results of earlier research conducted in the United States. A group of researchers operating from Stanford University found that, amongst members of a national sample surveyed in 1966, females were more likely than males to favour policies designed to de-escalate the conflict in Vietnam.[9] These results, being obtained three years earlier and in a different country, cannot be used as a standard in judging the validity of the A.S.P. findings. However, they do provide an interesting comparison; and the American researchers' explanation, that women have been shown to be *"somewhat more opposed to policies that could be considered 'agressive'"*[10] *may* be applicable to the A.S.P. sample.[11]

By controlling for the direction of 1969 vote, we have seen that some of the relationships between opinion on Vietnam and socio-demographic characteristics observed within the main sample were, in fact, confined to those respondents who voted for the same party; whilst others persisted across party lines. No causal sequence can be assigned to the observed

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9. S. Verba, *et al*, "Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam", American Political Science Review, 61 (1967), pp.317-33.

10. *ibid*, p.331.

11. But see the points advanced by Goot and Reid, *op.cit.*, against the validity of this type of generalisation.

relationships, with the possible exception of cases where 1969 vote was controlled, and where opinion varied with such pre-determined demographic characteristics as age and sex, no matter which party respondents had voted for at the election. In no instance can we be sure that the patterns of variation did not result from the operation of some additional, uncontrolled variable. It may have been, too, that the particular socio-demorgraphic categories examined had interactive effects - for example, that the combination of a certain age grouping and educational standard was associated with a particular viewpoint on Vietnam different from that shared by others in the same age group with more or less education, and from older and younger respondents with the same educational background. One possible area for the occurrence of such interaction was examined by a three-way analysis which controlled for sex, a binary variable whose use in addition to two other variables still allowed sufficient cases in each grouping for reliable analysis.

As sex and 1969 vote had been shown to interact in such a way that comparisons between the opinions of male and female respondents on Vietnam altered slightly according to the political party they supported, so sex was found to interact with educational level[12] and age in varying ways, some of which qualified any simplistic picture of a more isolationist female approach to the Vietnam war. Although the likelihood of preference for retaining civilian advisers in Vietnam (C) was greater for all tertiary educated respondents (regardless of their sex) than for those with less education, the most consistent supporters of this option were *females* with tertiary education, of whom 47.6% chose alternative (C) compared with 28.4%

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12. Occupation was not included in this analysis of socio-demographic variables which might have an interactive effect with sex in their influence on opinion, as it was felt that the measurement of females' occupation, in terms of Head of Household's occupation, was not a valid measure and any observed relationship between sex, occupation and opinion would be of questionable validity and reliability because of this.

of tertiary educated males. At this level of education, women were *less* likely than men to favour complete disengagement from Vietnam, although still being more likely to oppose a continued combat troop presence:

TABLE 5.6 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN VIETNAM OPINION AND TERTIARY EDUCATION OF MALES AND FEMALES

	Troops & Conscripts (A)	Only Volunteers (B)	Only Civilians (C)	Stay Out Altogether (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
Tertiary Educated Males	25.9	28.4	28.4	17.3	0.0	100% (81)
Tertiary Educated Females	11.9	26.2	47.6	14.3	0.0	100% (42)

When the effects of age and sex on opinion were examined, alternative (B) was found to be most consistently favoured by 21-23 year old females (56.9%), who first voted in 1969. As a result, 21-23 year old men were much more likely to choose the most *"radical"*[13] alternative (D) than were women of a comparable age (see Table 5.7). Although the youngest men were more radical in their views than the youngest women they were not, however, as likely to be in favour of total disengagement as women over age 55 or men over age 45.

13. *"Radical"* is used as an adjective here to indicate the large degree of change from 1969 government policy which this alternative would have necessitated.

TABLE 5.7 VIETNAM OPINIONS OF 21-23 YEAR OLD MALES AND FEMALES

	Troops & Conscripts (A)	Only Volunteers (B)	Only Civilians (C)	Stay Out Altogether (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
21-23 year old males	27.2	38.8	14.6	19.4	0.0	100% (103
21-23 year old females	22.2	56.9	11.1	9.7	0.0	100% (72)

The broad trend observed by Rawson[14] in Gallup Poll data obtained between 1965 and 1968 for young people to be more in favour of Australian participation in the war than their elders gained some support from the A.S.P. results. The complexity of the relationships between opinion and age became evident, however, when the data were controlled for sex as reported above. As Rawson had seen in earlier years, a higher proportion of all those aged under 35 favoured the commitment of troops, including conscripts, to Vietnam than of all those aged 36-75 (and the reverse applied on the option of total withdrawal), but the youngest *males* (21-23 years) were more in favour of complete disengagement than their immediate elders and than the youngest females. These results should also serve to illustrate the way variables which, on their own, seemed to bear little relation to opinion may in fact have been of significance when their interaction with other variables was studied. Although there was little overall difference recorded between male and female attitudes towards Vietnam in the A.S.P. survey, a clear difference in opinion emerged when the youngest age groups of men and women was compared.

Conscription

The distribution of opinions on conscription within the A.S.P. sample was shown in Chapter 2 to favour two options in particular - the conscription

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14. Rawson, *op. cit.*, p.64

of all young men; and the provision of civilian alternatives to military service. This pattern held for those respondents who had received some secondary or tertiary education, but the abolition of conscription altogether was more popular amongst those with only primary, or less, education than was the option of providing civilian alternatives (see Table 5.8). Nearly half of this latter group were in favour of extending the call-up to all young men, but the popularity of this option declined with increasing education. The abolition of national service was supported by approximately one quarter of those with the least education, and one quarter of those with the most education, but suffered a loss of support in the secondary educated group:

TABLE 5.8 OPINIONS ON CONSCRIPTION BY EDUCATION LEVEL

	Conscription For All (A)	Ballot System (B)	Civilian Alternatives (C)	No Form Of Conscription (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
None/ Primary	46.5	5.9	20.1	24.3	3.2	100% (527)
Secondary	39.4	7.8	38.0	12.8	3.1	100% (1209)
Tertiary	30.9	5.7	38.2	24.4	0.8	100% (123)

The decreasing popularity of alternative (A) and the increasing popularity of (C) with higher education persisted, no matter what party the respondents supported in the 1969 election. The large drop in support for alternative (D) amongst the secondary educated, however, was almost entirely restricted to Labor voters. A small, but noticeable decline in support for the present ballot system (B) was apparent amongst tertiary educated Liberal/ Country Party voters, whereas the level of support for this otherwise unpopular option gradually increased amongst Labor voters as their degree of education increased.

Although respondents' occupations were related to their educational qualifications, the drop in popularity of the extension of conscription to all young men observed above with increasing education was not apparent with increases in occupational status, except in the *"professional"* category; the lowest level of support for this alternative came from the skilled workers. The ballot system gradually gained support with higher levels of occupation, as did the provision of civilian alternatives. The popularity of abolishing conscription gradually decreased as the occupational status of respondents increased:

TABLE 5.9 OPINION ON CONSCRIPTION BY OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

	Conscription For All (A)	Ballot System (B)	Civilian Alternatives (C)	No Form of Conscription (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
Unskilled	45.5	4.1	26.0	21.9	2.4	100% (292)
Semi-Skilled	40.1	5.4	31.8	19.7	3.0	100% (299)
Skilled	34.8	8.4	34.8	20.6	1.4	100% (287)
Office & Sales Clerks	41.5	7.9	35.6	12.6	2.4	100% (253)
Semi-Professional, Owners, Managers	42.2	8.2	35.3	12.4	1.8	100% (490)
Professional	38.7	9.5	36.3	13.7	1.8	100% (168)

None of the trends in the above data were particularly uniform, however, and any regularity all but vanished when direction of 1969 vote was also taken into account. Even the increase in support for the availability of civilian alternatives with higher occupational status, which occurred amongst Labor voters, failed to carry over to government supporters.

Unskilled workers of both parties constituted the groups most in favour of conscripting all young men, but there was no uniform pattern of decline in support for this option amongst voters for either side. In sum, the occupational category to which respondents belonged did not seem to be an effective discriminator between opinions on conscription.

Relatively high levels of support for the extension of national service to all young men persisted across all the age groups in the sample (see Table 5.10). In contrast, the very small percentages of respondents in favour of the present ballot system of conscription declined slightly with increasing age until, in the 76-95 years age group, not one out of 63 respondents opted for this alternative. The popularity of providing civilian alternatives (C) decreased with age, whilst the popularity of abolishing conscription altogether (D) increased with age. In both these cases, the 21-23 years olds constituted something of an exception to the overall trend - they were less likely than their immediate elders to favour (C) and more likely than those aged up to 45 to choose (D).

TABLE 5.10 OPINION ON CONSCRIPTION BY AGE

Age	Conscription For All (A)	Ballot System (B)	Civilian Alternatives (C)	No Form of Conscription (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
21-23	42.3	9.1	30.9	16.6	1.1	100% (175)
24-35	40.4	7.9	37.1	12.7	1.9	100% (418)
36-45	41.3	7.4	34.4	14.6	2.2	100% (404)
46-55	43.0	5.5	33.4	16.6	1.5	100% (344)
56-75	39.4	6.3	29.6	20.9	3.7	100% (378)
76-95	38.1	0.0	14.3	39.7	7.9	100% (63)

The data, when controlled for 1969 vote, provided support for the hypothesis that the youngest Liberal/Country Party voters were more likely to take up positions favouring conscription than their immediate elders, whereas the new Labor Party voters in 1969 were more opposed to conscription than those aged up to 45 years. This situation clearly applied with respect to alternative (A), (50% of Lib/CP 21-23 year olds chose (A), compared with 40.1% of 24-35 year olds and 42.1% of 36-45 year olds; whilst correspondingly lower proportions of Labor 21-23 year olds made the same choice) and it occurred amongst Labor voters choosing alternative (D). However, a surprising reversal of this pattern occurred with alternative (B), which was chosen by fewer Liberal/Country Party 21-23 year olds than 24-35 year olds voting in the same way, and which attracted *more* support amongst Labor 21-23 year olds than in any other age group voting for the same party (although the actual size of the percentages was very small).

Apart from these rather contradictory results for the new, 21-23 year old voters, the general pattern observed within the main sample of decreasing support for (C) and increasing support for (D) with age was reproduced amongst both Liberal/Country Party and Labor voters.

Although the differences involved were not great, female voters, taken as a whole, were more likely to oppose the continuation of conscription in its present form, or its extension, than were males. Women were less likely than men to opt for alternatives (A) or (B) and more likely to choose (C) or (D):

TABLE 5.11 OPINIONS ON CONSCRIPTION BY SEX

	Conscription For All (A)	Ballot System (B)	Civilian Alternatives (C)	No Form of Conscription (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
Male	44.0	8.1	30.2	15.9	1.8	100% (975)
Female	37.4	5.9	36.0	17.9	2.8	100% (898)

Earlier attempts to measure Australian attitudes towards conscription resulted in similar findings. Albinski cited two Gallup Polls taken in 1966 where women were more opposed to conscription than men - in the first, in July 1966, 24.6% of men and 28.0% of women opposed conscription; and in November 1966 opposition had increased to 30.8% of men and 34.2% of women.[15] On the basis of a very restricted sample of Canberra residents Western and Wilson reported in 1967 a gap between male and female attitudes, with 37% of the women in their sample opposing conscription, compared with 26% of the men.[16]

The association between sex and opinion on conscription persisted across party lines in the A.S.P. survey. Similar distributions of opinion to that recorded above were found for male and female supporters of both major party groupings.

A study of relationships between age, sex and opinion on conscription produced some interesting findings which may go part the way to explaining the seemingly contradictory results on the attitudes of 21-23 year olds when the direction of 1969 vote was controlled for. On the whole, female voters of all ages were less in favour of conscription than men, and

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15. Australian Gallup Polls, Nos.184 (July 16, 1966) and 187 (Nov 18, 1966), as cited in Albinksi, *op. cit.*, p.198.

16. Western and Wilson, "Attitudes to Conscription", p.52

the same general tendencies observed earlier with increasing age were to be found amongst both sexes. However, 21-35 year old women who were less likely to be in favour of abolishing conscription than their elders, were also less likely to choose this option than were 21-35 year old men (although older men were less inclined to take an abolitionist stance than older women). Complementing this, 21-35 year old women were more likely to want conscription for all young men than men of the same age, although all older female age groups were less favourable towards the widening of the call-up than were men. In sum, the youngest men were more opposed to conscription than their elders, and also than the youngest women.

United States - Australian Alliance

As this question provided only a very general measure of voters' attitudes towards the United States, it would be a mistake to emphasize the significance of minor variations in response patterns. The major feature of the A.S.P. respondents' opinions, which did not change whatever their social or demographic background, was a preference for an alliance which was at least *"fairly close"*.

Possibly as a result of greater caution arising from an increased awareness of the complexities of the situation, voters with higher levels of education were increasingly likely to opt for a *"fairly close"*, rather than a *"very close"* alliance. The highest proportional level of support for a *"very close"* alliance came from amongst office and sales workers; whilst the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers were more likely than the higher occupational groups to prefer an alliance which was *"not very close"*. Women were less favourable in their attitudes towards the United States than men; and those respondents aged over 56 were more in favour of a *"very close"* relationship than the younger age groups.

Communist China

Due to the high levels of uncertainty registered in response to this question, comparisons across different socio-demographic groupings were

sometimes of dubious validity. For example, 16.3% of those who had been educated only up to primary level, or lower, answered *"don't know"*, whereas only 6.5% of the tertiary educated group were unable to give an opinion (see Table 5.12). The attitudes of those respondents who had reached the tertiary level, however, clearly differed in direction from the rest of the sample - as a majority of them felt that Communist China would not present a problem to Australia in the future:

TABLE 5.12 ATTITUDES TOWARDS COMMUNIST CHINA BY EDUCATION

	China a lot to worry about	China no problem	Don't know No Answer	
None/Primary	48.2	35.5	16.3	100% (527)
Secondary	56.2	32.0	11.8	100% (1209)
Tertiary	40.7	52.8	6.5	100% (123)

When the direction of 1969 vote was considered, this contrast between the tertiary educated and the rest was found to persist. Greater optimism about Communist China was evident amongst both Liberal/Country Party and Labor voters with tertiary education, although the variation was greatest amongst those who voted for Labor.

Attitudes towards Communist China did not appear to vary greatly with occupation. The greatest concern about China as a future problem was registered in the middle ranks of the occupational scale, but the differences were small and the large numbers of *"don't know"* responses amongst the blue collar workers made comparison difficult.

No consistent pattern of variation in the level of worry expressed about China was observed with increasing age. When the direction of 1969 vote was controlled, however, the youngest Labor voters were seen to be

distinctly atypical in their high degree of optimism about Communist China. The opinion distribution within the whole sample was reversed for this group of 69 voters, 55.1% of whom felt that China would not be a problem for Australia in the future.

There was very little difference between the proportions of male and female respondents feeling that Communist China would give cause for worry, but there were notably fewer women than men who were willing to say that China would not be a problem (see Table 5.13). Women were more than twice as likely to answer *"don't know"* to this question. The high level of uncertainty, associated with a lack of optimism, was characteristic of female respondents, whether they voted Liberal/Country Party or Labor in 1969.

TABLE 5.13 ATTITUDES TOWARDS COMMUNIST CHINA BY SEX

	China a lot to worry about	China no problem	Don't Know No Answer	
Male	51.4	41.2	7.4	100% (975)
Female	54.7	26.7	18.6	100% (898)

Controlling for sex removed some of the problems encountered earlier in comparing attitudes towards China along different socio-demographic dimensions, as much of the uncertainty on this item was restricted to female respondents. Amongst male respondents it was clear that those with secondary education had the most pessimistic views on the subject; followed by those who had received no education or some at primary level, who were fairly evenly split in their opinions. Tertiary educated men were, on the whole, optimistic about China. Although the distribution of women's views with education seemed also to follow this pattern, the results did not justify any definite conclusions as the *"don't know"* response rate reached as high as 24.5% for the lowest educational grouping.

The variation in opinion with age which was most notable when comparisons were made amongst individuals of the same sex was a heightened degree of pessimism in males aged between 24 and 35 years, 57.2% of whom felt that China would give Australia a lot to worry about. There were slight signs amongst both men and women of the greater optimism noted earlier within the youngest 21-23 years age group, but this was not as clearly apparent as it had been amongst Labor voters, regardless of sex.

Foreign Investment

This item provided a clear case where the relationships between opinion and a major criterion of social background assumed significance only where an additional variable was brought into consideration. When attitudes towards foreign investment were analysed by educational level, the views of those with none/primary education and those with secondary education seemed very similar. Tertiary education appeared to produce only a higher level of certainty amongst the respondents - there was no alteration in the balance of opposing viewpoints. Underlying this, however, were two totally different patterns of variation in attitude with educational level, depending on the direction of 1969 vote. These patterns are illustrated in Figures 5.3 and 5.4. The popularity of foreign investors *increased* with higher education amongst those who voted for the Liberal/Country Party coalition, and *decreased* as the educational level of 1969 Labor voters increased. As the graphs illustrate, this trend was most marked on the progression from secondary to tertiary education. The proportions of Liberal/Country Party and Labor voters supporting the two opposing viewpoints were practically identical at the none/primary level and differed very little at the secondary level. The relatively small number of respondents with at least some tertiary education, 123 in all, accounted for the failure of the divergence in opinion at this level to affect the overall tendency, observed in the previous chapter, for opinions to be bi-partisan on this issue.

FIGURE 5.3 SUPPORT FOR BEING "ON GUARD AGAINST FOREIGN INVESTORS" BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

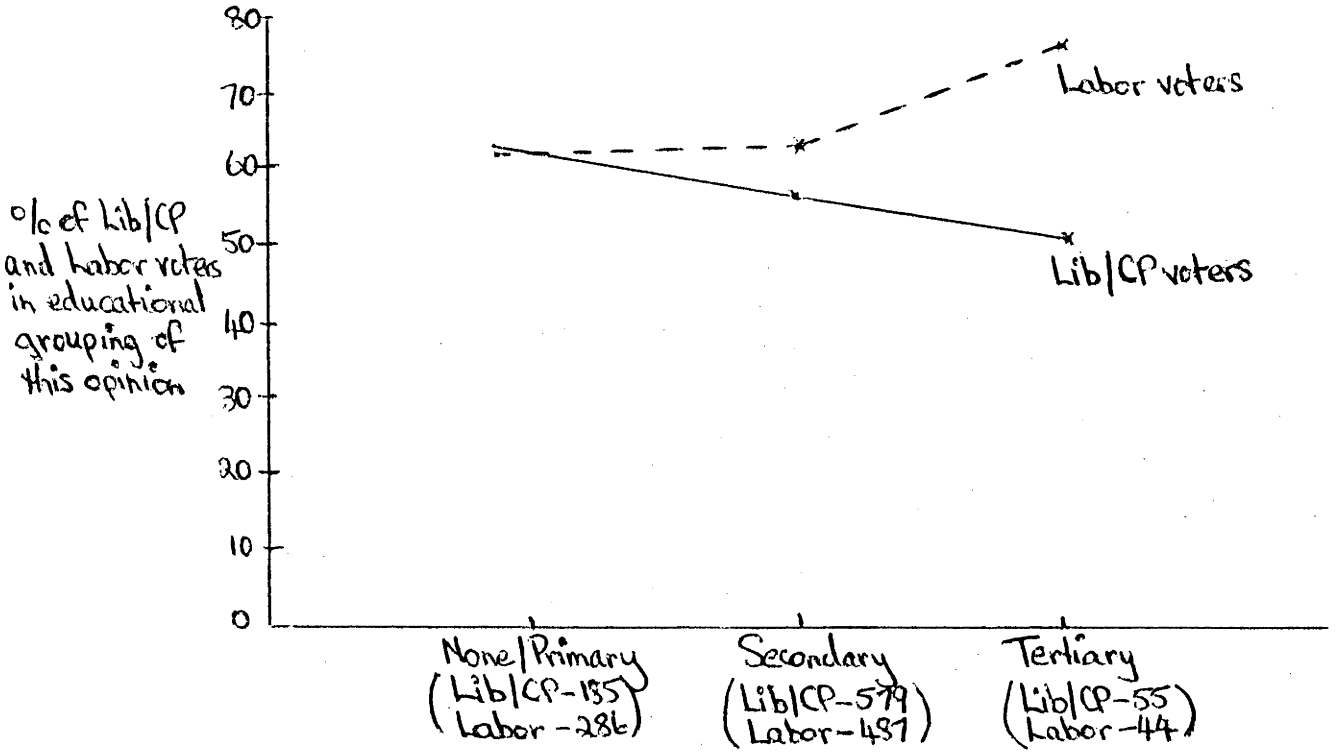
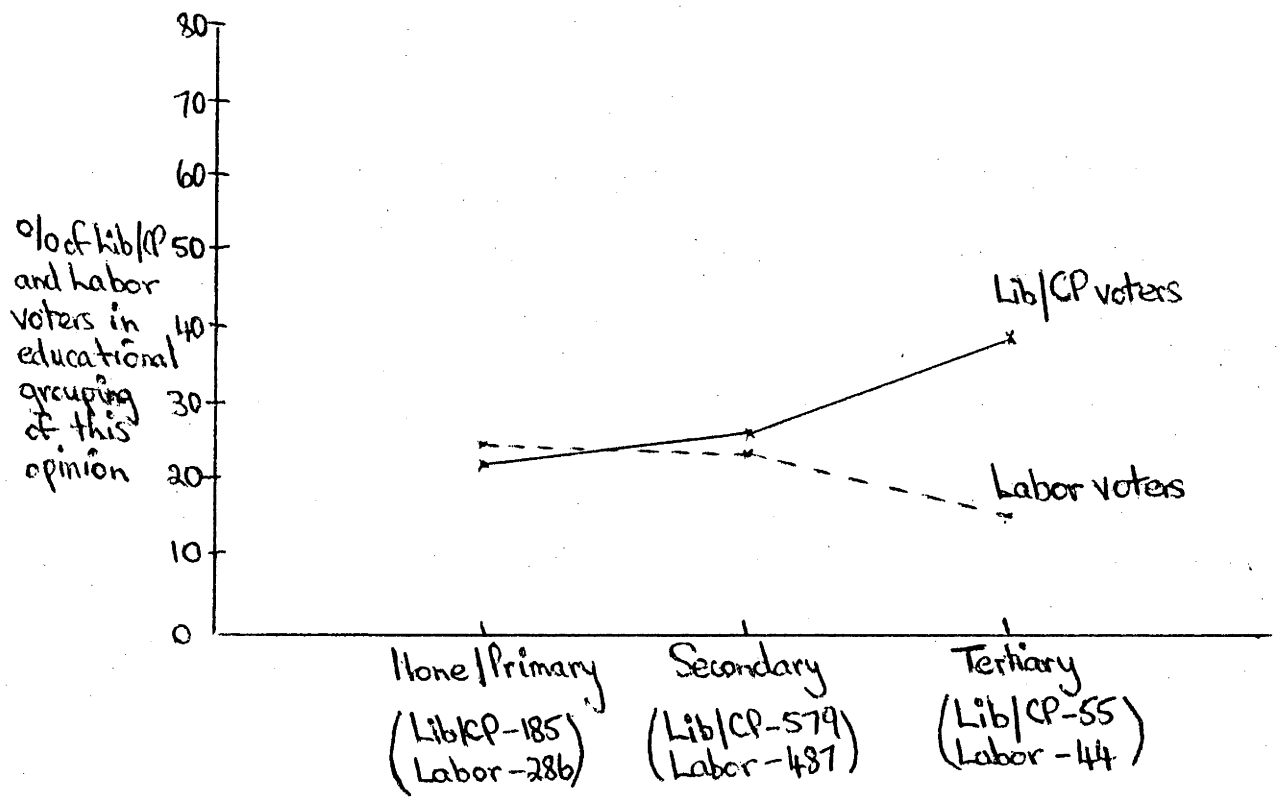


FIGURE 5.4 SUPPORT FOR WELCOMING FOREIGN INVESTORS BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL



Although indicating that 1969 vote and opinion on foreign investment were related specifically to the possession of tertiary education by the A.S.P. respondents, the results did not help to resolve the problem of cause and effect. At least three solutions to that problem would be possible here:

(a) either respondents who had reached the same educational level but had voted differently in 1969 had undergone different educational experiences in the course of their political socialisation[17], which led ultimately to the adoption of opposing views on foreign investment;

(b) or respondents with higher education were more likely to perceive the parties they supported as taking up opposing positions on this question, and to adopt views in line with their party;

(c) or foreign investment was one issue which determined the direction of 1969 vote for those respondents with higher education who held different opinions on the issue.

If different attitudes towards foreign investment had been a factor in determining the vote of that small proportion of electors with tertiary education, the outcome would have had only a marginal effect on the overall distribution of votes. However, the interaction between socio-demographic characteristics and opinions comprises one, perhaps vital, aspect of the search for the links between issue opinion and voting behaviour.

Only slight variations in attitudes towards foreign investment could be observed with changes in respondents' occupations. Those with professional occupations displayed the least hostility to foreign investment. Controlling for 1969 vote provided some evidence of the existence of opposing trends in opinion within each group of party supporters, as had been the case with the educational criterion. There was a tendency, as one approached the blue-

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17. Although respondents can be classified as having reached a uniform level of education, there can be no guarantee that the educational process was the same for each respondent. Outside the school curriculum, education about politics would have differed greatly depending on parent's voting habits and those of friends and neighbours.

collar end of the occupational scale, for respondents to be increasingly wary of foreign investors if they were Liberal/Country Party voters in 1969, and progressively less cautious if they voted Labor in that election. In neither case, however, was the trend as regular as had been observed for the different levels of education - variations in the degree of support for each viewpoint were particularly uneven amongst the white-collar occupations.

No overall relationships between opinion and the age of respondents could be observed on this item, nor could any consistent patterns of variation be found within the two sets of party supporters. The most interesting result was a contrast between opinions of the 21-23 year old Labor voters (the most opposed of all age groups in the sample to foreign investment), and those of the 21-23 year olds who voted Liberal/Country Party (the group which showed the least opposition to foreign investment).

Very little difference was recorded in the responses of men and women to this question. Women were more likely to be undecided, and to answer *"it depends"*, and less likely to welcome foreign investors. The last tendency was stronger amongst female Liberal/Country Party voters than those who voted for the A.L.P.; and was complemented by a greater tendency for women who supported the government parties to be *"on guard against foreign investors"* than men of the same voting persuasion.

An indication that other socio-demographic factors might have contributed to the variation in attitudes towards foreign investment with education observed earlier amongst Liberal/Country Party and Labor voters was provided by substituting sex as the control variable, in place of 1969 vote. Under these conditions, higher education was associated with greater caution towards foreign investors amongst males, and a more welcoming attitude amongst females. The magnitude of each trend was sufficiently slight, however, that sex differences alone could only have accounted for a small fraction of the wide variation in the opinions of

tertiary educated government and opposition voters described at the beginning of this section.

Migration

Whereas the A.S.P. item on the entry of Asian migrants to Australia had failed to uncover any difference in attitude between Labor and Liberal/Country Party voters, it did discriminate amongst people in different social and demographic categories.

As the level of education increased so did the amount of support for allowing Asians entry on the same basis as Europeans. Likewise, support for the present government policy of admitting a small quota of Asians increased with education - reaching a high of 51.2% of those with tertiary education. Restricting migration to those with origins in the United Kingdom and Northern Europe lost popularity amongst the more highly educated, as did the alternative of halting migration altogether. The suggestion that Asians, in particular, should be excluded from migrating was supported by only a small percentage of the sample, and this proportion did not alter with changes in educational background (see Table 5.14). When respondents who had voted for different parties in 1969 were considered separately, these tendencies were repeated in each group.

Variations in opinion with occupation were similar, except that no clear pattern was evident on alternatives (A) and (D). Support for present government policy (B) increased as occupations changed from blue-collar to white-collar and professional, whereas the cessation of migration (E) lost popularity. On this criterion, the amount of support for excluding Asians, in particular, (C) did vary - from 6.2% of unskilled workers it gradually fell away to 3.0% of professionals.

TABLE 5.14 OPINIONS ON ASIAN MIGRATION BY EDUCATION LEVEL

	Asians on Same Basis as Europeans (A)	Small Quota of Asians (B)	No Asian Migrants (C)	Migrants Only From U.K. and N.Europe (D)	Halt Migration Altogether (E)	Don't Know No Answer	
None/ Primary	22.0	31.5	5.9	19.2	16.1	5.3	100% (527)
Secondary	22.7	44.7	4.1	16.2	9.6	2.7	100% (1209)
Tertiary	31.7	51.2	5.7	9.8	0.8	0.8	100% (123)

Greater age was clearly associated with more restrictive attitudes towards the admission of Asians as migrants. The popularity of alternative (A) declined with age, whilst that of (D) increased with age. The pattern for alternative (C) was rather erratic, but it did appear to gain support as age increased. Levels of support for the two remaining options did not vary to any great extent with age. The same pattern of variation appeared amongst both Liberal/Country Party and Labor voters.

Men and women responded differently to the alternatives offered on the migration of Asians (see Table 5.15). Female respondents were more likely to favour the least restrictive option of allowing entry to Asians on the same basis as Europeans (A), but slightly less likely to support a small quota (B). A greater proportion of men favoured restricting immigration to people from the United Kingdom and Northern Europe (D), but fewer men than women wanted to halt migration for the present (E).

TABLE 5.15 OPINIONS ON ASIAN MIGRATION BY SEX

	Asians on Same Basis as Europeans (A)	Small Quota of Asians (B)	No Asian Migrants (C)	Migrants Only from U.K. and N.Europe (D)	Halt Migration Altogether (E)	Don't Know No Answer	
Male	19.7	43.3	5.3	19.6	8.6	3.5	100% (975)
Female	26.6	39.6	4.0	13.3	13.3	3.2	100% (898)

These variations held for both Liberal/Country Party and Labor voters, except for alternative (B) which was supported equally by men and women who voted for the government parties, but drew more support from male Labor voters than female.

When the results for opinion on Asian migration by education and by age were controlled for sex, the relationships observed earlier predominated over any variation in opinion which might have been due to sex differences. Amongst both men and women, increased education was associated with less restrictive attitudes towards the entry of Asians and increased age with more restrictive views.

State Aid for Education

The distribution of opinion on State aid within the whole A.S.P. sample was markedly in favour of the government providing as much help as possible to church and independent schools. Variations in opinion with education were only of a minor nature and did not disturb this basic pattern (see Table 5.16). Support for providing as much government aid as possible fell from a high of 49.9% of those with primary education or less, to 40.7% of the group with tertiary education. The more highly educated respondents were increasingly likely to favour the restriction of aid to the needy church schools. Of the three educational levels, those with secondary education were the least likely to opt for the halting of

government assistance entirely and the most likely to favour postponing it until the State schools were brought up to standard.

TABLE 5.16 OPINION ON STATE AID BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

	No State Aid at All (A)	No Aid until State Schools Better (B)	Aid Only to Needy Church Schools (C)	As Much State Aid as Possible (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
None/ Primary	12.3	20.9	12.7	49.9	4.2	100% (527)
Secondary	10.8	27.5	16.4	43.6	1.7	100% (1209)
Tertiary	16.3	23.6	19.5	40.7	0.0	100% (123)

When the direction of 1969 vote was controlled, the drop in support for (D) and increase in support for (C) with higher education were seen to be restricted to Labor voters. Amongst Liberal/Country Party voters the secondary educated respondents were marked by a greater tendency to opt for the less extreme alternatives (B) and (C), although they still predominantly favoured the provision of as much government aid as possible (D).

Very little difference was recorded in opinions according to the respondents' occupations. Skilled workers comprised the group which showed the greatest opposition to State aid - 15.3% wanted to halt government assistance altogether, but still 38.3% were in favour of as much help as possible.

The situation changed, however, when the sample was divided into two groups according to direction of 1969 vote. Amongst government supporters skilled workers were still the least favourable towards State aid. The opinions of Labor voters did vary quite markedly with occupation, the most hostile group being those employed in a professional capacity, of whom 25.0% wanted to cease State aid entirely. Office and sales workers,

semi-skilled and unskilled labourers were the Labor supporters most favourably inclined towards the allocation of government funds to church and independent schools.

The level of approval for State aid decreased with increasing age of respondents (see Table 5.17). This trend was clearly in evidence on the two extreme positions, the complete halting of aid (A) and the provision of as much assistance as possible (D). It persisted amongst those who voted Liberal/Country Party in 1969, but was not clear amongst Labor voters.

TABLE 5.17 OPINIONS ON STATE AID BY AGE

Age	No State Aid at All (A)	No Aid Until State Schools Better (B)	Aid Only to Needy Church Schools (C)	As Much State Aid as Possible (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
21-23	9.7	28.6	12.6	48.0	1.1	100% (175)
24-35	7.9	28.2	15.6	46.4	1.9	100% (418)
36-45	11.9	26.7	14.6	46.0	0.7	100% (404)
46-55	12.8	20.3	20.1	44.8	2.0	100% (344)
56-75	13.8	24.1	17.2	40.5	4.5	100% (378)
76-95	20.6	20.6	11.1	39.7	7.9	100% (63)

When the sex of respondents was taken into consideration (see Table 5.18), a larger proportion of women than men was seen to favour placing some restriction on the timing (B) or allocation(C) of government funds within the private system of education. This situation persisted amongst those respondents who voted Liberal/Country Party in 1969, whereas, amongst Labor voters, females were slightly more likely than males to favour State aid, with or without restrictions.

TABLE 5.18 OPINIONS ON STATE AID BY SEX

	No State Aid at All (A)	No Aid Until State Schools Better (B)	Aid Only to Needy Church Schools (C)	As Much State Aid as Possible (D)	Don't Know No Answer	
Male	13.3	23.0	13.4	47.4	2.9	100% (975)
Female	9.8	27.8	18.0	42.8	1.6	100% (898)

Censorship

The desirability of censorship was an issue on which the A.S.P. respondents' opinions were fairly evenly divided, with a majority favouring some censorship. The size of this majority increased as the level of education increased:

TABLE 5.19 ATTITUDES TOWARDS CENSORSHIP BY EDUCATION

	Some Censorship	Read and See Anything	Don't Know No Answer	
None/ Primary	49.7	47.1	3.2	100% (527)
Secondary	58.6	40.3	1.1	100% (1209)
Tertiary	61.0	38.2	0.8	100% (123)

As some degree of partisanship was registered on this item (P=14), it could be expected that opinions would be related to educational background in different ways, depending on the direction of vote in 1969. This was, in fact, the case. The trend observed above was restricted to those who supported the Liberal/Country Party coalition: the views of Labor voters altered little with education (in fact, secondary educated Labor voters took the hardest line on the need for censorship).

Support for some censorship clearly increased as occupational level progressed from the unskilled, blue-collar workers to the professionals:

TABLE 5.20 ATTITUDES TOWARDS CENSORSHIP BY OCCUPATION LEVEL

	Unskilled	Semi-Skilled	Skilled	Office & Sales	Managers Owners	Professional
Some Censorship	44.5	53.2	55.1	62.5	61.8	62.5
Read & See Anything	53.8	45.2	43.6	36.0	37.1	35.1
Don't Know No Answer	1.7	1.7	1.3	1.6	1.0	2.4
	100% (292)	100% (299)	100% (287)	100% (253)	100% (490)	100% (168)

The regularity of this trend was disrupted, however, when the two groups of voters were considered separately. Although there was an overall increase in the proportion of Liberal/Country Party voters favouring censorship as one progressed away from the blue-collar end of the occupational scale, the group with the most restrictive views were the office and sales workers in the middle of the scale. The most liberal approach of any occupational group in the whole sample was adopted by the 166 unskilled workers who voted Labor, 62.7% of whom thought people should be able to read and see what they liked. From there, the degree of support for censorship amongst Labor voters gradually increased until it reached a high point with the owner/manager grade. Labor voters in professional occupations constituted an exception to this trend as they were a little *less* likely to favour censorship than skilled workers.

Attitudes towards censorship became more restrictive with age:

TABLE 5.21 ATTITUDES TOWARDS CENSORSHIP BY AGE

	21-23	24-35	36-45	46-55	56-75	76-95
Some Censorship	46.3	53.8	59.4	58.1	61.4	68.3
Read & See Anything	52.0	45.5	39.1	39.8	36.2	30.2
Don't Know No Answer	1.7	0.7	1.5	2.1	2.4	1.6
	100% (175)	100% (418)	100% (404)	100% (344)	100% (378)	100% (63)

This trend was evident irrespective of the way respondents voted in 1969. In fact, the views of 21-23 year old Liberal/Country Party and Labor voters were very similar, with majorities favouring no censorship in each case. The permissive stance of this youngest group of government supporters contrasted strikingly with the pro-censorship views of the other age groups which voted in a similar manner. The Labor voters in the sample presented a picture of a more gradual trend towards a restrictive viewpoint with increasing age.

Opinions on censorship could not be differentiated on the basis of sex differences alone. The only variation was amongst female Labor voters, who were slightly more permissive in their attitudes than males (46.7% of these women opting for some censorship, in comparison with 51.4% of Labor men). Tertiary educated men were more in favour of censorship than other men and all women. Although female opinions became increasingly restrictive as education increased from none/primary to secondary, the opinions of the tertiary educated women could not be distinguished from those with secondary education only.

It was evident that the permissive attitudes of the 21-23 year old age

group owed more to the contribution of men than women, as controlling for sex showed the youngest women to be more conservative in their approach to censorship than men of the same age. 36-45 year old women, too, were more likely to favour censorship than men belonging to the corresponding age group. They were more restrictive in their views than women aged from 46 to 75, who were themselves more permissive towards censorship than their male counterparts.

The preceding analysis has uncovered some of the patterns of interaction between opinion, socio-demographic background and direction of vote amongst A.S.P. respondents on a range of position issues. The interrelationships between the different variables studied appeared to be more complex on some issues than on others. The combination of two (or, perhaps more, unaccounted for) socio-demographic characteristics (for example, tertiary education and being female) was seen, on occasion, to result in different opinion patterns from those observed when each characteristic was analysed separately. Cleavages in opinion with different socio-demographic criteria persisted across party lines on some issues, but not on others. And on any single issue item, some socio-demographic variables produced a different relationship with opinion depending on the direction of 1969 vote, whereas others were related to opinion in the same manner regardless of the voting preference of the respondents.

Although we have not been able to allocate cause and effect in the observed relationships, the analysis has shown the extent to which some cleavages in the social and demographic makeup of the sample corresponded, or failed to correspond with differences in opinion. Using 1969 vote as a control variable, it has been possible to observe the interaction between party preference and respondents' socio-demographic background.

Interest in Politics

A further dimension along which voters can be compared is that of their involvement in political activity. Key advanced the concept of *"political stratification"*, whereby strata of people within the electorate could be differentiated by their political, rather than social, economic or demographic, characteristics.[18] The sorts of criteria used could be measures of participation in electoral campaigns or other political acts, estimates of psychological involvement in politics, or measures of political efficacy.[19] Each of these criteria is applicable to the study of electoral reactions to policy issues, the hypothesis being that those people with high levels of involvement in political activity are more likely to have opinions and to know the parties' relative stances on issues.

Various estimates exist of the extent to which Australian voters participate in their political system.[20] The compulsory nature of voting in Australia ensures that the vast majority of people make at least this minimal, overt commitment to political activity and turn-out levels are consequently higher than in other countries, such as the United States and Great Britain, where no compulsion is exercised. Apart from this important difference, which does have implications for the *type* of work undertaken by volunteer party activists, the extent and range of participation in politics in Australia does not appear to differ greatly from other liberal democracies.[21] On the basis of A.S.P. data obtained in 1967, Aitkin arrived at the following breakdown of the Australian electorate:[22]

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18. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, chap.8.

19. *ibid.*, pp.184-95.

20. See D. Aitkin, "Electoral Behaviour" and J.S. Western and P.R. Wilson, "Politics: Participation and Attitudes" in Mayer and Nelson (eds), *op. cit.*, pp.301-335.

21. Aitkin, "Electoral Behaviour" in Mayer and Nelson (eds) *op.cit.*, p.302.

22. *ibid.*, p.303.

TABLE 5.22 DEGREE OF INTEREST IN POLITICS IN 1967 A.S.P. SAMPLE

The politically active and aware	30%
A passive audience	37%
The quite indifferent and uninterested	33%
	100%

This type of stratification is likely to have implications for the degree of familiarity electors have at any time with the issues of public policy being debated by politicians and publicised through the mass media.

The extent of an individual's involvement in politics can be assessed in various ways. Participation itself has both active and passive components: a person can participate by actively taking part in the political process, or he can be interested in and knowledgeable about political affairs without himself initiating any action.[23] Key made a distinction here between psychological involvement, or interest in politics, and its behavioural manifestations.[24] Although subjective involvement in politics was correlated with active participation, there were some whose activity in the political arena did not stem from interest in politics, *per se*, and others whose interest did not extend to an active commitment.

The A.S.P. questionnaire included a number of measures of overt political participation, such as party membership, attendance at political meetings, and participation in voluntary work for election candidates. It also asked respondents the extent to which they followed election campaigns in the mass media, whether they knew candidates' names and how much interest they generally had in politics - all indices of psychological involvement in political activity. A full analysis of the relationships

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23. Western and Wilson, "Politics: Participation and Attitudes" in Mayer and Nelson (eds), *op.cit.*, p.319.

24. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, pp.184-192.

between these different levels of participation and issue opinion (in terms of both the direct of opinion and the familiarity of respondents with the issue) would entail a research project of its own. A single measure, self-assessment of interest in politics, was therefore chosen for study here.

The categories upon which respondents were asked to base their assessment were very broad (a good deal of interest; some interest; not much interest; none) and were not necessarily equivalent in meaning for all respondents. It was felt, however, that the question would cover a wide variety of different types of participation and would thus provide the broadest possible estimate of psychological involvement. There was also a sense in which the hypothesis that high participators would be more likely to have opinions on issues of government policy was logically more closely related to the broad dimension of psychological involvement (or passive participation) than to actual behavioural participation.

The question resulted in the following distribution of self-assessed interest in politics:

TABLE 5.23 DEGREE OF INTEREST IN POLITICS IN 1969 A.S.P. SAMPLE

		%
A good deal of interest	407	21.7
Some interest	869	46.4
Not much interest	491	26.2
No interest	103	5.5
Don't know, no answer	3	0.2
	1873	100.0%

The very low refusal rate - only 3 respondents failed to give an answer - can be taken as an indication that respondents did not find the comparison asked for an unusual one. Although the breakdown provides no indication of the proportions actually taking part in political activity, it does suggest that Aitkin's calculation of 30% of the electorate being *"political active and aware"* and 33% *"quite indifferent and uninterested"* was not applicable

to the 1969 A.S.P. sample.

The stratification observed within the A.S.P. sample on the basis of this variable was related to, but not identical with the pattern of cleavage along socio-economic lines. The degree of interest in politics admitted to by the respondents clearly increased both with education and with occupational level. The results for education were as follows:

TABLE 5.24 INTEREST IN POLITICS BY EDUCATION LEVEL

	None/ Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Good deal of interest	17.8	20.5	48.8
Some interest	39.8	49.8	41.5
Not much interest	32.6	25.1	9.8
None	9.1	4.5	0.0
Don't Know No Answer	0.6	0.0	0.0
	100% (527)	100% (1209)	100% (123)

The persistence of varying degrees of interest at each educational level (except for the disappearance of *"no interest"* amongst the tertiary educated) provides support for Key's argument that it is misleading to restrict analyses of political behaviour to socio-economic differences, where the cross-cutting cleavage based on differences in levels of political involvement may hold additional explanatory power.[25]

The level of interest in politics displayed by the A.S.P. respondents gradually increased with age, reached a peak in the 46-55 year old age group and then declined. Men were more likely to have *"a good deal of interest"*

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25. *ibid.*, pp.197-198.

in politics or *"some interest"* than were women, but the proportion disclaiming any interest in politics at all was approximately the same for both sexes (see Table 5.25).

TABLE 5.25 INTEREST IN POLITICS BY SEX

	Male	Female
Good deal of interest	27.3	15.7
Some interest	48.0	44.7
Not much interest	19.5	33.5
None	5.0	6.0
Don't Know No Answer	0.2	0.1
	100% (975)	100% (898)

The general pattern of differences in sex, age and educational level amongst the A.S.P. sample was similar to that observed by Western and Wilson in their survey of 456 Brisbane residents, although these researchers were using composite indices of active and passive participation.[26]

The overall variation in levels of political interest was similar for those who voted either for the A.L.P. or for the government parties in 1969. The Labor voters, however, were more likely to be at the extremes of having a *"good deal of interest"* in politics or no interest at all than were those who voted Liberal/Country Party. The persistence of this tendency in voting habits over more than one election could have implications for the nature of the different parties' bases of support within the electorate, which might, in turn, affect each organisation's ability to familiarise its supporters

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26. Western and Wilson, "Politics: Participation and Attitudes" in Mayer and Nelson (eds), *op.cit.*, p.322.

with party policy.

A detailed examination of the hypothesis that voters' familiarity with issues increases with their involvement in politics was not possible with the A.S.P. data as the questionnaire did not follow up the opinion items with any test of the extent of respondent's knowledge. The only indication of the degree to which respondents were familiar with an issue was the proportion who failed to give an opinion. In each case, the number who admitted that they *"didn't know"* probably represented an underestimation of the actual extent of ignorance on that issue. As those who said they had no interest in politics were more likely to willingly admit to ignorance on political issues than those who claimed to be very interested, the proportion of *"don't know"*s as an index of familiarity is likely to have been biased in favour of the latter respondents.

The increase in the proportion of *"don't know"*s recorded as self-assessed interest in politics declined was sufficiently large for most issues, however, that it could be taken as confirmation of the general hypothesis. The exception to this was the censorship issue, where the level of interest in politics did not appear to be related to the ability to formulate an opinion. This result was not surprising, as the abolition of censorship was an issue with moral overtones, on which all people might be expected to have an opinion, regardless of their knowledge of censorship as a political issue.

The largest increases in uncertainty levels with disinterest in politics were to be found on foreign policy issues - the Vietnam war; Communist China; the U.S. alliance - and on foreign investment. The *"don't know"* response rate did not increase so drastically on those issues which might be expected to have more of an immediate impact on electors - conscription; State aid; migration.

On most issues, differences in the degree of interest in politics appeared to be linked to the *direction* of opinion as well as to the ability

to express a view. Communist China, with large increases in the level of uncertainty as interest fell away, constituted an exception to this. In some cases, increased support for an option did appear to be derived more from a deeper knowledge of the situation than from conflicting views. For example, those who expressed no interest in politics were more likely to pick either of the extreme options on State aid (its cessation; or its increase), whereas the more complex alternatives of postponing such aid until State schools had been improved, or of discriminating amongst non-government schools on the basis of need appealed more to those respondents for whom politics was an interesting activity.

No similar explanation could account for the preferences of those more interested in politics on other items. Respondents with a higher psychological involvement were more likely to favour a close alliance with the United States, restrictions on the immigration of Asians, some censorship and a welcoming stance towards foreign investors. These were all attitudes which were more in keeping with government than with A.L.P. policy in 1969. The results on the Vietnam war and conscription were more equivocal, with those moderately interested taking a conservative stance, in comparison both with highly interested respondents and those who were indifferent towards politics.

The extent of cleavage in opinions between those with *"a good deal of interest"* in politics and those with none at all was not very great on any of the issues surveyed - the results justified speaking only in terms of tendencies to favour one view in preference to another. It cannot therefore be expected that the variations in direction of opinion with involvement in politics which were observed at this particular time in 1969 would hold over a longer time span.

In the case of changes in the level of familiarity with policy issues however, we can be more confident that the results reported here are indicative

of a general long-term trend. The increased ability of respondents with high degrees of interest in politics to formulate opinions, which was so clearly apparent on each of the policy issues examined in the A.S.P. survey, was in keeping with the findings of earlier research on participation levels conducted both in Australia and overseas. The related question, as to whether high participators have greater knowledge of party policy stances, will be studied in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 6

THE IMPACT OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION

To this point, the analysis of the Australian survey data has taken as its dependent variable the direction in which each respondent cast his vote in the 1969 Federal election. An attempt to explain the forces underlying this behavioural criterion, however, necessitates a change in focus - a move away from the voting act to an examination of the psychological forces underpinning it.

The concept of party identification has been employed successfully in the United States to provide some explanation of the psychology of the mass electorate. This measure of a voter's feelings of psychological attachment to a political party was first operationalized by Angus and Campbell and his associates in the Michigan studies to help explain the stability of voting patterns in American presidential elections.[1] In an earlier study, Key had written of American voters making a *"standing decision"* to support one party or another.[2] Asked directly whether they thought of themselves as Republicans or Democrats, Campbell's respondents were able to classify themselves by their party loyalties, irrespective of whether they had any formal membership ties with the party involved. Moreover, further questioning elicited from the voters the strength or weakness of their feelings, an indication for Campbell that he and his colleagues were measuring a psychological commitment which was experienced in a range of intensities common to both sides of the political spectrum.[3]

Party identification was visualised by the Michigan researchers as an explanatory link between the individual and political reference groups. Partisan loyalty provided the voter with an explanation of the environment

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1. Campbell, *et al, op.cit.*, pp.120-145.

2. V.O. Key, as cited in Campbell, *ibid.*, p.120.

3. The difficulties inherent in measuring intensity of opinions have been outlined in the previous chapter. Campbell's work gave little recognition of their existence.

by means of *"an affective orientation to an important group-object"*.[4] The voter's actions would be guided by this loyalty, which performed the functions of a perceptual screen in reducing the bewildering variety of stimuli from the political environment into an order which he could comprehend.

The value of party identification as an analytic concept lay in its explanation of a psychological state, as distinct from the behavioural measure of voting. Campbell insisted that the two were distinct measures which should not be confused:

> *"When an independent measure of party identification is used it is clear that even strong party adherents at times may think and act in contradiction to their party allegiance."*[5]

Although voters saw the political world from the reference point of their own standing party loyalty, it did not wholly dictate their actions. They could consciously or unconsciously decide to vote in a different manner if they were sufficiently motivated to do so by information coming from other sources. Campbell cited the case of a 41 year old Texas resident in the 1956 Presidential election who classed herself as a Democrat:

> *"I'm voting Republican now only because of the candidate. I'd give anything in the world if Eisenhower were on the Democratic ticket."*[6]

In a later article, Donald Stokes summed up the evaluative function performed by party identification for voters who, on the whole, did not have any deep interest in politics but were asked to make a political judgement at regular elections:

> *"To the average person the affairs of government are remote and complex, and yet the average citizen is asked periodically to formulate opinions about those affairs. At the very least, he has to decide how he will vote, what choice he will make between candidates offering different programmes and very*

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4. Campbell, *op.cit.*, p.121.

5. *ibid*, p.122.

6. *ibid*, p.149

> *different versions of contemporary political events. In this dilemma, having the party symbol stamped on certain candidates, certain issue positions, certain interpretations of political reality is of great psychological convenience."*[7]

The contribution of party identification to the individual voter's perceptual outlook has been considered to have a significant effect on the nature of electoral swings across a whole nation. If party identification can be conceived as an inertia component in any individual voting decision[8], then on a national level its effect would be to dampen the wild swings in electoral support which might be expected if voters were reacting to new parties, new candidates, new policies without any firmly established preconceived loyalties. In the United States at least, party identification has been considered to contribute to the stability of voting support for the two major parties.

As *"the best measure"* of the long-term, enduring influences on political behaviour,[9] party identification has been a core concept in the development of analytic techniques for studying the behaviour of the American electorate. Philip Converse, for example, devised the *"normal vote"* model,[10] which relied upon calculating the distribution of partisan loyalties in the electorate over a sequence of elections in order to establish a hypothetical baseline indicative of the amount of voting support each party could expect to receive, if the rates of defection amongst party supporters were equal for each side.[11] Any deviation in the actual

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7. D. Stokes, "Party Loyalty and the Likelihood of Deviating Elections" in A.Campbell, *et al*, Elections and the Political Order (N.Y., 1966) p.126.

8. P.E. Converse, "Information Flow and the Stability of Partisan Attitudes", in Campbell, *ibid.*, p.140.

9. Miller, *et al*, *op.cit.*, p.20.

10. P.E. Converse, "The Concept of a Normal Vote" in Campbell, Elections and the Political Order, pp.9-39.

11. The *"normal vote"* model devised by Converse in only applicable to a strict two=party situation and thus is not suitable for analysing Australian Federal elections.

distribution of votes recorded in an election from this theoretically *"normal"* expectation could be attributed to short-term forces which may, or may not have been specific to that election.[12] Converse clearly demonstrated his conception of party identification as a stabilising factor in his own explanation of the model:

> *"The election outcome in the population ... may be construed as the result of short-term forces acting upon a certain distribution of party loyalties which have characterized the population ... The hallmark of the short-term partisan force is, of course, that it induces defections across party lines, yet defections which are unaccompanied by any underlying revision of party loyalty. The model does not preclude the possibility that the distribution of underlying loyalties itself may change over time for a population, and the initial phases of such a change might well be marked by defections not yet accompanied by partisan conversion. However, it is empirically clear that in the lengthening period of our observation, vote shifts have not been accompanied by conversion but rather have been followed routinely by actual return to the party of original choice."*[13]

Butler and Stokes, in a joint panel study of three successive British elections, were not so confident that the party loyalties of British electors could survive voting defections without change.[14] Although approximately 90% of their sample could nominate a general party loyalty and *"well over four-fifths"* of the respondents said they had always supported the same party,[15] the proportion of British voters who altered their electoral choice whilst retaining the same party identification was considerably lower than that recorded in a similar panel study conducted in the United States. The authors' explanation of this difference suggested that the American voter might have a greater need to develop *"a general conception of his ties to a party"*[16] as a perceptual guide, owing to the

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12. For the application of the *"normal vote"* model to an analysis of the outcome of the 1968 and 1972 U.S. Presidential elections see R.W. Boyd, "Popular Control of Public Policy: A Normal Vote Analysis of the 1968 Election", American Political Science Review, 66 (1972) pp.429-49 and Miller *et al, op.cit.*
13. Converse, "The Concept of a Normal Vote", p.15.
14. Butler and Stokes, *op.cit.*, pp.56-64.
15. *ibid.*, p.57.
16. *ibid* p.63.

multiplicity of electoral choices forced upon him by the federal structure of the country's political system. If this was the case, it might be expected that the relationships between party identification and voting in Australian elections would follow the American, rather than the British pattern.

However, the closeness of party identification, as a psychological attribute, to the voting act itself gave rise to two reservations about the utility of the concept which were expressed by K. Prewitt and N. Nie.[17] They queried both the validity of party identification as a measure distinct from a voter's extrapolation of his remembered voting record, and its theoretical fertility, being a construct *"uncomfortably"* close in nature to the actual voting decision.[18] Ironically, the utility of party identification in explaining the motives behind voting behaviour is closely linked to the degree to which voters diverge from it in their electoral choices. The ease with which respondents can relate to the party identification item in an attitude questionnaire can also be indicative of its validity as an independent construct.

The A.S.P. survey results certainly gave reason to expect that party identification was a familiar form of psychological attachment for Australian voters. In response to the question, *"Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Liberal, Labor, Country Party or D.L.P.?"*, 89.0% (1667) of the sample classified themselves in one of these or another category. This proportion of party identifiers is consistent with the British and American findings, and is supported by Aitkin's figure of

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17. K. Prewitt and N. Nie, "Review Article: Election Studies of the Survey Research Centre", British Journal of Political Science, I, 1, (1971), pp.479-502.

18. *ibid.*, pp.486-7. On the second of these queries, Prewitt and Nie acknowledged the contribution of P. Rossi, "Four hand marks in Voting Research" in E. Burdick and A. Brodbeck (eds), American Voting Behaviour, (Glencoe, Ill., 1959).

87% of a similar sized sample interviewed in the same survey project in 1967[19]. Party loyalties were distributed amongst the 1969 respondents as outlined in Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1 PARTY IDENTIFICATION WITHIN THE 1969 SAMPLE

		%
Liberal/Country Party	868	46.3
Labor	740	39.5
D.L.P./Other	59	3.2
Didn't identify with a party	186	9.9
Didn't know/no answer	20	1.1
	1873	100.0%

As Campbell found in the United States, the Australian voters interviewed were able to classify the strength of their feelings in a way which suggested that party loyalties ranged in intensity along a continuum progressing from weak feelings of linkage with a particular party through to a strong psychological commitment. The proportions of the A.S.P. sample admitting to differing strengths of party commitment are set out in Table 6.2

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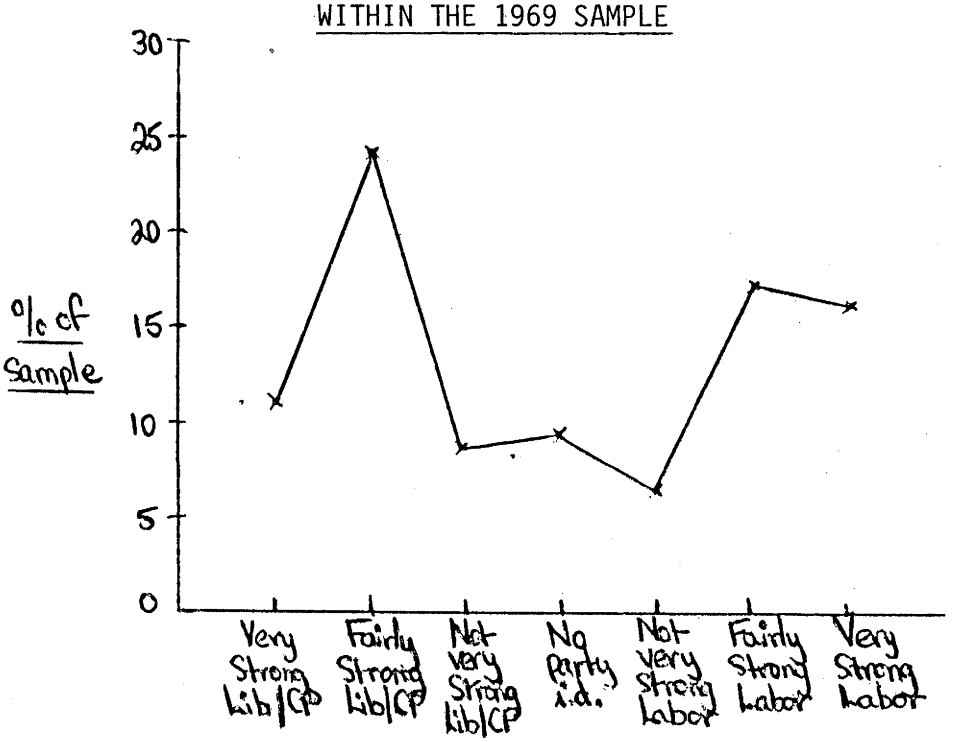
19. D. Aitkin, "Electoral Behaviour", *op.cit.*, p.302.

20. The Liberal and Country parties, although in coalition in 1969, existed as two separate organisations at the Federal level and in all States except South Australia. It is not strictly correct, therefore, to assume that a voter's loyalty to one party would be automatically transferred to the other. However, it has been considered preferable to regard them as a single entity here, by combining the figures for party identification. Respondents' expressed attitudes towards the parties were responsible for this decision. During coding of the survey data it was observed that a number of people had given their party identification as *"Liberal"* when, in fact, they lived in a Country Party electorate which had never been contested by the Liberal Party.

TABLE 6.2 STRENGTH AND DIRECTION OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Very strong Liberal/Country Party	234	12.5
Fairly strong Liberal/Country Party	458	24.5
Not very strong Liberal/Country Party	172	9.2
Very strong Labor	303	16.2
Fairly strong Labor	318	17.0
Not very strong Labor	112	6.0
Did not identify with a party	186	9.9

FIGURE 6.1 STRENGTH AND DIRECTION OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION WITHIN THE 1969 SAMPLE



As Figure 6.1 indicates, the major party groupings in Australia did not appear to be on an equal footing in their ability to attract strong feelings of loyalty from their supporters. The Labor Party had a larger proportion of its followers amongst the respondents who felt very strongly committed than did the government parties - 40.9% of Labor identifiers said they felt *"very strongly"* about their party loyalty, compared with only 27.0% of Liberal/Country Party identifiers. This contrast between the two blocs of party supporters in Australia was not evident in Campbell's

analysis of the distribution of party identification in America, where the Republican and Democratic parties did not differ markedly in their ratio of strong to weak support.[21] The vast difference in historical and ideological backgrounds of the Labor and non-Labor parties in Australia immediately suggests itself as an explanatory factor here.[22]

The establishment of party identification at an early stage in the political life of a voter and its subsequent resistance to change have been widely considered as integral parts of the concept, responsible for its stabilizing effect on voting patterns.[23] The process of political socialization, whereby a child is gradually introduced to the political norms and values of a society through the influence of family, school, peer groups, and, later, work experiences, has been used to explain the formation of partisan loyalties. There has been some debate, however, over the actual nature of the influence processes at work here, and the age at which party identification can first be recognised in the form in which it is common amongst adults. Figures derived from studies of school children in the United States and in Australia differ in the latter respect. Early American findings that 9 year olds had firm party loyalties which were distributed in roughly similar proportions to those found in a comparable adult population,[24] can be contrasted with R.W. Connell's Australian study, where children of a similar age displayed only tentative party preferences and one third of the children were completely undecided between the parties.[25]

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21. Campbell, The American Voter, p.124.

22. Similarities in the background of Labor parties in Australia and in Great Britain would suggest that the British Labor Party may enjoy a similar advantage over its rival the Conservative Party. Unfortunately, no British figures were available to test this hypothesis.

23. Campbell, The American Voter, Chapter 7.

24. F.I. Greenstein, Children and Politics, (New Haven, Conn., 1969) reports a 1958 study of New Haven children. See also H. Hyman, Political Socialisation (Glencoe, Ill., 1959).

25. R.W. Connell, The Child's Construction of Politics, (Melbourne, 1971).

The tenuous nature of the preferences expressed by his 9 and 10 year old respondents led Connell to reject American notions that childhood partisan loyalties were developed through a Freudian psychological process of identification with a parent-figure.[26] This interpretation had stressed the emotional and irrational basis of party identification, where *"political feelings, evaluations and attachments formed well before the child learned the relevant supporting information"*.[27] Instead, Connell suggested that allowance should be made for the conscious activity of the children in undertaking *"reasonable acts of political choice, given the grounds available to them"*.[28]

In an earlier study of American high school and university students, L.A. Froman and J.K. Skipper attempted to show that party identification was based *"to a significant extent, on certain beliefs about various issues and problems that are associated with one political party or the other"* by setting up candidate choice situations where a respondent's party identification would be in conflict with his issue opinions.[29] Froman and Skipper admitted that the older ages of their subjects prevented their contradicting Greenstein's conclusions that party identification was learned amongst 9 year olds independently of issues. Nevertheless, they contended that younger

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26. *ibid.*, pp.77-81.

27. Greenstein, *op.cit.*, p.72.

28. Connell, *op.cit.*, p.81.

29. L.A. Froman and J.K. Skipper, "An Approach to the Learning of Party Identification", Public Opinion Quarterly, 27, 3 (1963), pp.473-480. Froman and Skipper admitted that their choice situations were not necessarily *"realistic"* ones for voters, p.478. Their questionnaire's clear juxtaposition of party candidate and issue position in a *"dissonance"* situation would not normally be replicated in voters' minds owing to the multiplicity of messages received from the political environment and the operation of perceptual devices which aid the voter in avoiding just this type of conflict situation (see Chapter 7 of this thesis).

less educated people learned to discriminate between the parties on the basis of moralistic or *"style"* issues - in contrast with the older, more educated students, for whom *"position"* issues about policy were likely to be important.

In re-introducing rational choice as an element in the learning of party identification, Froman and Skipper, and Connell with Australian children, were adopting an approach similar to that of Arthur Goldberg in his analysis of empirical evidence from the Michigan studies of adult voting behaviour.[30] Goldberg used his findings as a basis for arguing that party loyalties were rooted in socially-oriented group norms which constituted rational guides to action (in terms of the reduction of information costs involved in a voter's attempt to cope with the political environment).

The results of the studies such as those cited above have aided in removing the deterministic overtones of some earlier analyses of the role played by party identification in voting decisions. In adopting a more sophisticated approach to the interplay between individual choice, the political environment and learned responses, such studies have helped to answer earlier critiques of survey research which accused political sociologists of relying upon an overly mechanistic interpretation of political behaviour.

The persistence of a party loyalty as a stable guide to a voter's perception of his environment forms an integral part of the explanatory value of the concept of party identification. The inability of a voter's psychological attachment to a party to survive any voting change would strip

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30. A. Goldberg, "Social Determinism and Rationality as Bases of Party Identification", American Political Science Review, 63 (1969), pp.5-25. Connell pointed out that Goldberg's thesis could not explain the first formation of party preferences, as children could not make the necessary means-end calculations about their own political actions at this early stage, Connell, *op.cit.*, p.66.

the concept of its relevance in explaining the dynamics behind a voting decision. Yet the above discussion should caution against any conception of party identification as a static force, dictating to the individual a consistent form of political behaviour. Campbell himself saw party identification as characterised *"not by rigid, immutable fixation on one party rather than the other, but by a persistant adherence and a resistance to contrary influence."*[31]

The relative susceptibility of party loyalties to change is one of the most difficult aspects of party identification to assess. In the absence of longitudinal studies, data on the stability of party identification over time depends on the ability of survey respondents to recall past events. The recall data accumulated by Campbell and his associates was considered by them to provide *"impressive evidence of the constancy of party allegiance"*.[32]

The information which could be gleaned from the A.S.P. survey data was sketchy and of dubious accuracy in the case of older respondents. However, the overall percentage breakdown did support the notion of party identification as a stable commitment for the majority of voters. 76.0% (1267) of those who had volunteered a party identification (or 67.6% of the whole sample) said they had never changed that loyalty in the past; whereas 22.6% (377) of identifiers (or 20.1% of the whole sample) remembered having altered their loyalty at some stage. Of this latter group, approximately one third (114) said they had made the change in the last couple of years or during the last election. Unfortunately, it was not possible to compare movements in party identification with respondents' past voting patterns, or even to ascertain the ages at which respondents had switched their loyalties.

The relationships between party identification and vote at the 1969

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31. Campbell, The American Voter, p.146.

32. *ibid.*, p.127.

Federal election were interesting in themselves, however. Although the direction in which respondents voted bore a strong and highly significant relationship to their party identification (Cramer's V = +.64, p > .001), small numbers of respondents did choose to vote against their partisan loyalties:

TABLE 6.3 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND 1969 VOTE

Party I.D.	1969 Vote: Lib/CP	Labor	DLP/Other	Did not Vote	An answer	
Lib/CP	83.2	6.9	5.6	1.6	2.6	100% (868)
Labor	4.9	88.8	3.6	0.4	2.3	100% (740)
DLP/ Other	16.9	15.3	66.1	0.0	1.7	100% (59)
No Party Identification	29.6	48.9	10.8	3.8	7.0	100% (186)
No Answer	15.0	30.0	5.0	5.0	45.0	100% (20)

The results show a defection rate amongst Liberal/Country Party identifiers of 6.9% to Labor, in contrast with only 4.9% of Labor identifiers who defected in the reverse direction. The Labor Party gained far more votes than did any of its opponents from those who professed to have no party identification. Those who identified with the D.L.P. or other smaller parties defected at an approximately equal rate to the Liberal and Country parties and to the A.L.P.[33]

Labor's ability to retain the votes of a higher proportion of its identifiers and to attract more support from the *"independent"* voters in the sample should not be any surprise in a survey conducted at the time

33. The figures on the 1969 first preference vote to DLP and smaller party identifiers may not give a true picture of decisions to defect from party identification as, in this case, the absence of candidates of the preferred party standing in the voters' electorates may have forced a vote for another party.

of an election which saw a 7% national swing to the A.L.P. It is of interest, however, that the total Labor vote recorded for the A.S.P. sample drew more heavily from amongst those respondents without any party identification (*"independents"* contributed 11.1% of the Labor vote) than from amongst those whose loyalty lay with any of the other parties (Liberal/Country Party, D.L.P. and Other Party identifiers contributed 8.4% of the Labor vote) - and this occurred with a survey sample which was biased in favour of the government parties. Unfortunately, it is not possible within the bounds of the present study to investigate the questions which suggest themselves here.[34]

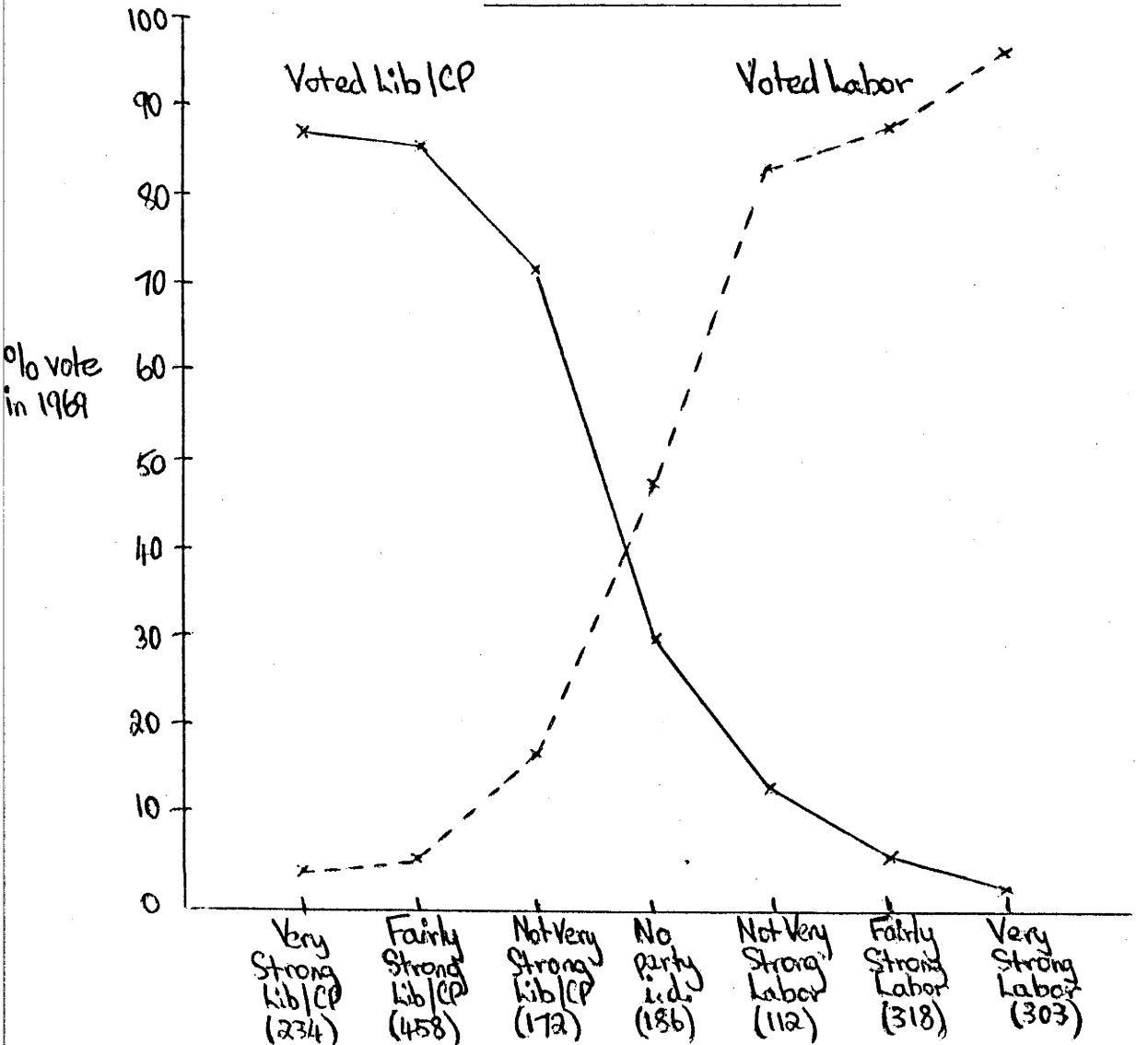
As no follow-up data are available on these respondents, it is impossible to tell whether the voting defections traced here were, in fact, temporary in nature or whether they signalled an approaching change in party identification. On the basis of these figures, however, it can be concluded that vote and party identification were demonstrably different concepts for a proportion of the Australian electorate in 1969.

The nature of the concept of party identification as established by Campbell and his colleagues gained further support from the A.S.P. data when the relationships between strength of party identification and likelihood of a contrary vote were examined. For both party groupings, the frequency of respondents voting against their party identification decreased as the intensity of feeling they associated with their loyalty increased. This relationship is illustrated graphically in Figure 6.2.

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34. The questions which do suggest themselves are whether the *"independents"* from whom Labor draw 11.1% of its 1969 vote were mainly young voters who had no firmly established party loyalty, or whether they were mainly habitual swinging voters.

FIGURE 6.2 STRENGTH AND DIRECTION OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION IN RELATION TO 1969 VOTE



A further hypothesis was that those respondents who had changed their party identification in the past would be more prone to defect from their current identification in casting their 1969 vote than would those who had a stable history of partisan loyalty. The data gave some support to this hypothesis for Labor identifiers, but not for those who identified with the government parties.

In contrast to the notion of the independent citizen, free of party ties, who was concerned with political affairs and weighed the rival claims of competing parties in making his/her considered electoral judgement, Campbell posited an association between partisanship and psychological involvement in politics. The stronger an individual's sense of attachment

to a political party, the more likely he or she was to be interested in political affairs.[35] The Australian data upheld this hypothesis, as the following table demonstrates:

TABLE 6.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTENSITY OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND INTEREST IN POLITICS

Interest in Politics	Very Strong Lib/CP	Fairly Strong Lib/CP	Not Very Strong Lib/CP	Didn't Identify	Not Very Strong Labor	Fairly Strong Labor	Very Strong Labor
Good Deal	30.8	16.8	14.0	26.3	8.9	16.7	34.0
Some	48.7	59.2	41.9	43.0	29.5	49.4	36.3
Not Much	18.4	22.5	37.2	21.5	49.1	27.7	23.8
None	2.1	1.5	7.0	8.6	12.5	6.3	5.9
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(234)	(458)	(172)	(186)	(112)	(318)	(303)

As the strength of identification with one or other of the parties decreased, so the percentage of respondents with a good deal of interest in politics decreased, and the percentage with no interest in politics at all or not much interest showed a corresponding increase. *"Some interest"* in politics was most common amongst those respondents with a *"fairly strong"* party loyalty. The failure of those with no party identification to conform to the general pattern was an interesting indication that a total lack of

35. Campbell, The American Voter, pp.142-5. This hypothesis is directly contradicted by Downs' economic rationality model of voting behaviour which predicts that the more a voter favours one party over another, the less likely he is to obtain political information, Downs, *op.cit.* A series of studies, including the A.S.P. survey, have produced empirical evidence which runs counter to this portion of Downs' theory.

partisanship could not be equated with a generally low level of interest in political affairs - the *"independents"* were more likely to express a good deal of interest in politics than were the *"fairly strong"* party identifiers. Overall, Labor identifiers were distributed more towards the two extremes of political involvement than were those identifying with the government parties.

Having established that party identification is a concept which can be applied to the Australian survey respondents, we can now move on to the main task of this chapter which is to examine the relationships between voters' attitudes on political issues and their standing party loyalties.

As a first step, each of the issue items in the A.S.P. questionnaire was cross-tabulated against the party identification variable and a statistical measure of the strength of association within each set of two variables was obtained. The information gained from this simplified approach was limited in its usefulness, as no allowance was made, initially, for varying intensities of party loyalty or for the degree of correspondence between questionnaire alternatives and party stances on the policy issues. However, testing the significance of the simple bivariate relationships was a necessary precaution to ensure that variations did not occur merely by chance. The relative sizes of the correlation coefficients quickly identified those issues where attitudes were most closely related to the direction of party loyalties.

Using Chi square, responses to all the issue items were found to be significantly related to direction of party identification at the most rigorous .1% level of significance. When the *strength* of association was measured, however, only a few issues emerged as bearing noteworthy relationships to the independent variable. The size of the Cramer's V correlation coefficient[36] varied from a miniscule +.07 on State aid for

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36. Cramer's V is a correlation coefficient which can be used to measure the strength of association between variables which are not expressed in continuous form. The *direction* of party identification (and, like-

education to +.22 on Vietnam - as expected, a perfect correlation was not approached on any one issue. Clearly, respondents' attitudes on issues of public policy were not solely determined by their party identification; and, conversely, neither were their party loyalties dictated completely by their issue opinions.[37]

The four issues which recorded the highest correlations with party identification were:

TABLE 6.5 CORRELATION BETWEEN ISSUE OPINION AND PARTY IDENTIFICATION

	Cramer's V
Vietnam war	.22
Communist China	.21
Conscription	.16
Censorship	.15

The top two items, the Vietnam war and Communist China were the only issues on which opinions had displayed even a moderate degree of partisan cleavage (using 1969 vote as the independent variable) in Chapter 4. This correspondence was not unexpected. Although party identification did differ from 1969 vote in some cases, the overall distribution of opinions in the sample could not be expected to differ significantly, whichever of the two measures was taken as the independent variable.

On the basis of this study of the 1952 and 1956 U.S. Presidential elections, Campbell reached several conclusions on the nature of the relationships between voters' attitudes on political issues and their party identification which can be used to shed light on the motivations

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36. cont. wise, the direction of 1969 vote) is such a variable, where identification with one political party does not possess any obvious rank order in relation to identification with another party.

37. It is important to specify both of these conditions, as no assumptions can be made at this stage as to the direction of cause and effect.

underlying voting decisions made by the Australian electorate in 1969. The significance of the suggestion that a voter's partisan loyalty acted as a guide to perception of the political environment was that information about issues (as well as about parties and candidates) would be selectively perceived to fit in with an existing preference for a particular political party. Campbell and his colleagues were convinced that the main direction of influence was from party identification to attitude formation, rather than the reverse; although they did admit that some information from the political environment, if sufficiently inconsistent with a voter's party allegiance, could work to change the latter.[38]

Campbell found that the *stronger* a voter's feeling of identification with a party, the more likely he was to hold views which were consistent with those adopted by that party. Party identification could explain a large part of the variance in individual's attitudes towards political objects. It could account, too, for the internal consistency of attitude sets - stronger partisans were more likely to have views which were both internally consistent and corresponded with their party's stance.[39]

The difficulty in testing Campbell's findings in relation to the A.S.P. data on policy issues stems from the problems already encountered in locating party policy stances in terms of the alternatives posed in the questionnaire items. This task could only be accomplished with any degree of certainty on the questions relating to the Vietnam war, conscription, censorship, Communist China and foreign investment (see Chapter 3). Even in these cases there could be no guarantee that the respondents' perception of equivalence between the questionnaire alternatives and party policies corresponded with my own.[40] In contrast with the small number of usable

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38. Campbell, *op.cit.*, p.135.

39. *ibid.*, pp.128-36.

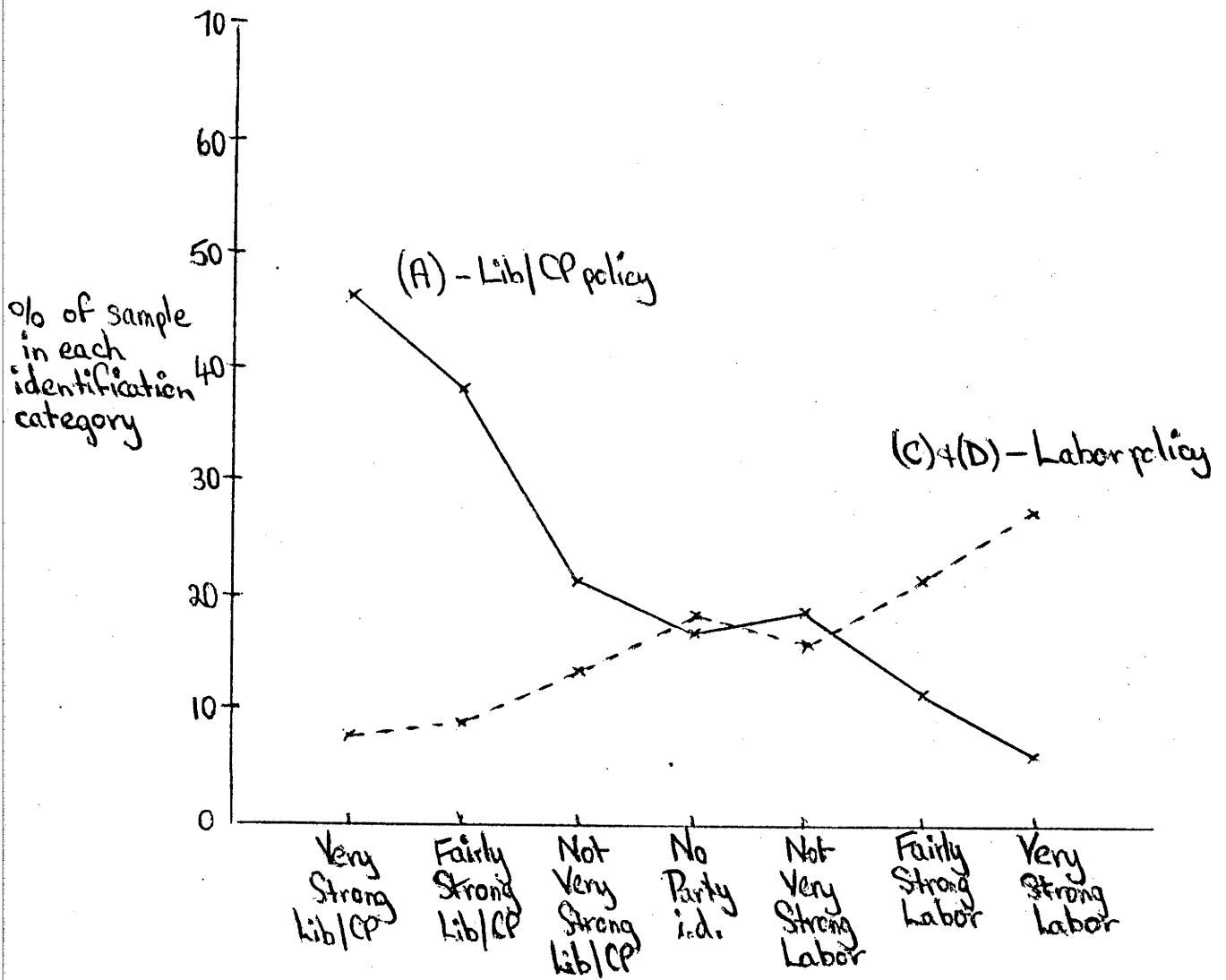
40. This information is available on one issue item, the Vietnam war, and will be analysed in the next chapter.

items lacking any standard format in the A.S.P. survey, Campbell's data enabled him to construct two sets of scaled items on domestic and foreign policy, the alternatives on each issue ranging from a pro-Democratic stance at one end of the scale to a pro-Republican stance at the other.

Despite the fact that reliable scale construction was not feasible with the A.S.P. data, it was possible to examine the distribution of attitudes amongst respondents with variations in strength of party identification and to compare these attitudes with party policy stances on the items listed above. The two issues - the Vietnam war and Communist China - which bore the strongest relationships with the party identification variable were also the only ones where cleavages in opinion between those who identified with the opposing parties corresponded with actual differences in Liberal/Country Party and Labor policies. Campbell's hypothesis that a greater sense of identity with a party was associated with a higher likelihood of consistency between the attitudes of a respondent and his party's policy was upheld in both these cases. The results are graphically illustrated in Figures 6.3 and 6.4.

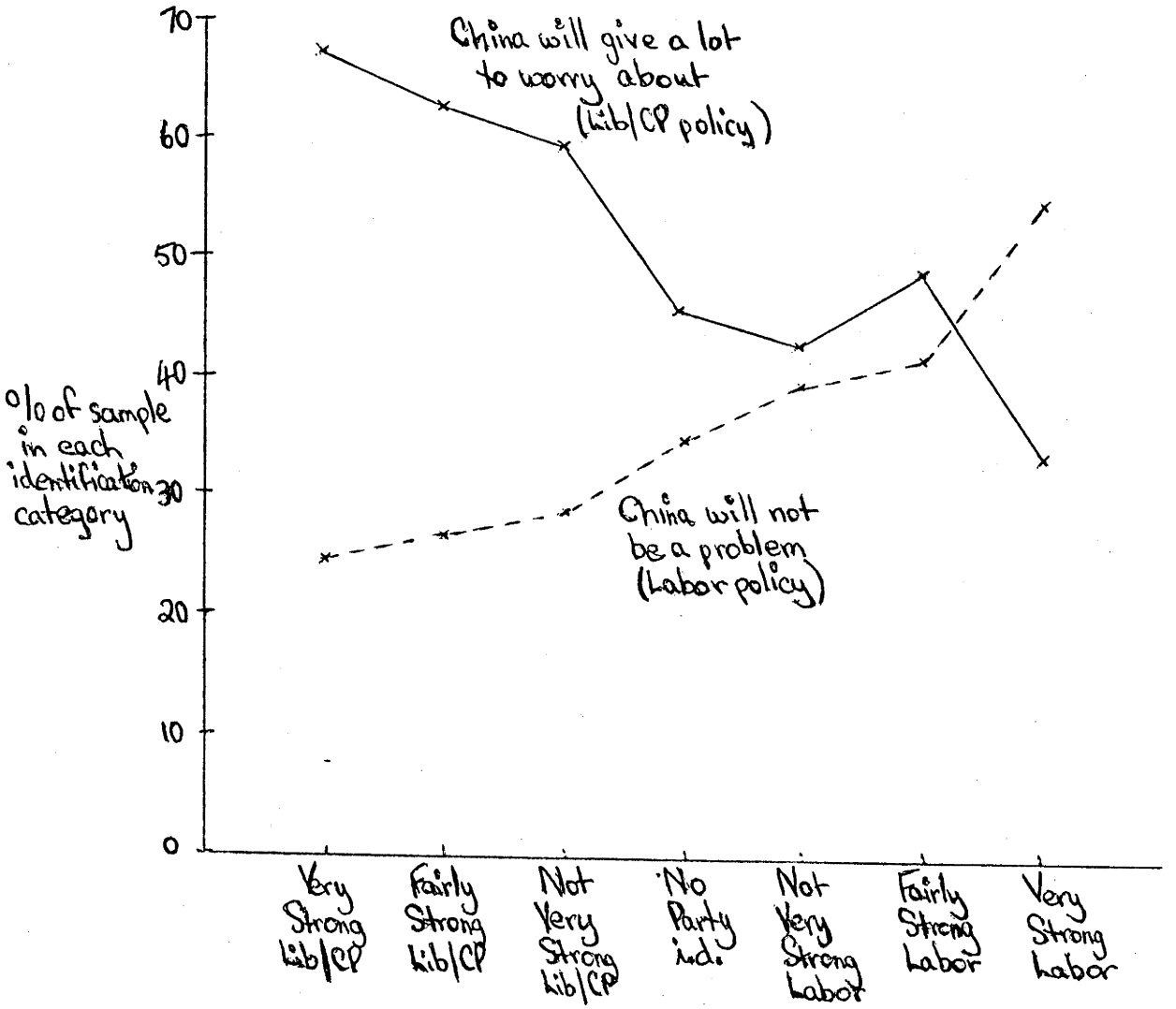
As had been the case when 1969 vote was used as the independent variable (see Chapter 4), there was evidence of a partial cleavage in attitudes towards the two issues of conscription and censorship with party identification. In each instance, one of the alternatives presented to respondents discriminated between Liberal/Country Party and Labor identifiers, but the remaining alternatives did not. The policy positions which were clearly related to direction of party loyalty were the ending of conscription and the abolition of censorship - differences between opposing party identifiers in their level of support for these particular options were primarily responsible for the overall correlation coefficients of .16 and .15, respectively, which were noted earlier. Support for halting conscription and for abolishing censorship was mainly restricted to those who identified *"very strongly"* with the Labor Party. In accordance with Campbell's findings

FIGURE 6.3 ATTITUDE TOWARDS VIETNAM BY STRENGTH AND DIRECTION OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION[41]



41. The graph does not show the degree of support for the fourth alternative (B - that volunteer troops only should be retained in Vietnam), which was distributed fairly evenly amongst Lib/Cp and Labor identifiers, because this view did not correspond with the policy of any of the major parties in 1969. The figures for alternatives C (that civilian experts only should be retained in Vietnam) and D (that Australia should stay out of Vietnam altogether) have been combined by averaging the percentage support from each identification category, as both alternatives could correctly be classified as representing Labor policy.

FIGURE 6.4 ATTITUDE TOWARDS COMMUNIST CHINA BY STRENGTH AND DIRECTION OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION



on the importance of the intensity of party loyalty, strong identifiers were the ones who tended to adopt stances in line with their parties' policies on the issues of conscription and censorship.

The discovery of a difference in opinions between those who felt strongly and those who felt only weakly committed to the same party has certain similarities with research conducted by McClosky in the United States.[42] Working with known party activists and rank-and-file party supporters, McClosky found that opinion cleavages between the two sets of

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42. H. McClosky, *et al.*, op.cit.

leaders were not necessarily replicated amongst their followers; indeed, often the rank-and-file supporters of a party were closer in their attitudes to their counterparts in the opposing party than to their own party leaders. The A.S.P. data, consisting of rough self-assessments of intensities of feeling associated with party loyalty, were not comparable with McClosky's findings, which relied upon behavioural measures of party activism. However, his line of enquiry was adapted to the A.S.P. data in order to investigate a further dimension of the differences in opinion associated with different strengths of party identification.

On two issues, foreign investment and censorship, there was more similarity between the views of those whose loyalty lay with opposing parties but who did not feel very strongly about it, than there was between these respondents and their fellow identifiers in the same party, who *did* feel very strongly.[43] Foreign investment was not an issue which had registered any cleavage between the views of opposing party identifiers, when these had been considered in the aggregate without any breakdown for various strengths of party identification. Opinions on the abolition of censorship had shown some partisan cleavage, but this was clearly restricted to a division between very strong identifiers which was not matched at the weaker levels of party identification. The gap between the attitudes of weak and strong followers of the same party was, in both these cases, larger than that between voters who identified, though *"not very strongly"*, with parties which were advancing opposing viewpoints.

As the data suggested that there were differences in opinion associated with the strength of feeling, as well as the direction of party identification

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43. This assessment of similarity is based on comparing the difference between the percentage of strong and weak identifiers from the same party holding a particular viewpoint, and the difference between the percentage of weak identifiers from each of the two opposing parties with the same attitude. On the issues of foreign investment and censorship the former difference was larger than the latter for both parties.

in the 1969 Australian electorate, it might be asked whether strong identifiers held their views with greater intensity than those with weaker party loyalties. The results produced equivocal answers to this question on the three issues (Vietnam, conscription, censorship) where intensity of feeling was examined and where it was also possible to match party policy stances to the questionnaire alternatives. Some, but not all attitudes were held with greater intensity by those who felt *"very strongly"* committed to a particular party.

On Vietnam and conscription the association between strength of feeling for a party and strength of commitment to a policy position was particularly in evidence at the extremities of opinion. *"Very strong"* Liberal/Country Party identifiers could be differentiated from their fellows with weaker loyalties by the greater intensity of their support for the retention of troops, including conscripts in Vietnam, and for the extension of conscription to cover all young men (incidentally, not a government policy). The obverse applied to *"very strong"* Labor identifiers, who felt intensely that Australia should stay out of Vietnam and that conscription should be abolished, in comparison with less committed Labor identifiers who held the same views with less intensity.

It has already been noted, in Chapter 4, that the more extreme policy options on the issues of Vietnam and conscription attracted stronger feelings than did the more moderate alternatives. The present findings indicate that *"very strong"* party identifiers were responsible for a large share of this heightened intensity of feeling. The observed relationship between intense party loyalty and strongly felt attitudes may well have been restricted, however, to the few issues (such as Vietnam and conscription) where supporters of different parties took up clearly opposing stances, regardless of whether these corresponded with their respective party's policies.

The investigation to this stage has revealed a more complex pattern

of relationships between party identification and voters' attitudes on political issues than Campbell and his colleagues found as a result of their research. To a certain extent, this may be due to the narrow focus of the present study, necessitated by certain technical limitations in the survey itself. Campbell was able to base his analysis on a large number of items of domestic and foreign policy, and to incorporate these in independently validated opinion scales. The variations between different issues which have become apparent here may well have been submerged in more general trends of the sort observed by Campbell, if the number of issue items available for analysis had been larger, and had been asked in a standardised form.

The failure to find evidence of a cleavage in attitudes along party lines on several of the issue questions was not necessarily indicative of the absence of any links between party identification and attitude formation on these issues amongst the Australian respondents. Party loyalty may still have functioned as a perceptual screen, but respondents simply may have been unable to correctly identify the parties' policy stances. An awareness at least of where one's own party stands on an issue is necessay if party identification is to be used as a guide to attitude formation. So far, no evidence of the capacity of respondents to make this linkage correctly has been obtained for the A.S.P. survey. It will be covered in the next chapter, so far as the boundaries of the survey allow. Suffice it to say here that, in view of the difficulty experienced in matching questionnaire alternatives to party policies, we might hardly expect the respondents to be aware of any correspondence. Without such awareness, it cannot be said that the absence of cleavages in opinion along the lines of party identification was indicative of anything more than a lack of knowledge of party policies on the part of the voters.

As a corollary to this point, it could be suggested that those strong party identifiers whose views corresponded with party policy on Vietnam and

Communist China were merely taking advantage of a greater degree of knowledge about the parties and were not using their party identification in any sense as a guide to their perception of the environment. It has already been established that respondents' interest in political affairs increased with the strength of party attachment, regardless of the direction of that attachment. Was party identification related to educational background in the same way? The data suggest that it was not. Although a clear overall difference was evident in the education levels of Labor and Liberal/Country Party identifiers, the latter having a higher proportion of secondary and tertiary educated followers, there was no consistent pattern of alteration in degree of education with the intensity of party loyalty. The outstanding exception to this, and one which went against the above hypothesis, was found amongst very strong Labor identifiers, 44.9% of whom had none/primary education - a substantially higher figure than for any other category of party support.

Despite the lack of relevance of educational level, strong partisans may have benefited from an ability to distinguish clearly between party stances which was not shared by those whose party commitments were weak. This possibility will be investigated in the following chapter. Together with an estimation of respondents' perceptions of party policies on the central issue of the Vietnam war, it may help to shed further light on the relationships between party identification, attitudes and, ultimately, voting behaviour.

CHAPTER 7

PERCEPTION OF PARTY DIFFERENCE

Each individual voting decision is heavily dependent upon the voter's perception of the competing parties and candidates and his/her judgement of the differences between them. This statement would be of little significance if voters merely reacted to objective reality, without interposing their own subjective interpretations of the political world. In fact, a single political event is open to a wide variety of interpretations and people's perceptions of it are likely to be coloured by their personal experiences and attitudes. And, in turn, subsequent events are affected by these perceptions - *"Today's subjective unreality in the voters' minds affects tomorrow's objective reality in the political arena".*[1]

In the task of differentiating between the parties, voters are dependent on broad subjective images which serve as simplified guides to reality. We have already seen that perceptions of the parties' stances on issues of public policy can constitute components of these images.[2] The images may, on the other hand, be based on more generalized judgements relating to subjective values about politics and parties - possibly group-oriented, or rooted in a particular ideology. The establishment of an association in the public's mind between particular parties and the interests of social classes - one party for *"the workers"* and one for *"big business"* has proved a consistently effective means for asserting party difference in the British and Australian political systems.[3] Different ideological stances also provide useful party labels which serve

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1. Berelson et al, *op.cit.*, p.216

2. See also Butler and Stokes, *op.cit*, pp. 433-6.

3. Group-related assessments of the parties were fairly frequent amongst responses to the ASP items which asked what voters liked and disliked about the major parties. 20.9% of all the reasons respondents gave for liking the Labor Party were group-related - the bulk of these (255; 25.4% of total responses) referred in some way to the association between "workers" and the A.L.P.

to distinguish parties from their competitors.

The competition between parties for the allegiance of the same body of voters in two-party systems has increased the need to rely on such opposing images if the parties are to be perceived as distinctly different. Political scientists, in the United States particularly, have spoken of a tendency towards convergence in the policies of broad, mass-based parties. This hypothesis has been applied to Australia, although the divergent historical and ideological origins of the Liberal and Labor parties, together with the existence of such an avowedly sectional party as the Country Party, should lead us to question the extent of its relevance.

The ASP survey has provided some data on the degree of difference between the parties perceived by Australian voters, as distinct from measures of the objective differences or similarities in party policies. This data can be obtained from three main sources in the questionnaire:

1. an item requiring respondents to make a general assessment of party difference;
2. a comparison between the frequencies with which the two main parties were chosen to solve problems nominated by the respondents as important;
3. an examination of the extent of respondent's knowledge of party policies on the Australian commitment to the Vietnam war.

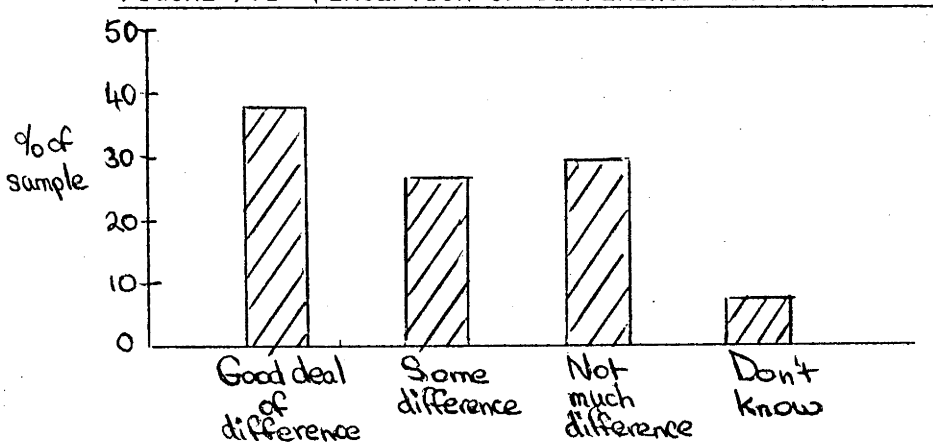
These items, each possessing some measurement deficiencies, together constituted only a tentative assessment of the ways Australian voters distinguish between the parties from which they must choose at election time. A more fruitful approach would require some measurement of trends across time intervals in the public's assessment of party difference.

Data derived from the question, *"In general, would you say there is a good deal of difference between the parties, some difference or not much difference?"*, was the most suspect, in terms both of its reliability and its validity. As Converse observed of American studies, attempts to measure party difference lacked reference points as to

"how big is big", and hence would remain subjective.[4] There could be no guarantee that respondents would share the same conception of *"distance"* - in each case, the judgement would have been a personal one. In addition, the wording of the question may have forced respondents to make an estimation of party difference which was not meaningful to them. The results could only be of use, therefore, to provide a rough indication of the degree of difference common in voters' perceptions of the political parties.

The distribution of answers to this item was indicative of a greater emphasis on distance between the parties than might be expected from the American hypothesis that party policies have tended to converge. In all, 37.5% (703) of the ASP sample perceived a *"good deal of difference"* between the parties.[5] A large proportion of the sample saw at least *"some difference"* between the parties - 26.9% *"some difference"* + 37.5% *"a good deal of difference"*; whilst only 6.1% was unable to answer the question (see Figure 7.1).

FIGURE 7.1 PERCEPTION OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PARTIES

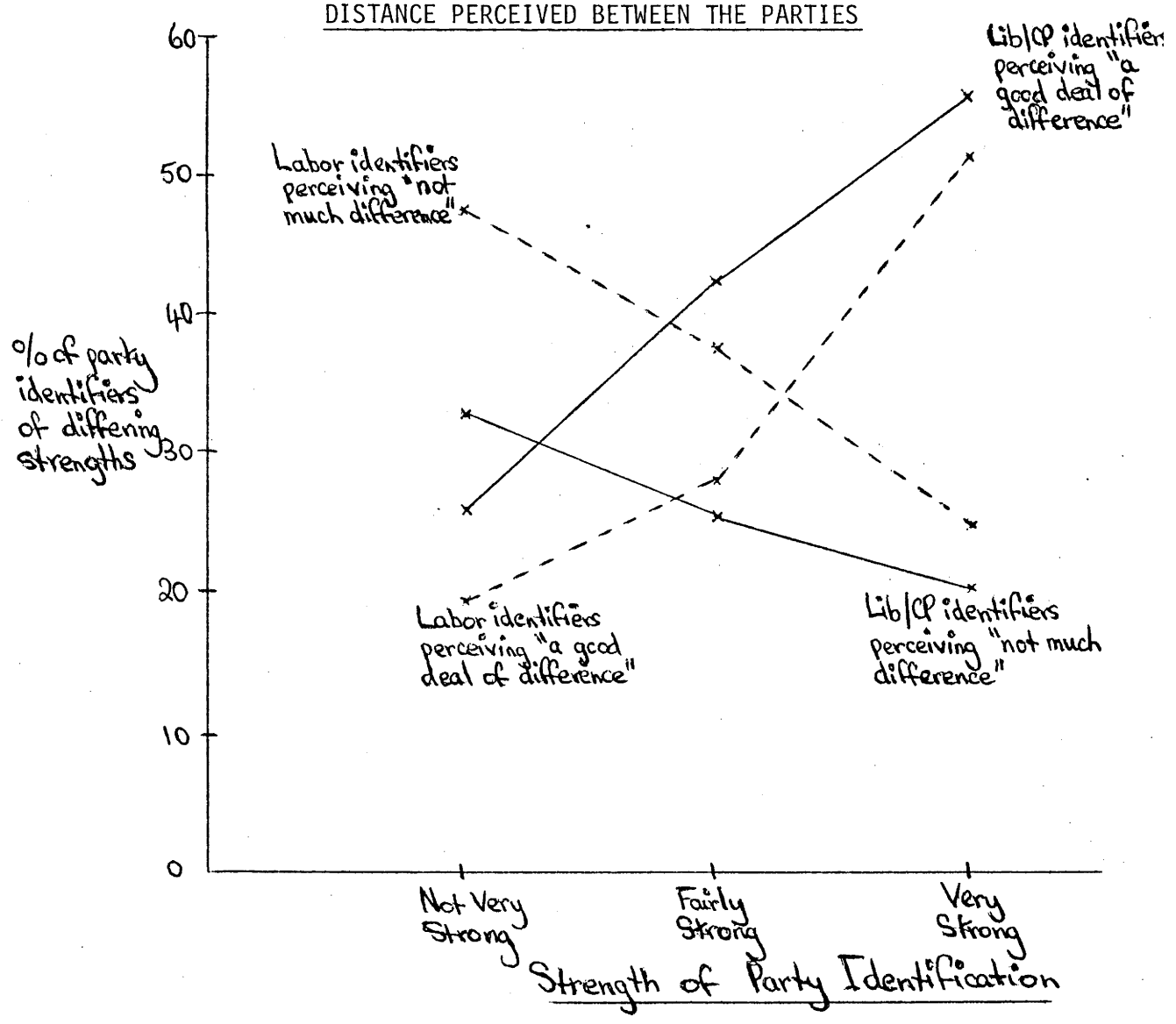


4. P. Converse, et al., "Continuity and Change in American Politics, Parties and Issues in the 1968 Election", American Political Science Review, 63 (1969), p. 1100.

5. The question on party difference presumably referred to all the political parties contesting the 1969 election. The positive relationship between perception of party difference and strength of identification with either the A.L.P. or the Liberal/Country Party coalition suggests, however, that the item did provide a valid measure of the degree of distance perceived between the government and opposition parties.

Some confirmation of the validity of the results was provided by the observation of a link between the perceived distance between the parties and the strength of partisanship. As the strength of respondents' loyalties to either the government or the opposition parties increased, so did the likelihood that they would perceive a greater overall difference between the parties (see Figure 7.2). Educational level and interest in politics, too, were positively linked with perception of party difference - suggesting that the apparent relationship with strength of partisanship could have been largely spurious. The latter's persistence even when education level was controlled, however, confirmed that it was genuine in nature.

FIGURE 7.2 STRENGTH OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION AS A FUNCTION OF DISTANCE PERCEIVED BETWEEN THE PARTIES



On the whole, Liberal/Country Party identifiers were more likely to perceive greater distances separating the parties than were those whose loyalties lay with the Labor Party. This result could be partially, but not completely, attributed to higher levels of education amongst Liberal/Country Party supporters. The differences between Liberal/Country Party and Labor identifiers of the same educational background may have arisen from the contrast in perspective stemming from the parties' respective statuses in government and in opposition. As supporters of a government long in power, Liberal/Country Party identifiers might be inclined to exaggerate the difference between the government parties and the untested opposition, whilst Labor supporters would not see the transition to a Labor government as altering the fundamentals of Australian life.

An additional assessment of the way Australian electors perceived the political parties could be made by comparing the extent to which Labor or the Liberal/Country Party coalition was seen as likely to solve particular problems nominated by the ASP respondents. The questionnaire asked, *"In your opinion, what are the most important problems the federal government should do something about?"*, and followed-up with a request to identify the party which would be most likely to do what the respondent wanted on the first two problems mentioned.[6]

An analysis of the follow-up responses showed clear differences in the voters' perceptions of the parties' capacities to handle some of the most commonly mentioned problems. Only 9.3% (175) of the sample could see *"no difference"* between the parties on the first problem they had specified as needing federal government attention. 26.8% (502) saw one or other of the government parties as most likely to solve their problem in a satisfactory way; whilst 43.2% (809) favoured the Labor Party. The large proportion of respondents who nominated the Labor Party in this fashion (compared with a total 39.5% of the sample who identified with

6. Results for this item will be analysed more exhaustively in the following chapter.

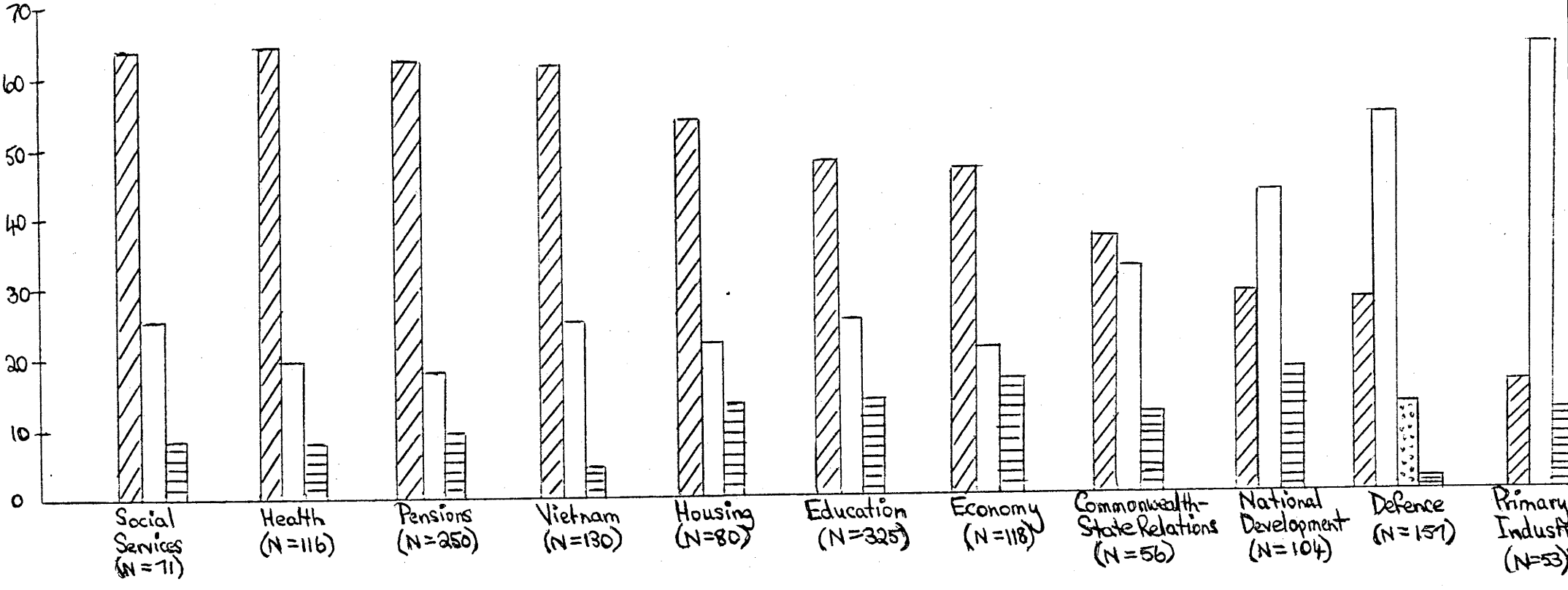
the Labor Party) provided an immediate indication that assessments of the parties' problem-solving abilities were not entirely derivative of party allegiance.

The Labor Party was not favoured by most respondents on all the problems specified, however. As illustrated in histogram form in Figure 7.3[7], three problems were predominantly seen as areas where the government parties would be successful - defence, primary industry and national development (although national development registered the highest *"no difference"* response rate - 18.3% of 104 respondents specifying that problem). Defence, particularly, was a problem area where perceptions of the parties were polarized, with only 1.9% (n = 157) seeing *"no difference"* between the parties' abilities to do what the respondents wanted. It was also the only issue which attracted a significant number of mentions for the D.L.P. (12.7% of 157).

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7. The codes used for this item did not discriminate amongst those respondents who took opposing views on the particular issue they nominated as an important problem. Both pro and con respondents have therefore been included under the same category and it should not come as any surprise that both parties have been mentioned by respondents as best able to handle each of the problems listed. Even if the comparative frequencies shown in the histogram are seen as mere reflections of the divisions of opinion within the sample, the comparison is still valid as a measure of the degree to which differences were perceived between the parties' policies on the problems nominated. See Repass, *op.cit.*

FIGURE 7.3 PARTIES SEEN AS MOST LIKELY TO DO WHAT RESPONDENTS WANTED ON 11 MOST COMMON FIRST-MENTIONED PROBLEM AREAS



The A.L.P. was favoured to tackle social services, health, pensions, the Vietnam war, housing, education and the economy. This finding corresponded with earlier research by Don Aitkin and Michael Kahan,[8] as well as data from elsewhere in the 1969 ASP questionnaire (see Chapter 3), both sources suggesting that the Labor Party was more favourably regarded for its domestic policies than was the Liberal/Country Party coalition.

Although not completely accounted for by party identification, the differences in the parties' images as problem-solvers were rooted in the loyalties felt by the respondents to the opposing parties. Where one party was favoured over another to handle a particular problem, the problem itself was usually mentioned most frequently by supporters of that party - e.g., primary industry was predominantly an area of concern to Liberal/Country Party identifiers; pensions were mentioned most often by Labor identifiers. Overall, the likelihood of a respondent nominating a particular party to solve his/her problem depended on the direction and strength of partisan loyalty (see Table 7.1).

TABLE 7.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND PARTY NOMINATED AS "PROBLEM-SOLVER"

	Lib/CP Very Strong	Lib/CP Fairly Strong	Lib/CP Not Very Strong	No Party Identification	Labor Not Very Strong	Labor Fairly Strong	Labor Very Strong
Lib/CP	60.7	48.5	29.1	18.3	17.0	5.7	2.0
Labor	12.8	19.4	32.0	37.1	44.6	73.3	86.8
No difference between parties	8.5	13.3	12.8	12.4	9.8	6.3	2.3
Other Party; No answer; Don't know	18.0	18.8	26.1	32.2	28.6	14.7	8.9
	100% (234)	100% (458)	100% (172)	100% (186)	100% (112)	100% (318)	100% (303)

8. D. Aitkin and M. Kahan, "Politics and the Election Campaign", a series of five articles in The Australian, October 10, 15, 20, 22, 23, 1969.

The responses of Labor identifiers were more closely tied to their party loyalties than were those of Liberal/Country Party identifiers. In the absence of any party allegiance, Labor was more likely to be favoured for its ability to solve salient problems - 37.1% of those who did not identify with a party nominated Labor, whilst only 18.3% suggested the Liberal/Country Party coalition. This preference for Labor extended into the ranks of weak Liberal/Country Party identifiers, more of whom chose Labor than the government parties to tackle problems concerning the Vietnam war, education, the economy, pensions, housing and health.[9] There was no corresponding leakage of weak Labor identifiers to support the Liberal/Country Party government as a likely problem-solver, even though the question related to possible Federal government action.

Quite large proportions of respondents failed to answer the question or said they did not know which party would be best able to handle the problem they had nominated. Only small numbers admitted to seeing no difference between the parties in this regard. A total 72.9% of the sample was able to discriminate amongst the parties concerning their abilities in problem areas which the respondents themselves thought to be important. However, it was impossible to tell from these results whether an actual knowledge of party stances underlay the perception of party difference expressed in this choice of parties. The relationship between many respondents' choices and their partisan loyalties suggested that party identification was probably used as a guide to perception.

A voter's knowledge of party policies aids in establishing the link between personal opinion and perception of party stance which is a necessary pre-condition if an issue is to have any influence on his voting decision.[10] An ability to discriminate between the competing

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9. Too much reliance cannot be placed on this comparison as the number of respondents in each cell of the table was small.

10. Campbell et al., The American Voter, p.170. This is listed as one of the three pre-conditions for issue voting.

parties is implicit in the realisation that one party represents a voter's own position on an issue better than the other parties. Evidence from numerous voting studies in the United States and Britain,[11] however, suggests that the electorate often does not possess the information necessary to correctly identify and differentiate between party stances. It is clear that the capacity of voters in this regard differs according to their educational background and extent of involvement in political activity, but it has also been argued that the type of issue itself is responsible for some variation in the extent of knowledge about party policies within the electorate. Berelson suggested the degree of controversiality of an issue in the community as an explanation for differences he observed in the capacity of his respondents to identify candidate stances - the more controversial, or divisive the issue, the more likely voters were to know the correct party stance.[12] Campbell observed a variation in the capacity to perceive party differences from 2 out of 3 respondents who held opinions on the *"long-standing issues of the New and Fair Deal period"* to fewer than 1 out of every 2 people with opinions on foreign policy issues.[13]

In these situations it appears that differences in the degree of ambiguity within the political environment are responsible for variations in the level of voters' knowledge. Very often, the stance of a party on a particular policy issue is obscure and distinguishing its policy from that of another party is a highly ambiguous task. Key argued that the two

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11. See studies by Berelson et al., *op.cit.*; Campbell et al., The American Voter; Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy; Butler and Stokes, *op.cit.*; Coverse, "Continuity and Change in American Politics"; B. Page and R. Brody, "Policy Voting and the Electoral Process", American Political Science Review, 66 (1972), pp. 979-95; L. Froman and J. Skipper, "Factors Related to Misperceiving Party Stands on Issues", Public Opinion Quarterly, 26 (1962), pp. 265-72.

12. Berelson et al., *op.cit.*, pp.218-20.

13. Campbell et al., The American Voter, p.180.

major parties in the American system were forced by the competition for votes to advance fairly similar policies which were characterised by *"equivocation and ambiguity"*.[14]

To Downs, deliberate attempts to obscure and confuse were part of a rational strategy for those competing for power in a two-party system.[15] The effort to maximise votes resulted in an overlapping of the parties on moderate policies, accompanied by a division on a few extreme stands designed to retain the loyalty of those voters on the fringes of the parties' ideological positions. Both parties could then expect to gain votes from being as ambiguous as possible about their net policy positions, and about their stances on controversial issues of public debate.[16]

This outcome has been observed in the past by theorists of democracy[17] and by authors of election case studies. B.I. Page and R.A. Brody attributed the failure of Vietnam, as an issue, to influence the outcome of the 1968 U.S. Presidential election to the practical impossibility of differentiating between the stances adopted by Nixon and Humphrey towards the continuation of the war.[18] In a review of election studies carried out by the University of Michigan Survey Research Centre, Prewitt and Nie discussed the implications of such uncertainty for the debate over voter rationality. *"How"*, they asked,*"should the 'rational' person respond to an electoral situation characterised by vagueness, overlapping issue positions and so forth?"*[19] In response,

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14. V.O. Key, Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups (N.Y., 1958), pp.231-2.

15. Downs, *op.cit.*, pp.135-6.

16. For a refinement of Downs' argument on the rationality for political parties to pursue a strategy of ambiguity, see K. Shepsle, "The Strategy of Ambiguity: Uncertainty and Electoral Competition", American Political Science Review, 66, (1972), pp.555-68. Shepsle used mathematical models to demonstrate that the strategy would not maximise votes in all circumstances

17. G. Sartori, Democratic Theory, (Detroit,1972), p.207.

18. Page and Brody, *op.cit.*,

19. Prewitt and Nie, *op.cit.*, p.492.

voters might well find their only guides to choice in the parties favoured by their parents and/or by the social groups to which they belonged.[20] Deductive rationality, in the sense of an individual calculus about the costs and benefits in alternative electoral choices, would thus be severely circumscribed by the ambiguity of the electoral situation. Paradoxically, a strategy which was rational for the competing parties to pursue could obscure the grounds for rational choice available to the voters as individuals.

Whether ambiguity is, or is not a rational strategy for a party to pursue in a coalition situation (such as that applying to the Liberal and Country parties in Australia), uncertainty is also a common characteristic of Australian party competition. The internal party differences and confusion over actual policy stances noted in Chapter 3 in relation to the positions adopted by the Australian parties on the issues examined in the ASP survey suggest that differentiation between the parties would have been a difficult task for the electorate in 1969.

There were two controversial issues, however, on which the parties had been pursuing clearly opposed policy lines for a long period preceding the 1969 election: Australia's involvement in the Vietnam war, and the abolition or retention of conscription. On these issues, opinions of the ASP respondents were divided more clearly along partisan lines than on any other items (see Chapter 4). In such circumstances, with ambiguity in the political environment at a minimum,[21] a relatively high degree of knowledge of party policies would be expected.

Unfortunately, the ASP survey permitted the examination of

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20. Partisanship was conceived as a rational guide to voting choice in much the same fashion by Goldberg, "Social Determinism and Rationality as Bases of Party Identification", *op.cit.* See discussion of this in Chapter 1.

21. Even in these circumstances, some confusion about party policies was to be expected. Labor Party spokesmen, as reported in the media, were not clear as to whether a Labor government would withdraw totally from Vietnam or leave behind some Australian civilians as advisers.

perceptions of party policy on only one of these items, the Vietnam war. In this case, the criteria used for determining the *"correct"* policy positions of the parties were the official party policy (A.L.P. only), the party leaders' 1969 opening campaign speeches, and Press reports of party stances in the twelve month period preceding the election. On this basis, the *"correct"* assessment of Liberal/Country Party policy was best represented by alternative (A), the retention of troops, including conscripts, in Vietnam. Both alternatives (C) (maintaining only civilian advisers in Vietnam) and (D) (total withdrawal from Vietnam) could be classified as *"correct"* descriptions of the A.L.P.'s stance towards Australian participation in the Vietnam war.

An overwhelming proportion of the sample, 84.8% (1589), correctly identified the government parties' policy on Vietnam as alternative (A) (see Table 7.2). As was expected, knowledge of Labor's policy was not so widespread (see Table 7.3), with 60.0% (1123) of the sample choosing alternative (D) and only 16.0% (300) choosing (C) which, in fact, corresponded most closely to the official, written policy of the party. A combined total of 76.0% could be said to have a *"correct"* perception of the A.L.P.'s stance on Vietnam, a higher degree of knowledge than an opposition party might expect to register on all its policies. Very few respondents admitted their ignorance of either party's position, but these admissions would be underestimations of the extent of uncertainty within the electorate as some respondents would almost certainly have risked making a guess from the available alternatives.

FIGURE 7.4 PERCEIVED PARTY POLICY STANCES ON THE VIETNAM WAR

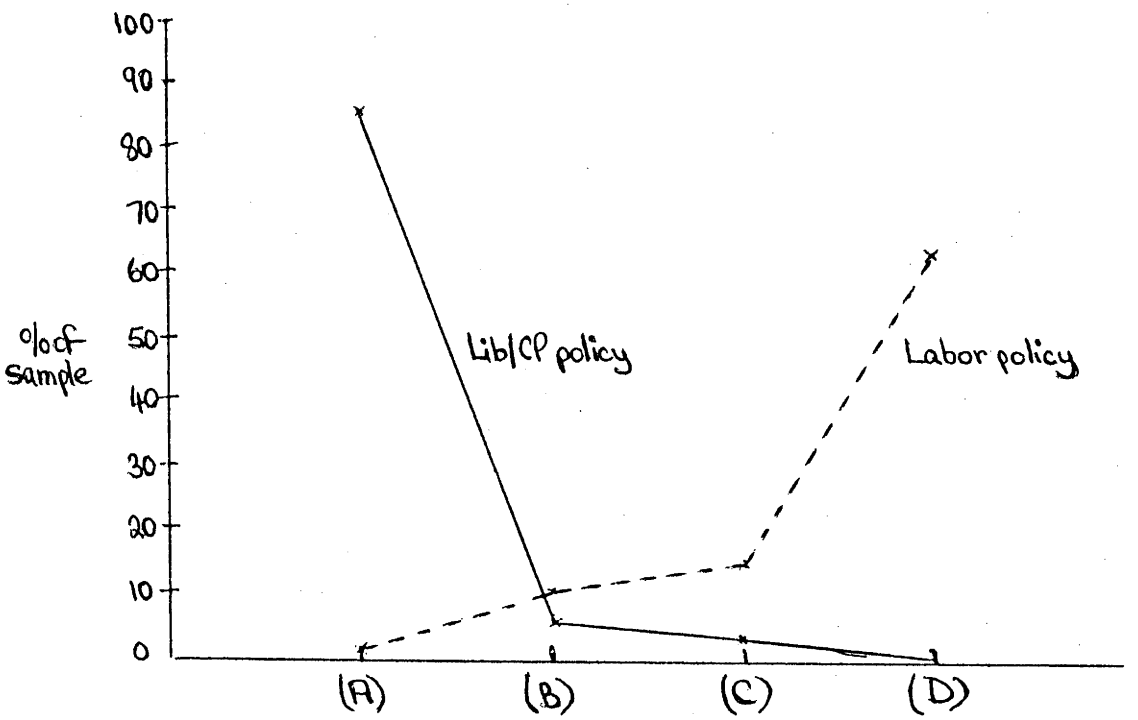


TABLE 7.2 PERCEPTIONS OF LIBERAL/COUNTRY PARTY POLICY ON VIETNAM

			%
(A)	Troops, including conscripts, in Vietnam	1589	84.8
(B)	Only volunteer troops in Vietnam	64	3.4
(C)	Only civilian experts in Vietnam	17	0.9
(D)	Stay out of Vietnam altogether	12	0.6
	Don't know; no answer	191	10.3
		1,873	100.0%

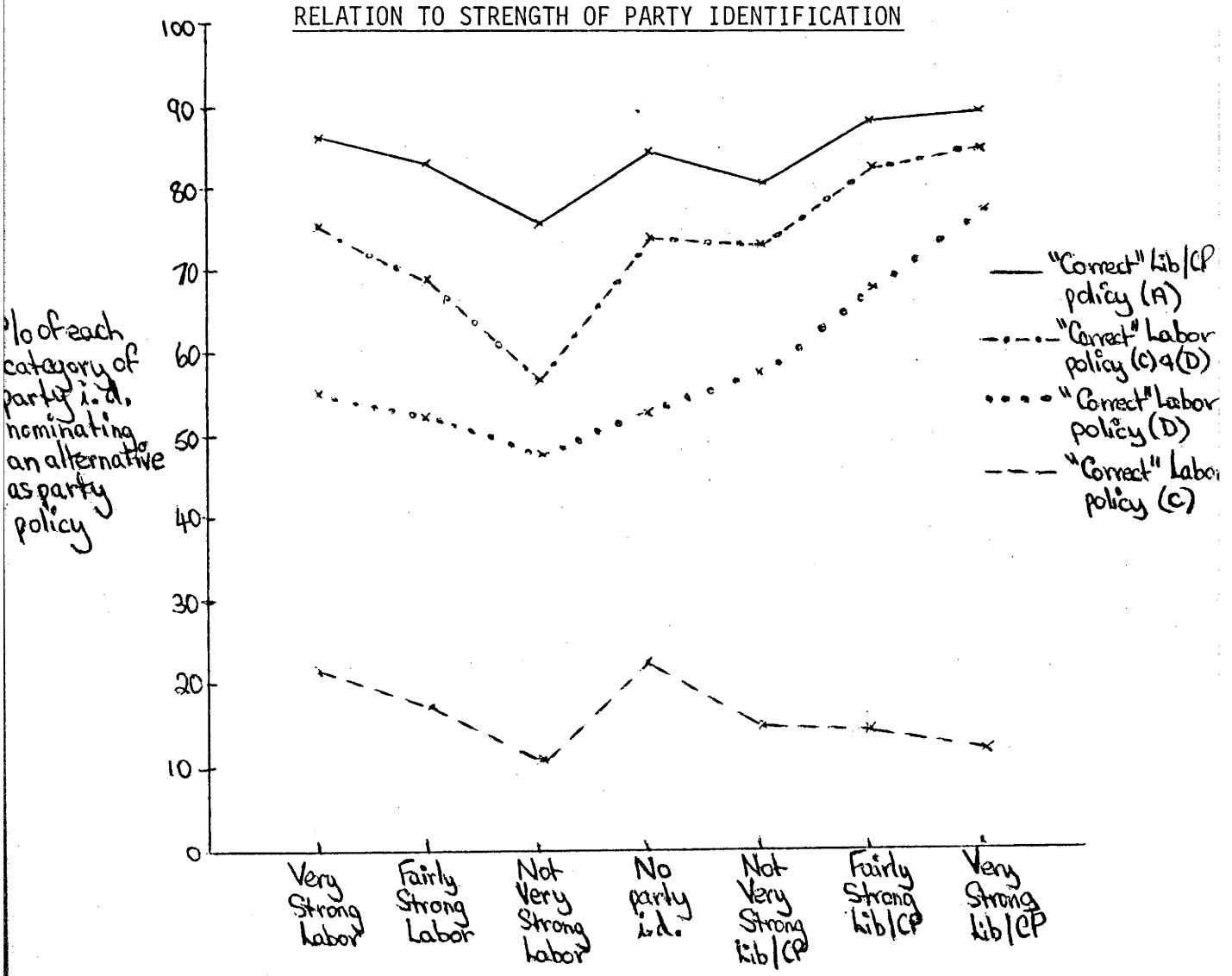
TABLE 7.3 PERCEPTIONS OF LABOR POLICY ON VIETNAM

			%
(A)	Troops, including conscripts, in Vietnam	44	2.3
(B)	Only volunteer troops in Vietnam	177	9.5
(C)	Only civilian experts in Vietnam	300	16.0
(D)	Stay out of Vietnam altogether	1123	60.0
	Don't know; no answer	229	12.2
		1,873	100.0%

The regular progression in the frequency of responses upwards from (A) to (D) for the Labor Party and downwards from (A) to (D) for the government parties (as set out in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 and illustrated in Figure 7.4) suggests that respondents were able to see the four alternatives as a scale, with Liberal/Country Party policy towards one end and Labor policy towards the other.

Respondents' knowledge of both government and opposition policies on Vietnam increased with the intensity of party identification, irrespective of the direction of loyalty. A decline in the *"Don't know"* response rate and an increase in the frequency of correct responses were apparent as the strength of partisan loyalty increased. The latter trend is illustrated graphically in Figure 7.5.

FIGURE 7.5 ACCURACY OF PERCEPTIONS OF PARTY POLICIES ON VIETNAM IN RELATION TO STRENGTH OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION



In regard to *both* government and opposition policy positions, Liberal/Country Party identifiers had a higher overall level of knowledge than Labor identifiers. Those with no party identification were more likely to perceive party policies accurately than were all but the strongest Labor identifiers.

In addition to the combined figures for *"correct"* perceptions of Labor policy, the graph shows separately the response patterns for alternatives (C) and (D). The necessity for this stems from the divergence in response rates amongst Liberal/Country Party identifiers depending upon whether they nominated alternative (C) or alternative (D) as corresponding to Labor's policy stance. The pattern of increased accuracy of perception with intensity of party loyalty apparent amongst all Labor partisans was not shared by those who identified with the government parties and nominated (C) as being equivalent to A.L.P. policy, although it was strongly in evidence for those Liberal/Country Party identifiers choosing alternative (D). This finding suggests that increased intensities of party loyalty, rather than being indicative purely of higher levels of knowledge about *all* parties' policies, may have been responsible for a tendency to perceive the opposing party as adopting a stance as far removed as possible from the policy of one's own party.

Combining answers to the two questionnaire items on government and opposition policy stances gave an indication of the degree to which the sample perceived the parties as adopting different positions on the Vietnam war, irrespective of the objective accuracy of their perception. In all, 83.3% of the sample allotted different alternatives on Vietnam to the competing parties - an indication of a widespread awareness within the electorate in 1969 that the parties presented some choice on the question of Australian involvement in the war.

56.0% of the sample chose a combination of *"troops, including*

conscripts in Vietnam" (A) as Liberal/Country Party policy and *"stay out of Vietnam altogether"* (D) as Labor policy; a further 15.1% chose the same for the Liberal/Country Party coalition, but felt Labor policy was nearest to *"civilian experts only in Vietnam"* (C). Following the earlier rule of regarding both (C) and (D) as correct interpretations of Labor policy, a total 71.1% of respondents could be classified as having correctly discriminated between government and opposition stances towards Vietnam.

Although these findings were indicative of an extraordinarily high level of accuracy in the perception of party policies on this particular issue, they did not, in themselves, demonstrate conclusively that the respondents' perceptions were derived from knowledge of their political environment. In the absence of such information, it can be hypothesized that voters would use their loyalty to a political party as a cue and simply allot the party of their choice the policy which corresponded with their own opinion. Such an action would correspond with Downs' model of rational decision-making which saw the acquisition of political information as a costly activity which would be avoided unless the voter expected a high yield, in the form of an altered estimation of the parties which would ultimately lead to a change in vote.[22] Without information about the political parties, the accuracy of a voter's assessment of party policy would depend on the degree of correspondence between his own opinion and actual party policy. If assessments of the policies of *two* competing parties were called for, their accuracy would also depend on the extent to which party policies were actually polarised, assuming that a voter in this situation would allot the opposite policy stance to the party which did not attract his loyalty.

It has been suggested that this type of psychological process may be indicative, not of a lack of information about the parties, but of

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22. Downs, *op.cit.*

unconscious attempts on the part of voters to reduce conflict between their own views and their image of the party to which they gave allegiance. In one of the earliest comprehensive voting studies, Berelson demonstrated the existence of a tendency for partisans to misperceive candidate and party stances in the direction of consistency with their own views.[23] As the strength of party identification increased, so did the tendency towards consistency, so that the process of perception operated *"to make the opponent into more of an 'enemy' and thus to magnify the potential for political cleavage"*.[24]

The ASP survey data enabled an examination of the degree of consistency between respondents' own views on Vietnam and their perception of party policy positions. When the party a respondent nominated as holding the same viewpoint as himself (irrespective of the actual nature of this opinion) was compared with the respondent's own party identification in Table 7.4, it became clear that the hypotheses discussed above did not apply to the majority of voters sampled on this particular issue.

TABLE 7.4 CONSISTENCY OF PARTY POLICY PERCEPTIONS ON THE VIETNAM WAR AND PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Party Identification	Party to which respondent allocated same policy on Vietnam as his own opinion						
	Lib/CP	Labor	Lib/CP and DLP	No Party	Other[25]	No answer; Don't know	
Lib/CP	27.4	6.6	11.5	42.4	5.8	6.3	100% (868)
Labor	5.3	34.9	2.7	44.7	2.8	9.6	100% (740)

23. Berelson et al., *op.cit.*, pp.220-2.

24. *ibid.*, p.225.

25. The category "Other" in this table includes various combinations of parties, including the DLP, whose policy on Vietnam was also examined in the ASP questionnaire. The proportions of respondents nominating other combinations of parties, apart from the Lib/CP and DLP combination (already included in the table), were so small as to be virtually negligible when considered separately.

Table 7.4 shows the proportions of those identifying with the major parties whose opinions on Vietnam were consistent with their perceptions of the party they supported - 38.9% of Liberal/Country Party identifiers (338 respondents) and 34.9% of Labor identifiers (258 respondents). The largest categories amongst both groups of supporters consisted of those respondents who failed to nominate either the government parties, the opposition or the D.L.P. as advancing a policy on Vietnam which corresponded with their own view. The bulk of the remaining respondents, not included in the table, were those who did not admit to any feelings of party loyalty and, therefore, could not be using party identification as their cue for perception of party policies. Some respondents, who identified with the D.L.P. or other minor parties, could have been acting in accordance with the consistency hypothesis, but their numbers were small. In the absence of a full breakdown of the 'DLP and Other Party' identification category, the figures here can be taken as providing a rough indication of the extent of consistency between opinions on the Vietnam war, party loyalties and perceptions of party policies within the ASP sample. According to this, a *maximum* of 596 respondents (or 31.8% of the sample) could have been using party identification as a cue in the absence of information about party policies, or could have been perceiving party stances in such a way as to maintain consistency between their own opinions and feelings of party loyalty.

This finding also has implications for a further hypothesis which has been advanced concerning the relevance of opinions on Vietnam to voting decisions in Australian elections. In 1969, Rawson pointed out the fallacy in assuming that Vietnam, as an issue, influenced voting behaviour simply because the opinions of those who voted for different sides were divided.[26] He suggested that, in fact, the opposite effect might be occurring and that the opinions on the Vietnam war measured by public

26. Rawson, *op.cit.*, p.60.

opinion polls may have been derived from the respondents' party loyalties. The ASP survey has demonstrated that this was clearly not the case for the bulk of its respondents in 1969, who held opinions on the war which were independent of their partisan leanings. Of this category, 829 respondents (or 44.3% of the total sample) gave answers which indicated that none of the major parties offered a policy on Vietnam which was in line with their own opinion. Most of this group (569 respondents) held the view that only volunteer troops should be fighting in Vietnam (B), a stance which was not, in fact, catered for by any of the parties in 1969. If these results can be extrapolated to the electorate at large, they indicate a substantial gap between the images of the parties in the 1969 election and the voters' own opinions on the Vietnam war.

Although the majority of the ASP respondents held opinions on Vietnam which were not congruent with their party identification and perceptions of party policy, an examination of the minority whose attitudes were consistent showed support for Berelson's hypothesis that the pull towards consistency varied with the strength of party loyalty. As Table 7.5 illustrates, the likelihood of correspondence between a respondent's own position on Vietnam and his perception of a party's policy stance increased as the strength of identification with that party increased. Conversely, the proportion whose views and/or perception of party policy were inconsistent with party identification increased as the intensity of party loyalty decreased. As this analysis was confined to whether or not a respondent identified a party's policy position as coinciding with his own opinion, it has not been possible to test Berelson's hypothesis that strong identifiers also tend to cast the opposing party in the role of the *"enemy"* by alloting it a stance contrary to their own.

The results to this point have demonstrated that the voters'

perceptions of party policies on Vietnam in 1969 were largely attributable to actual knowledge of party stances, rather than to the operation of psychological forces inclining voters to shape party images in accordance with their own views. That Vietnam was an unusual issue in the degree of knowledge displayed by voters is suggested by earlier findings of a generally low level of information about politics within the Australian electorate. It also stands in stark contrast to Aitkin's finding that

TABLE 7.5 CONSISTENCY OF PARTY POLICY PERCEPTIONS ON THE VIETNAM WAR AND PARTY IDENTIFICATION (DIRECTION AND STRENGTH)

	Party to which respondent allocated same policy on Vietnam as his/her own opinion						
	Lib/CP	Labor	Lib/CP and DLP	No party	Other	No answer; Don't know	
Very Strong Lib/CP	29.9	4.3	16.7	40.2	4.7	4.2	100% (234)
Fairly Strong Lib/CP	28.8	6.8	11.6	41.7	6.1	5.0	100% (458)
Not Very Strong Lib/CP	20.3	9.3	4.7	47.7	7.0	11.0	100% (172)
Not Very Strong Labor	12.5	21.4	4.5	43.8	3.5	14.3	100% (112)
Fairly Strong Labor	6.0	30.8	1.9	49.1	3.7	8.5	100% (318)
Very Strong Labor	2.0	44.6	3.0	40.6	1.6	8.2	100% (303)

a great majority of the ASP survey's 1967 respondents could not identify the major parties' policy stances on State aid for education, an issue which had also received a great deal of attention from the media at the time.[27]

Party identification has been shown to be related to respondents'

27. D. Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics, forthcoming. State aid for education is perhaps not a comparable issue as the electorate's knowledge of A.L.P. policy could justifiably be confused as a result of the bitter dissension within the party on this issue in the years preceding 1967.

perception of party policies in two ways:

1. overall, respondents who identified very strongly with either of the party blocs were more likely to perceive both government and opposition stances accurately than were those who felt their loyalty less strongly;
2. the likelihood of consistency between Liberal/Country Party identifiers' own opinions and their perception of government policy increased with the strength of their identification and, similarly, the likelihood of correspondence between Labor identifiers' own views and their perception of Labor party policy increased with the strength of their party identification.

These two trends are illustrative of the difficulty in untangling different aspects of party identification - are strong party identifiers more knowledgeable about politics (see previous chapter) and, therefore, more likely to perceive party policies correctly? or are they more susceptible to psychological pressures towards consistency? or both?

The hypothesis that the increased accuracy of perception of party policies with heightened intensity of party identification was at least partially attributable to greater knowledge of the political environment received support from the finding that accuracy of perception was also related to interest in politics and to education. The proportion of respondents who correctly identified both Liberal/Country Party and Labor policy positions on Vietnam increased as their degree of interest in politics and level of education increased.[28] These two variables have already been shown to be positively related to strength of partisan loyalty (for either party). The higher overall level of knowledge of party policies amongst Liberal/Country Party identifiers, in comparison with their Labor counterparts, also suggested that differential educational levels contributed to increased accuracy of perception amongst strong identifiers - government party identifiers having, on the whole, higher

28. See Appendix III for tables detailing these relationships.

educational backgrounds than opposition supporters.

Overseas findings, although not strictly comparable, provide support for the hypothesis that accuracy of perception is related to greater knowledge of politics amongst strong partisans, but indicate that this is not a simple relationship. Berelson's early U.S. studies established that accuracy of perception was positively related to the amount of mass media exposure, interest in politics and educational level.[29] Froman and Skipper investigated these findings in relation both to strength of party identification and to the type of issue involved.[30] Using an *"average misperception score"*, rather than a direct measure of the accuracy of perception of party policies, Froman and Skipper observed less misperception amongst stronger party identifiers on position issues, but *more* misperception amongst the same voters on style issues. Accuracy of perception increased with educational level on both types of issues. The author's explanation for their findings lay with the nature of style issues - *"since style issues are ambiguous and emotionally charged they tend to be subject to more misperception than position issues"*.[31] Apart from the suggestion that aroused emotions are not conducive to accurate perception, this argument is based on an observation (discussed earlier in this chapter) that knowledge of party policies within the electorate is dependent on the degree of actual ambiguity in the political situation. Unfortunately, Froman and Skipper's results with regard to style issues could not be tested here, as Australia's involvement in the Vietnam war was clearly a position issue, of a highly controversial nature, where ambiguity in party positions had been reduced to a minimum.

It was possible, however, to examine the effects of intensity of partisanship on perception of party policies, independent from the influence

29. Berelson, *op.cit.*, Chapter 10.

30. Froman and Skipper, *op.cit.*

31. *ibid.*, p.271.

of educational background. When the education variable was controlled, strength of party identification was still seen to be associated with increased accuracy of perception amongst respondents with none/primary education and secondary education. Numbers in the tertiary education category were too small for reliable analysis, but it appeared that strength of party identification was not related to accurate knowledge of party policies at this level of education. The exception to the general increase in accuracy with intensity of party loyalty amongst Liberal/ Country Party identifiers nominating alternative (C) as Labor policy (see Figure 7.5) persisted at both none/primary and secondary education levels. Although the increased knowledge of party policies with strength of party identification *may* have been attributable to the sole influence of education at the tertiary level, intensity of party identification clearly had some independent effect on accuracy of perception amongst those with less education.

Whether, in the absence of educational influences, the continuing increases in awareness of party policy stances on Vietnam resulted from greater psychological pressures towards consistency of attitudes amongst those intensely loyal to one or other of the political parties could not be finally established without the aid of more sophisticated techniques of multi-variate analysis. An examination of the party images of those very strong identifiers whose own opinions on Vietnam were consistent with actual party policies (45.3% (106) of Very Strong Lib/CP identifiers; 54.8% (166) of Very Strong Labor identifiers) could also tell little about the nature of the influence of partisanship on accuracy of perception. In each of these cases, the great majority of respondents perceived both parties' policy stances correctly (87.7% of the Very Strong Lib/CP identifiers who favoured alternative (A) - n=106; 80.1% of the Very Strong Labor identifiers who favoured alternatives (C) or (D) - n=166), and were more likely to do so than respondents holding similar views but

with weaker feelings of party identification - an outcome which could result *either* from increased knowledge of politics or from greater pressure towards consistency of attitudes. Accuracy of perception and consistency were compatible in this situation.

The high popularity of alternative (B) (the retention of volunteer troops only in Vietnam) amongst supporters of both parties, provided an opportunity to examine the impact of pressures towards consistency on the perception of party policies for different levels of party identification where accuracy of perception was *not* compatible with consistency. If very strong party identifiers amongst those holding opinion (B) still perceived party policies accurately (no party, in reality, having supported this alternative), then their perception must have been influenced by some other variables apart from a psychological drive for consistency.

Due to the popularity of alternative (B), a relatively large number of cases was available on which to test this hypothesis. 40.2% (94) of Very Strong Liberal/Country Party identifiers held this opinion, as did 37.6% (114) of Very Strong Labor identifiers. Their perceptions of party policy stances were as follows:

Very Strong Lib/CP identifiers with opinion (B) (n=94)

83.0% (78) correctly assessed both parties' policy positions (AC;AD)

7.5% (7) chose (B) as Lib/CP policy - the perceptions of these respondents could have been subject to pressures towards consistency.

Very Strong Labor identifiers with opinion (B) (n=114)

58.8% (67) correctly assessed both parties' policy positions (AC;AD)

22.0% (25) chose (B) as Labor policy - the perceptions of these respondents could have been subject to pressures towards consistency.

Amongst Liberal/Country Party identifiers, weaker levels of identification were associated with less accuracy of perception; whereas the proportions

correctly identifying party policy positions did not differ significantly according to strength of party identification amongst Labor supporters who shared opinion (B). The increased accuracy of perception, in defiance of any pressures towards consistency of outlook, as strength of identification with the government parties increased, was probably the result of higher education amongst these respondents. More education would have been accompanied by more interest in, and knowledge about the political sphere, which would, in turn, have ensured that voters holding opinion (B) knew it did not correspond with the policies of any of the major parties towards Vietnam in 1969.

The foregoing analysis has attempted to untangle the influence on perception of two aspects of intensity of party identification - higher educational level (and consequent knowledge of political affairs); and a hypothesized drive towards consistency of attitudes. It has only partially succeeded in this, but has demonstrated conclusively that a substantial number of ASP respondents did *not* misperceive party policies in the direction of reducing inconsistencies between their attitudes towards the Vietnam war and their party loyalties. Most respondents had, in fact, assimilated information about party stances on the Vietnam issue in a manner which met the criteria for inductive rationality (see Chapter 1), although some, clearly, had not taken any subsequent steps to adapt their own belief systems to accommodate this conflicting information. Whether they preferred to ignore its implications or tolerated inconsistencies on the Vietnam war issue because other issues, or their partisan loyalties, were more important to them must remain matters for conjecture.

Although the ASP results did cast some doubt on the extent to which psychological theories of cognitive dissonance[32] can be applied to voting behaviour, they did support the arguments of Berelson, and of Froman and Skipper that, ultimately, the accuracy of perception of party policies

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32. L. Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, (Stanford, Cal. 1966).

rests on the controversiality of an issue within the community and the amount of actual ambiguity in the parties' stances.

According to the ASP survey, Australian voters in 1969 were able to discriminate between the parties on the basis of their Vietnam policies, demonstrating a very high level of knowledge of the respective party stances. To a certain extent, voters' own attitudes on the Vietnam war were divided along party lines, but a sizeable proportion of the sample was of the opinion that the conscripts serving in Vietnam should be brought home, leaving the volunteer troops to continue fighting. 70.0% of these respondents (n=813) recognised that none of the parties had adopted this option as party policy. Small proportions mistakenly allocated their own opinion to one or more of the major parties.

For those voters able to link their own opinion with the policy advanced by either the government or the opposition, the Vietnam war *may* have been an influential factor in determining which party they would support at the 1969 Federal election. . A breakdown of respondent's opinions and perception of party policy according to their 1969 vote, however, demonstrated that a large number failed to make this linkage in a way consistent with their voting decision. From Table 7.6 it can be calculated that a proportion amounting to 66.3% of the total sample held a view on Vietnam which did not correspond with their perception of the policy of the party for whom they voted. The further elimination of 2.7% of the sample who did not volunteer an opinion on the issue leaves a remainder of 31%, being the maximum proportion whose voting decision could have been influenced by the Vietnam war.

TABLE 7.6 OPINION ON VIETNAM BY PERCEPTION OF PARTY STANCE ON THAT OPINION AND DIRECTION OF 1969 VOTE

Respondents' Opinion	Party to which R attached this opn.	1969 vote: Lib/CP	Labor	Other	Total		
(A) Troops, including conscripts fighting in Vietnam	Lib/CP policy	44.8	7.0	6.8	58.6%	x correct	
	Lib/CP & DLP policy	20.1	4.5	6.1	30.7%	x correct	
	Labor policy	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.5%		
	No party's policy	2.0	0.9	0.5	3.4%		
	Other	3.2	2.3	1.4	6.9%		
	Total	70.3%	14.9%	14.9%		100%	(N=442) (=23.6%)
(B) Only volunteer troops fighting in Vietnam	Lib/CP policy	3.4	0.5	0.4	4.3%		
	Labor policy	1.7	8.1	1.1	10.9%		
	DLP policy	3.2	1.2	1.0	5.4%		
	No party's policy	32.2	32.1	5.7	70.0%	x correct	
	Other	3.8	4.2	1.4	9.4%		
	Total	44.3%	46.1%	9.6%		100%	(N=813) (=43.4%)
(C) Only civilian experts in Vietnam	Lib/CP policy	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.9%		
	Labor policy	4.7	22.7	3.4	30.8%	x correct	
	No party's policy	21.9	33.1	7.7	62.7%		
	Other	3.4	1.7	0.5	5.6%		
	Total	30.9%	57.5%	11.6%		100%	(N=233) (=12.4%)
(D) Stay out of Vietnam altogether	Lib/CP policy	0.3	0.3	0.6	1.2%		
	Labor policy	9.0	43.0	3.9	55.9%	x correct	
	No party's policy	5.4	19.1	5.1	29.6%		
	Other	3.6	7.2	2.5	13.3%		
	Total	18.3%	69.6%	12.1%		100%	(N=335) (=17.9%)

The row totals in Table 7.6 illustrate the low degree of misperception of party policy amongst those respondents choosing alternatives (A) or (B) on Vietnam. Although correct perceptions were less apparent in the case of opinions (C) and (D), there was no evidence that respondents were misperceiving party policy in a direction which was consistent with their 1969 vote. 62.7% of those in favour of (C) in fact thought that none of the parties supported it; a tiny 0.9% voted for the government and incorrectly perceived its policy to be (C); 4.7% voted

Liberal/Country Party, although they correctly identified Labor policy as corresponding with their own opinion (C).

Similar trends could be observed amongst those respondents holding different views about the war - except for opinion (B) which provided the only case of a significant number of voters misperceiving party policy in a way consistent with their voting decision. 11.5% of those supporting (B) incorrectly identified it as representing the stance of the party for which they voted (3.4% Lib/CP; 8.1% Labor).[33] Converting these percentages to proportions of the total sample, however, resulted in precious little support for the hypothesis that misperception of party policy stances occurs in the direction of reducing conflict and strain within a voter's attitude structure. On the whole, the ASP respondents were able to tolerate a conflict between their vote, their opinion and their perception of the policy of the party they supported.

These findings would not be expected in relation to the other issues covered in the ASP questionnaire (except, perhaps, that of conscription) owing to lower levels of exposure in the media and less controversiality within the community. It is unfortunate that the survey design did not allow an examination of respondents' perceptions of party policies on issues where information transmitted to the electorate about the parties would have been of an ambiguous nature. This chapter has shown that respondents generally perceived some difference between the parties and shared certain images of the government and opposition which differentiated between the parties' capacities for tackling particular domestic and foreign policy problems. It has only been in regard to the Vietnam war, however, that the data have been suited to an examination of Campbell's pre-condition for issue voting that ".. *(an Issue) must be accompanied by some perception*

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33. People listed in the table under "Other" (both for perception of party policy and for 1969 vote) may have misperceived party policy in a direction consistent with their vote, but the numbers are likely to be very small as a proportion of the total.

that one party represents the person's own position better than do the other parties".[34] The vast majority of respondents were sufficiently knowledgeable to make this link on the question of Australian involvement in the Vietnam war, but a large proportion did not, in fact, vote in a manner consistent with their perceptions of the parties.

34. Campbell et al., The American Voter, p.170.

CHAPTER 8

SALIENT ISSUES

A further dimension on which issues can be assessed is their degree of salience to the voters. An issue must have achieved some prominence in a voter's mind if it is to affect his voting decision. Various operational definitions of *"salience"* can be used to estimate this degree of prominence, thus providing further information on the bonds between voter and issue which are a necessary complement to the perception of links between issue and party studied in the previous chapter.[1]

The concept of salience is an extension of attempts to measure the affect associated with an attitude by assessing the intensity of feelings with which an opinion is held.[2] The advantage of salience as a concept lies in the use of open-ended survey questions which measure both cognition and affect through ensuring that the respondent has some awareness of the issue, can formulate an opinion on it and is concerned about it. In using these questions, D.E. RePass asserted that, "... *the researcher comes much closer to measuring an attitude which is on the respondent's mind (salient) at the time of the interview - an attitude which presumably was salient before the interview and will remain so afterwards*".[3]

The type of questions usually employed to measure salience, in fact, plumb a further dimension of the links between issue and voter - they establish the relevance of a particular issue to a voting decision at a particular election. It could be said that they investigate the bond between issue and election in the voter's mind. Other preconditions for

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1. See Butler and Stokes, *op.cit.*, pp.230-234 for the importance of establishing these bonds as pre-conditions to issue voting.

2. Early studies, such as Campbell et al, The American Voter, restricted their consideration of the links between issue and voter to the high affect, or intensity of feeling, associated with an attitude.

3. RePass, *op.cit.*, p.391.

issue voting - awareness of an issue, intense feelings about it, linkage of the issue to party policy - will not provide sufficient motivation for action if the voter does not see that issue as relevant to the vote he is called upon to cast at a particular election.

The ASP questionnaire asked, *"In your opinion, what are the most important problems the Federal government should do something about?"* In doing so, it was inviting respondents to specify the issues important to them which could be tackled by Federal government action and thus were presumably of relevance to a voting decision at a Federal election.[4] This indirect approach has been preferred by survey researchers in recent years to the use of direct requests for the reasons behind a voting decision. Results gained from the latter approach are thought to have been highly dubious, owing to the complexity of the task of sorting out the influences on voting behaviour (likely to be almost as difficult for the voter himself as for researchers) and the tendency for respondents to give the replies they feel are expected by their interviewers.

Respondents to the ASP survey could nominate as many problems as they liked, but only the first five were coded in the results, on the assumption that additional problems could not really be said to have been uppermost in the voter's mind. Unlike work carried out in the United States by the University of Michigan Survey Research Center,[5] the ASP questionnaire did not provide follow-up questions intended to refine the estimation of salience. U.S. respondents were asked how worried they were about each problem they had nominated (extremely worried, fairly worried, or just quite interested) and whether the problem was *"on their mind a lot"*, so that problems could be classified as *"highly salient"* only if they met these additional criteria. Unfortunately, the only refinement possible in

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4. Behind this survey question lies the assumption that electors were casting their votes for a government, rather than for the election of an individual candidate to Federal Parliament.

5. See RePass, *op.cit.*

the analysis of ASP results was the separation of first-mentioned problems from the rest, assuming that the first problem was of greatest importance to the voter.[6]

Most of the ASP respondents did have a list of *"important problems"*. Only 166 (8.9%) subjects failed to nominate a problem; 310 (16.5%) gave only one answer; and the remaining 1,397 (74.6%) were able to suggest two or more problems of importance to them:

TABLE 8.1 NUMBER OF IMPORTANT PROBLEMS MENTIONED

		%
None, no answer	166	8.9
1 problem	310	16.5
2 problems	584	31.2
3 problems	494	26.4
4 problems	214	11.4
5 or more problems	105	5.6
	1,873	100.0%

As was to be expected, a wide variety of problems was included amongst the 4,341 problems mentioned, ranging from international issues, such as the Vietnam war and relations with Great Britain, through major national issues, such as the economy and social services, to State and local issues, such as sewerage and council facilities for teenagers. The inclusion of the latter type of problem provided a clear indication that the Australian electorate did not discriminate amongst issues on the basis of the formal division of powers between different levels of government, at least in the 1969 Federal election. The Federal government was seen as potentially capable of doing something about an enormous range of problems. The great variety of problems also nominated for Federal

6. There was a possible fallacy in this procedure as the respondent may have not immediately confided to the interviewer his prime concern about a highly controversial issue.

government attention in the United States was remarked upon by D.E. RePass in his analysis of the University of Michigan survey data for 1960 and 1964.[7] In response to the same type of questions asked of British electors operating within a unitary system of government, Butler and Stokes found a similar range of important problems.[8]

Some indication of the variety of problems nominated is given by Table 8.2 which shows the twelve most frequently mentioned problems in relation to the total number of problems and in relation to the size of the sample. The most common problems were education and pensions - no other issues accounted for more than ten percent of the total number of mentions. The level of concern about these issues within the sample is demonstrated most clearly by the fact that 36.7% of respondents included education somewhere in their list of problems and 30.3% mentioned the problem of pensions. Some of the categories used by the coders overlapped - social welfare issues taken together (including pensions and health, as well as the general social services category) comprised 27.5% of all problems mentioned, and were of some concern to 63.9% of the sample.

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7. RePass, *op.cit.*, p.391.

8. Butler and Stokes, *op.cit.*, Chapter 15.

TABLE 8.2 MOST COMMON IMPORTANT PROBLEMS

		% of total no. of problems (n = 4341)	% of sample (n = 1873)
Defence (including national service)	361	8.3	19.3
Vietnam	261	6.0	13.9
Education	687	15.8	36.7
Social Services	243	5.6	13.0
Pensions	567	13.0	30.3
Health	385	8.9	20.6
Housing	204	4.7	10.9
Roads and Transport	145	3.3	7.7
National Development	260	6.0	13.9
Economy	302	7.0	16.1
Assistance to primary industry	111	2.6	5.9
Commonwealth-State relations	106	2.4	5.7
Other issues	709	16.3	37.9
	4341	100.0%	

Restricting the analysis to those issues of highest salience to the voters, by considering only the first-mentioned problem in each respondent's list, resulted in very little difference in the relative frequency and range of issues mentioned (see Table 8.3). Education (nominated by 17.4% of the sample) and pensions (13.3% of the sample) remained far and away the issues of greatest concern to the ASP respondents. Defence came next, being nominated first by 8.4% of the sample. The Vietnam war (6.9%), the economy (6.3%) and health (6.2%) attracted approximately the same degree of concern. The broad category of *"social services"* was listed first by only 3.8% of respondents. However, when considered as a composite category together with pensions and health, it became evident that nearly a quarter of the sample (23.3%) was primarily concerned with social

welfare issues.

TABLE 8.3 MOST COMMON FIRST-MENTIONED IMPORTANT PROBLEMS

(Arranged in order of frequency)

		%
Education	325	17.4
Pensions	250	13.3
Defence (including national service)	157	8.4
Vietnam	130	6.9
Economy	118	6.3
Health	116	6.2
National development	104	5.6
Housing	80	4.3
Social services	71	3.8
Commonwealth-State relations	56	3.0
Assistance to primary industry	53	2.8
Other issues	247	13.2
No problem, no answer	166	8.9
	1873	100.0%

This high level of concern with social welfare was similar to that found by Butler and Stokes in an earlier, 1963 study of the British electorate.[9] The 1969 Australian respondents were markedly more concerned with education and less concerned with housing issues than their British counterparts of six years earlier. Amongst American voters questioned in 1968, the Vietnam war was of highest salience, followed by racial and public order issues, and then social welfare.[10]

9. *ibid.*, p.414.

10. Kirkpatrick and Jones, *op.cit.*, p.699. It was not surprising that education was not seen as an important problem the Federal government should do something about, as its administration and financing is primarily a local matter in the United States.

Using panel data from the two waves of the ASP survey, Aitkin showed that the problems important to Australian voters in 1969 had changed very little from those of 1967.[11] Education and health appeared to have become issues of greater concern by 1969, but overall the impression was one of stability. Gallup polls conducted during the 1960's had also consistently pointed to education, health and pensions as the most important issues for the electorate.[12]

The Gallup polls relating specifically to the 1969 election, however, produced a rather different result. In June 1969, the Gallup organisation asked its respondents to nominate the chief issue which would be of concern to them at the end-of-year Federal election. Education and the Vietnam war, each being mentioned by 14.5% of the sample, emerged as the chief issues, followed by pensions, with 11.4% of the sample.[13] Later polls in August and October showed the Vietnam war as the chief election issue (although it was chosen by only 10.6% and 12.1% of respondents in each case) when respondents were forced to choose from a restricted list of issues which included State aid and the means test, but not the more general issues of education and pensions.[14] In both these polls, approximately 60% of the sample did not consider any of the issues listed to be of sufficient importance to determine their vote at the approaching Federal election. The lack of spontaneity and the restricted choice of issues in the later polls meant that they did not, in fact, provide a valid test of salience.

The open-ended question posed by Gallup in June differed from the ASP questionnaire's approach in that it specifically linked the respondent's most important issue to his voting decision at the coming election. The

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11. D. Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics, forthcoming.

12. *ibid.*

13. Australian Gallup Poll, No. 204, 21st June 1969.

14. Australian Gallup Polls, No. 205, 15th August 1969; No. 206, 4th October 1969.

wider expression of concern with the Vietnam war registered amongst members of the Gallup sample *may* have been a result of this difference in wording. Although some logical contradiction is involved, it is quite possible that voters may have intended to cast their vote on the basis of party policies towards Vietnam, whilst not really feeling that the war was a problem which any Federal government could do something constructive about (a position implied by the ASP wording). If this was so, the Gallup poll results would prove a more accurate indicator of the significance of the Vietnam war for voting behaviour in the 1969 election that results obtained by the ASP survey. At this point, it can be concluded that education and pensions were issues of relatively high salience within the Australian electorate at the time, but final conclusions on the salience of Vietnam will have to be left to a later stage in the analysis.

The types of problems which were of high salience (by the first-listed criterion) did vary to some extent according to the partisan loyalties of the respondents. Some issues - the economy, education, social services (general category) - were mentioned with almost equal frequency by Liberal/Country Party and Labor identifiers. Others, however, were more likely to be of concern to the supporters of a particular party; the most striking example of this being the nomination of pensions as an important problem requiring Federal government attention by more than twice as many Labor identifiers as government supporters.

As the analysis was restricted to the eleven most often first-listed problems (the criterion for inclusion being at least 50 mentions), it was not possible to make any firm conclusions as to the sort of problems which enjoyed a higher level of salience amongst those identifying with a particular party. But it did appear that party supporters were more likely to nominate areas with which their party had shown concern in the past. Labor identifiers were more concerned with pensions, the Vietnam war, housing and health; whereas Liberal/Country Party identifiers

nominated defence, national development, Commonwealth-State relations and assistance to primary industry with greater frequency (see Table 8.4). D.E. RePass, who observed the same tendency amongst American voters, suggested that it could be due either to selective attention to political communications amongst party supporters, or to the different life situations characteristic of those identifying with opposing parties.[15] The greater preoccupation of Labor identifiers with the problem of pensions was understandable in either of these terms.

Salient problems for those respondents who claimed to be free of party ties included education and pensions, in keeping with findings for

TABLE 8.4 SALIENCE OF ISSUES ACCORDING TO PARTY IDENTIFICATION

	Party Identification			
	Lib/CP	Labor	No party identification	Total Sample
Education	18.1	16.8	16.7	17.4
Pensions	9.0	18.8	10.8	13.3
Defence	10.5	5.5	6.5	8.4
Vietnam War	4.8	8.5	11.3	6.9
Economy	6.2	6.5	6.5	6.3
Health	5.5	7.6	3.8	6.2
National development	7.3	3.9	4.8	5.6
Housing	3.6	5.8	1.1	4.3
Social services	3.3	4.3	3.2	3.8
Commonwealth-State Relations	4.0	1.8	3.8	3.0
Assistance to primary industry	5.1	0.5	1.1	2.8
Other	13.2	12.0	20.4	13.2
No problem, no answer	9.4	8.0	10.0	8.9
	100% (868)	100% (740)	100% (186)	100% (1873)

15. RePass, *op.cit.*, p.395.

the general sample. The exception, however, was provided by the Vietnam war which was nominated as the most important problem by 11.3% of non-identifiers, in comparison with only 6.9% of the total sample. The higher salience of the Vietnam war amongst these respondents suggested that the overall frequency of its mention as an important problem may have underestimated the significance of Vietnam as an issue affecting voting behaviour at the 1969 Federal election, particularly if it could be established that non-identifiers were more likely to switch their vote than others (see Chapter 9).

In addition to the presence and direction of party identification, certain social and demographic characteristics were associated with the types of issues nominated as most important problems. The likelihood of respondents specifying a problem at all was also dependent on differences in these variables. People with very little interest in politics, unskilled workers, people with low educational levels, older respondents and females were more likely than others either not to answer the question, or to be unable to suggest an important problem.[16]

Some interesting differences in the types of problems mentioned according to interest in politics, education, occupation, age and sex emerged when the four issues of highest salience (education, pensions, defence, the Vietnam war) were compared.

Education, the most common problem, was most likely to be of concern to those with a high degree of interest in politics, those in professional and semi-professional occupations, and those respondents who themselves had been educated at the tertiary level. It drew most attention from respondents in the 24-45 year age groupings, and was mentioned more

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16. This finding was not unexpected, but disturbing. It would appear highly unlikely that these people had no problems; but, rather, that they could not verbalise them in response to a survey question. The use of an open-ended question here may have avoided the artificial imposition of opinions on respondents who had no views on a particular issue, but it has still neglected those voters who could not readily articulate their views.

frequently by women than by men.[17]

Pensions were more likely to seem a problem to a very different set of people - manual workers, and those with the lowest levels of interest in politics and with the least amount of education. Not surprisingly, the older respondents were, the more likely they were to nominate pensions as their first answer (except for the 76-95 year old group, whose numbers were small and many of whom did not specify a problem at all). As with education, though, females were more often concerned with pensions than males.

Defence (including conscription), particularly, and Vietnam, to a lesser extent, were more likely to be mentioned by those with *"a good deal"* or *"some"* interest in politics, and with higher levels of education. The two issues appealed to quite different occupational groupings, however - defence was of most concern to those in professional occupations, whilst the Vietnam war was of most importance for office and sales workers. Of all the age groups,[18] 21-23 year olds were most likely to be concerned with both Vietnam and with defence (the latter probably due to the inclusion of conscription within this category by those coding the data). Respondents older than 23 years were decreasingly likely to see the Vietnam war as their most important problem, whereas the likelihood of defence being mentioned gradually increased again after age 45. Male respondents were slightly more likely to nominate either defence or Vietnam than were females.

Quite clearly, there were some interrelationships amongst the different socio-demographic variables in their association with the types of problems which were highly salient. Also, it was apparent that some of the differences observed previously in response patterns of Liberal/Country Party and Labor identifiers could be explained by the variation

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17. See Appendix IV for tables setting out these and following results.

18. Except the small number of 76-95 year olds.

in social composition of the two blocs of party supporters. Sorting out the relative contributions of partisan loyalty, on the one hand, and socio-demographic variables, on the other, to the types of problems perceived as important did not appear to be a worthwhile exercise, in view of the way the problems themselves had been classified by those coding the ASP data. The inclusion within the same category of respondents whose views on the correct approach to a problem were diametrically opposed[19] meant that this particular question, whilst giving an indication of the general problem areas which were salient to Australian voters in 1969, was not very meaningful to the analysis of voting behaviour unless accompanied by information on the party each respondent saw as most fitted to handle his problem.

The questionnaire did, in fact, provide this information in the form of two follow-up items asking respondents to specify the party which they felt would be most likely to do what they wanted on the first two problems mentioned. The extent to which the parties were perceived differently in this regard has already been analysed in the previous chapter. Only a small proportion of the sample admitted to seeing no difference between the parties' capacities as problem-solvers - the remainder appeared to be influenced in their answers by partisan loyalties. Regardless of the type of problem specified as important, the party perceived as best able to handle it was likely to coincide with the respondent's party identification (see Table 8.5).

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19. For example, respondents who were pro- and anti- Australia's troop commitment to Vietnam were all included within the same category, if they nominated the Vietnam war as an important problem. No differentiation could be made between pro- and anti- respondents without going back to an inspection of the individual questionnaires.

TABLE 8.5 PARTIES AS "PROBLEM-SOLVERS" BY PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Party nominated to handle first-mentioned problem

Party Identification	Lib/CP	Labor	No difference Between Parties	Other Party; No Answer, Don't Know	
Lib/CP	47.8	20.0	12.0	20.2	100% (868)
Labor	74.1	5.9	5.3	14.7	100% (740)
No Party Identification	18.3	37.1	12.4	32.2	100% (186)

This trend was much less apparent amongst government supporters than amongst those who supported the opposition. Liberal/Country Party identifiers were also far more likely to see *"no difference"* between the parties. A further analysis by strength as well as direction of party identification showed clearly, however, that the likelihood of perceiving a party as a problem-solver increased with the strength of feelings of loyalty towards that particular party (whether Liberal/Country Party or Labor) and displayed a corresponding decrease as the intensity of loyalty towards the opposing party increased.[20] In statistical terms, the two variables displayed a moderately strong degree of correlation (Cramer's V=+.42) which was significant at the .1% level.

In the absence of any party allegiance, Labor was more likely to be favoured for its ability to solve salient problems - 37.1% of those who did not identify with a party nominated Labor, whilst only 18.3% suggested the Liberal/Country Party coalition. Despite the association of responses with party identification, this preference for Labor extended into the ranks of weak Liberal/Country Party identifiers, with the result that 43.2% of all respondents nominated the Labor Party to handle their most important problem (47.4% of the 1,707 respondents who nominated a problem), in comparison with a total 39.5% of the sample which identified with the

20. See Table 7.1 (Chapter 7).

Labor Party.

Particular types of problems, too, were seen as the province of particular parties.[21] The explanation for this, however, appeared to lie in the observed variation amongst the sorts of issues that were salient to Liberal/Country Party, as compared with Labor supporters. The differences illustrated in the previous chapter were thus not so much an indication that parties were perceived to have different capacities in different areas, as an outcome of the inter-relationships amongst partisanship, salient problems and perceptions of the parties.

Controlling for the influence of partisanship did produce some interesting comparisons between the types of problems which were seen as best handled by one or other of the major parties. Amongst Liberal/Country Party identifiers, problems of defence and assistance to primary industry were overwhelmingly seen as areas which the Liberal/Country Party coalition could best handle, whereas the government was only marginally favoured over Labor to tackle pensions and health, and nearly one quarter of those for whom the economy was highly salient saw no difference between the parties. None of the salient problem areas was seen by more than 30% of Labor identifiers to be capable of solution by the Liberal and Country Parties. The latter parties were nominated to handle the problem of defence by 29.3% of Labor supporters, compared with 61.0% who suggested the Labor Party. At the other extreme, health, social services, pensions, education and the Vietnam war were overwhelmingly regarded by Labor supporters to be areas which the Labor Party itself could best tackle (see Tables 8.6 and 8.7).

A comparison of the results for Liberal/Country Party and Labor identifiers suggested that the latter were more strongly influenced by party loyalties than the former in their nomination of the party best suited to handle the problem most salient to them. Three problems in

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21. See Figure 7.3 (Chapter 7).

TABLE 8.6 PARTIES NOMINATED TO SOLVE DIFFERENT PROBLEMS

BY LIBERAL/COUNTRY PARTY IDENTIFIERS

	Party nominated to handle problem				
	Lib/CP	Labor	No Difference	Other	
Education	45.2	23.6	17.2	14.0	100% (157)
Pensions	41.0	37.2	11.5	10.3	100% (78)
Defence	78.0	11.0	0.0	11.0	100% (91)
Vietnam War	50.0	33.3	7.1	9.6	100% (42)
Economy	42.6	18.5	24.1	14.8	100% (54)
Health	45.8	35.4	10.4	8.4	100% (48)
National Development	58.7	20.6	15.9	4.8	100% (63)
Housing	48.4	22.6	16.1	12.9	100% (31)
Social Services	51.7	34.5	10.3	3.5	100% (29)
Commonwealth-State Relations	42.9	22.9	11.4	22.8	100% (35)
Assistance to Primary Industry	70.5	6.8	13.6	9.1	100% (44)
Other Issues	53.9	13.9	16.5	15.7	100% (115)

TABLE 8.7 PARTIES NOMINATED TO SOLVE DIFFERENT PROBLEMS

BY LABOR IDENTIFIERS

	Party nominated to handle problem				
	Lib/CP	Labor	No Difference	Other	
Education	2.4	83.9	6.5	7.2	100% (124)
Pensions	5.8	87.1	4.3	2.8	100% (139)
Defence	29.3	61.0	2.4	7.3	100% (41)
Vietnam War	12.7	81.0	0.0	6.3	100% (63)
Economy	0.0	77.1	6.3	16.6	100% (48)
Health	1.8	92.9	1.8	3.5	100% (56)
National Development	6.9	58.6	24.1	10.4	100% (29)
Housing	0.0	79.1	7.0	13.9	100% (43)
Social Services	3.1	90.6	6.3	0.0	100% (32)
Commonwealth-State Relations	7.7	69.2	7.7	15.4	100% (13)
Assistance to Primary Industry	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100% (4)
Other Issues	5.9	74.1	5.3	14.7	100% (89)

particular, however, stood out as being more closely associated, across the sample, with one party grouping, in preference to the other. The establishment of some association in the respondents' minds, independent of the influence of partisanship, between the Liberal/Country Party coalition and the area of defence was suggested by the high frequency with which government supporters nominated the coalition to handle the problem *in combination with* the relatively high frequency of the same response amongst Labor supporters (29.3% of Labor supporters for whom defence was highly salient). This type of relationship was reversed amongst government and opposition identifiers who were concerned with pensions and health in a way which indicated that these two problem areas were more likely to be associated with the Labor Party, regardless of the influence of party identification.

In the case of these three salient issues, the hypothesis that the type of problem, as well as the respondents' party loyalties, influenced their perceptions of the parties' capacities received confirmation from an analysis which differentiated amongst various strengths of party identification. The earlier finding that stronger identifiers were increasingly likely to nominate their party as a problem-solver was clearly in evidence for a range of different problems at the two strongest levels of party identification. But it did not always hold for the weakest levels of partisanship, especially in relation to the particular problems of defence, pensions and health.[22]

These results give some indication of the patterns of interaction between party loyalties and knowledge of party stances in the formation of perceptual links between the parties and the problems of high salience

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22. Unfortunately, this analysis could not be pursued very far as the number of respondents nominating some problems became very small when each party's support was divided into three different degrees of strength of party identification.

to voters. In relation to the issues important to ASP respondents, partisanship appeared the overriding factor of those whose psychological commitment to one or other of the major party groupings was fairly intense. When party identification was not so strongly established, however, the type of problem specified was likely to be just as important in determining the party specified as best able to handle it (in a manner consistent with the respondent's opinion on the problem). The significant proportion of *"not very strong"* Liberal/Country Party identifiers nominating the Labor Party to solve their most important problem could be explained by the *"social welfare or interventionist"* nature[23] of many of the issues specified, where Labor's ideological stance would have been well known throughout the electorate. In such cases, where parties had taken opposing stands over a long period of time, RePass hypothesised that a *"strain toward political reality"* would operate, in conflict with the pull exerted by partisan loyalties.[24] The knowledge that one party was more suited than the other to solve a particular problem clearly overrode the influence of partisanship amongst weak Labor identifiers for whom defence was highly salient, and weak Liberal/Country Party identifiers who were concerned with pensions or health (n=10).

Overall, the Labor Party benefited from the nature of the problems which were salient within the electorate in 1969 and from the large proportion of partisan answers amongst its own identifiers. Also, it drew support as a problem-solver from those respondents who lacked any feelings of party identification. A substantial proportion of these respondents *"didn't know"* which party would best handle the problem they had nominated, but, of the remainder, more preferred the Labor Party to the Liberal/Country Party coalition. This preference extended over a number of different

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23. Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics (forthcoming).

24. RePass, *op.cit.*, p.395.

problems, even including defence and the economy, which were not regarded by the general sample as areas in which Labor would be successful.[25]

TABLE 9.8 PARTIES NOMINATED TO SOLVE DIFFERENT PROBLEMS BY THOSE WITH NO PARTY IDENTIFICATION

	Lib/CP	Labor	No Difference	Other	
Education	12.9	48.4	19.4	19.3	100% (n=31)
Pensions	20.0	35.0	20.0	25.0	100% (n=20)
Vietnam	19.0	66.7	4.8	9.5	100% (n=21)
Defence	8.3	41.7	8.3	41.7	100% (n=12)
Economy	8.3	41.7	16.7	33.3	100% (n=12)

The most interesting result in Table 8.8 (despite the very small numbers on which to base percentages) was the substantial proportion of non-identifiers for whom Vietnam was salient who nominated the Labor Party to tackle the problem, and the very small fraction who failed to perceive any difference between the parties on the Vietnam war. When it is kept in mind that Vietnam was the most important problem for a significantly larger proportion of non-identifiers (11.3%) than of the total sample (6.9%), it appears that the Vietnam war may have been in a position to influence some of those respondents not susceptible to partisan pressures to vote for Labor on this issue in 1969.

Despite the sample's overall preference for the Labor Party to handle the salient issues of the day, the party's advantage was not

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25. Only the five most frequently mentioned problems have been included in this analysis as the numbers involved were very small. The frequencies within each cell in the table were still so small that the percentages could not be regarded as necessarily accurate.

reflected in an electoral majority in 1969. Aitkin suggested, as a reason for this, the absence of links between responses to the ASP item testing salience and voters' own political behaviour - *"It may very well be the case than many respondents cited problems which they knew from reading and discussion to be important ones, but not important in the sense that they impinged directly on one's own life."*[26] If this was so, questions which attempted, indirectly, to elicit the issues important to voters at the time of an election may have been better phrased in a manner which put the respondent closer to the situation of casting a vote. For example, the June 1969 Gallup item which asked voters what would be the most important issue for them at the end-of-year elections *may* have provided a more valid indication of the issues which were relevant to voting decisions.[27]

One does not have to question the validity of the survey item itself, however, to explain the failure of the 1969 election results to reflect the overall preference for Labor as a problem-solver. The general image of a party, and its leader, and its emotive appeal to the voter via the links of partisan loyalty could be expected to override the perception that an opposing party was most competent to handle *one* problem which the voter felt to be particularly important. This explanation was supported by the ASP data. An analysis of respondents' actual votes in 1969 by

(a) their party loyalties, and

(b) their choice of parties to solve salient problems,

showed clearly that partisanship was the predominant influence when (a) and (b) were in conflict.

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26. Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics (forthcoming).

27. The accuracy of the *"most important problem"* question in isolating those issues salient to voting behaviour depends on the proximity of the survey to an actual election. A question asked six months before an election (as was the case for the Gallup Poll item) would be of dubious relevance to electoral behaviour unless respondents were specifically directed to bear the election in mind.

Table 8.9 compares the percentages voting Labor in 1969 of respondents with differing party loyalties and varying perceptions of the parties as problem-solvers. From a high-point of 91.6% of those identifying with the A.L.P. and nominating it to solve their most important problem, the actual Labor vote dropped to a low of 2.9% amongst those consistently loyal to the Liberal and Country parties. In each column, the decrease in percentages from top to bottom can be attributed to the influence of changing perceptions of the parties' competence to solve salient problems, whilst the drop in percentages from left to right in each row of the table reflects the move from Labor partisanship, to independence, to loyalty towards the opposing parties. In each case, the fall in the Labor vote was greater with changes in party identification than with alterations in perceptions of the parties as problem-solvers.

TABLE 8.9 PERCENTAGE[28] VOTING LABOR IN 1969 BY PARTISANSHIP AND CHOICE OF PARTY AS PROBLEM-SOLVER

Party nominated to solve problem	Party Identification: Labor	No party Identification	Lib/CP
Labor	91.6 (548)	68.1 (69)	18.4 (174)
No difference	84.6 (39)	52.2 (23)	4.8 (104)
Lib/CP	63.6 (44)	20.6 (34)	2.9 (415)

Although there were few respondents who identified with the Labor Party but nominated the Liberal/Country Party coalition to handle their

28. The percentage in each cell is that voting for the Labor Party in the 1969 Federal election. The numbers in parentheses are the totals on which percentages were based, *not* the raw scores for each cell.

salient problem (n=44), a clear majority of these people (63.6%) voted Labor. Conversely, very few (18.4%) of those loyal to the governing parties, but seeing Labor as the most competent problem solver, in fact voted for the A.L.P. in 1969. Partisanship (or some other related factor) clearly determined the votes of those respondents who saw no difference between the parties in relation to their ability to solve important problems (84.6% of Labor partisans and only 4.8% of Liberal/CP supporters voted for the Labor Party). The choice of a party to handle a respondent's problem was not entirely without influence on his vote, however, as was demonstrated in the voting percentages for those who lacked any party loyalties. Also, those respondents identifying with the Labor Party but choosing the government as a problem-solver were less likely to vote for the A.L.P. at the Federal election than their fellow partisans who had nominated Labor - and the same trend was in evidence amongst Liberal/Country Party identifiers.

The predominant influence of partisanship amongst the Australian respondents was not in keeping with 1968 U.S. findings which demonstrated that salient issues and the related estimates of party competence, often overcame long-term party loyalties in the determination of voting behaviour.[29] If the ASP survey had enabled the construction of a scale of issue partisanship over a series of salient problems, as did the Michigan research,[30] it may have emerged that the likelihood of voting contrary to partisan loyalties increased with the strength of feeling towards particular important problems and towards the parties as problem-solvers. In the absence of this refinement, however, it can only be concluded that the issues salient to Australian voters were not as important to their electoral decisions in 1969 as were the forces of party identification.

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29. RePass, *op.cit.*, pp.399-400.

30. *ibid.*, p.399.

This general conclusion does not jeopardise the possibility that salient issues may have had a strong influence on the voting behaviour of those people who possessed no party ties. Nor is it sufficient to make final judgements on the basis of electoral decisions made on only one occasion. Despite the influence of partisanship, perceptions of the parties related to their performance in issue areas of high salience may have figured more significantly in decisions to switch voting direction between 1966 and 1969, than in the behaviour of those whose voting patterns remained the same. This possibility will be investigated in the following chapter on those who switched their votes in 1969.

The analysis so far has not made any comparison between the relative influence on voting decisions of issues which were of high salience to electors and those which were regarded as less important, when party identification was held constant. Common sense would suggest that the influence of the former would be greater and, indeed, this hypothesis provided the basis for RePass' contention that open-ended survey questions examining the relevance of issues to the voters should be used in preference to fixed-choice items which merely tested opinions on issues possible of no concern at all.[31] In previous chapters the issues studied have been restricted to the latter type. The inclusion in the ASP survey of a question probing the salience of various policy areas should, therefore have provided the opportunity to compare, on each issue, those respondents who displayed concern with those who did not. This proved, unfortunately, to be impossible in relation to all but two policy issues, owing to the small numbers of respondents who classied as *"important problems"* the issues included as fixed-choice items elsewhere in the questionnaire.

The Vietnam war, conscription, State aid, migration and relations with

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31. *ibid.*

the United States were all mentioned by some respondents as important problems the Federal government should do something about. Only the Vietnam war, however, attracted a large number of first mentions (130). 31 respondents mentioned conscription in this way; 16 mentioned State aid; 10 mentioned immigration; and only 6 saw Australia's relations with the U.S.A. to be their first important problem. As a result, reliable comparisons with the rest of the sample could only be made on the Vietnam issue; with conscription being included in the analysis on grounds of intrinsic interest, although any observations could only be tentative.

Several comparative questions about the data seemed to be relevant to the voting behaviour of the two groups of respondents (those for whom an issue was salient; and those for whom it was not) and will be examined in the following pages:

- Did the views of those for whom an issue represented an important problem differ in direction from those of the remaining respondents?
- Were there significant social and demographic differences between the two groups?
- Did those for whom an issue was salient say they felt more strongly about their views than those who merely expressed an opinion on it?
- Were the former more likely to perceive the opposing party stances on the issue with greater accuracy than the rest?

An analysis of the answers given by those respondents who had specified either the Vietnam war or conscription as their most important problem to the separate attitude questions on the two issues did show some difference in the opinions of these respondents in comparison with the remainder of the sample. In the case of conscription, it also demonstrated the existence of opposing viewpoints within the group for whom the issue was most salient.

The distribution of opinion amongst those respondents for whom Vietnam was most important was skewed towards the reduction of Australian

troop commitment to the war (see Table 8.10). 50.8% of them (n=130) wanted either total disengagement or the retention only of civilian advisers. Only 10.8% of these voters were in agreement with government policy; 88.5% felt there should be some sort of reduction in Australian troop levels. The most moderate approach, that of bringing home only the national service men, remained the most popular single option, however, as it had been when the views of the whole sample were considered.

TABLE 8.10 COMPARATIVE VIEWS ON VIETNAM OF THOSE FOR WHOM IT WAS A SALIENT ISSUE AND THOSE FOR WHOM IT WAS NOT

	(A) Troops & Conscripts	(B) Only Volunteers	(C) Only Civilian Experts	(D) Stay Out of Vietnam	Don't Know No Answer	
Those who saw Vietnam war as their *"most important problem"*	10.8	37.7	24.6	26.2	0.7	100% (130)
Remainder of the Sample	24.6	43.8	11.5	17.3	2.8	100% (1743
Total Sample	23.6	43.4	12.4	17.9	2.7	100% (1873

Those for whom conscription was the most salient issue were more evenly divided in their opinions (see Table 8.11). Their attitudes towards national service, as measured by the ASP questionnaire's forced-choice opinion item were more likly to lie at the two extremes of *"conscription for all"* or *"abolish conscription"* than were those of the total sample.[32]

32. It was not possible to compare the views of those respondents for whom conscription was of most importance with the views of the remainder of the sample. In order to isolate the former respondents from those who felt other aspects of defence to be important (conscription having been included in the general category of *"defence"* by the coders), it was necessary to go back to the individual questionnaires themselves. A new data file was constructed for the 31 respondents concerned with conscription, but, in the absence of a complete new data file for the remaining respondents in the sample, comparisons could only be made with the total sample.

TABLE 8.11 COMPARATIVE VIEWS ON CONSCRIPTION OF THOSE FOR WHOM IT WAS A SALIENT ISSUE AND THE TOTAL SAMPLE

	(A) Con-scription for all	(B) Ballot System	(C) Civilian Alter-natives	(D) Abolish Conscription	Don't Know No Answer	
Those who saw conscription as their *"most important problem"*	48.4	0.0	22.6	29.0	0.0	100% (n=31)
Total Sample	40.9	7.0	32.9	16.9	2.3	100% (1873)

* includes above 31

The implications of this high polarisation of views were interesting, particularly in the absence of any respondents for whom conscription was salient supporting the government's ballot system of selection. Presuming a link between concern with conscription and voting behaviour, the question of interest to the outcome of the 1969 Federal election would be whether those voters wanting conscription for all, in preference to the ballot system, would still support the government parties. If so, their votes might be expected to cancel out the party choice of those who favoured some relaxation in the national service requirements, particularly as only a relatively minute fraction of the electorate could be expected to see conscription as an *"important problem"* (only 0.6% of the total ASP sample did so).

In addition to variations in opinion, there were some significant social and demographic differences in the background of those who regarded either Vietnam or conscription as an important problem, in comparison with the total sample.[33] Both groups included a higher proportion of male respondents than would be expected from the distribution of sexes in the total sample (this was noted earlier in this chapter in relation to Vietnam and the more general problem area of *"defence"*). There were some differences,

33. See Appendix IV for tables.

however, between the two groups with respect to education level - those concerned with Vietnam were more likely to have tertiary education, and those for whom conscription was important were more likely to have no education, or only primary or secondary schooling (there were no tertiary educated respondents in this group). As noted earlier, 21-35 year olds were overrepresented in the group who nominated the Vietnam war as important, and older age groups tended to be under-represented. The relationships between age and concern with conscription were more complex, however, (possibly reflecting the split in opinion between those who were pro- and anti-) with 21.23 year olds more likely to be in this group and, also, 46-75 year olds. Unlike Vietnam, 24-35 year olds were markedly under-represented.

If there was some connection between the intensity of feeling with which an opinion was held (affect) and the importance attached to that subject by the voter (salience),[34] then it would be expected that those for whom Vietnam or conscription was a matter of concern would say they felt strongly about their opinion on that issue. In fact, this expectation was only partially fulfilled by the data, with an interesting exception in the case of conscription.

For Vietnam, those who were of the opinion that only volunteer troops should remain (37.7% of the group) were slightly more likely to feel *"very strongly"* about this and less likely to feel *"not very strongly"* than the same opinion-holders in the total sample. Over the three remaining alternatives, those for whom Vietnam was salient were less likely to feel *"not very strongly"* about their opinion than the total sample, but this was not matched by any corresponding increase in the very strong opinion

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34. The existence of a connection between these two measures cannot be taken for granted. See D.W. Rae and M. Taylor, The Analysis of Political Cleavages, Chapter 3, on the difficulties of measuring intensity.

category. Although fewer voters in the high salience group showed minimal affect in their opinions on the war, the group overall did not hold its opinions with markedly greater intensity than the ordinary respondents.

There was an interesting reflection of the polarisation of opinion on conscription in the intensity of feelings of those who saw it as an important problem. Those in the group who wanted *"conscription for all"* were much more likely to feel very strongly about their view than were the same opinion-holders in the total sample (which included themselves). Those who were in favour of either *"abolition"* or *"civilian alternatives"*, however, held their views with lower intensity than did their counterparts (including themselves) in the general sample. The tentative nature of these findings, due to the small number of respondents concerned with conscription (n=31), was disappointing as the data could otherwise have been taken as evidence for the existence of a potentially volatile situation where opinions were highly polarised between one group of respondents who felt very strongly about their opinions and an opposing group, for whom the problem was still important, but who felt less intensely committed to their views.

The degree of accuracy in the respondents' perceptions of party positions could only be ascertained for the Vietnam war. A comparison between the perceptions of those respondents for whom Vietnam was an important problem and the general sample showed little difference in the ability of the two groups to discriminate government and opposition policy stances. Where Vietnam was salient, respondents were only slightly more likely to give an accurate assessment. This lack of contrast in knowledge of party policies may not have been the rule, however, for other issues where voters on the whole were not as clearly aware of the parties' positions as they were on the Vietnam war.

At this stage of the analysis, the contention that salient problems were more likely to influence voting behaviour than issues of less concern

to the voters must remain at the status of an as yet unconfirmed hypothesis. The argument that issues must be seen to be relevant to electoral decisions in order to have an effect on voters is a persuasive one. Even if true, however, it would not necessarily follow that *all* issues of high salience within the electorate could be expected to have some impact on the election results. The discovery that respondents who said they were primarily concerned about the Vietnam war still did not feel very much more strongly about their opinions on the subject than other respondents should at least lead one to question the assumption that the salience of this issue provided sufficient motivation for voting action.

Of those 130 respondents who nominated the Vietnam war as their most important problem 54.6% voted for the A.L.P. in 1969 and 35.4% voted Liberal/Country Party. It would be tempting, but possibly completely mistaken, to conclude that this distribution of votes reflected the bias in the opinions of these respondents towards some degree of withdrawal from Vietnam. There also happened to be more Labor identifiers than government supporters amongst voters who displayed concern with Vietnam, and it may have been this factor alone which was responsible for Labor's advantage in actual votes. Allowing the importance of party identification, however, Labor's vote amongst these respondents may have been swollen by the addition of non-party identifiers concerned with Vietnam (16.2% of the total 130) who were swayed by Labor's stance on this issue.

Conclusions about the likely impact of an issue such as Vietnam on electoral behaviour are also complicated by the conflicting nature of the evidence as to the degree of its importance within the electorate. It has already been mentioned that a Gallup Poll conducted four months prior to the ASP survey found a proportion of the electorate regarding Vietnam as their chief election issue (14.5%) which was twice as large as the proportion identified by the ASP survey. It could be argued that the ASP questionnaire

provided a better test of salience in connection with the 1969 Federal election, as it was administered very close to polling day; but it could also be argued that the wording of the Gallup Poll item tied respondents more closely to a consideration of the issues important to their forthcoming electoral decision.[35]

To add to the confusion, Albinski's analysis of earlier Gallup findings suggested that Vietnam was the most important problem for up to one quarter of Australian electors in the years 1966 and 1967.[36] On the basis of this data, he concluded that Labor's electoral support was *weakest* amongst those who assigned the greatest salience to Vietnam.[37] These results are not necessarily incompatible with those reported in this chapter as they apply to a different time period - but they do illustrate the necessity of taking similar measures over a number of time intervals if conclusions are to be reached with any great degree of certainty.

A statement which can be made with confidence is that the Vietnam war was by no means as salient an issue amongst Australian voters as it was amongst Americans. Using the same question format as that employed in the ASP survey, B.I. Page and R.A. Brody found in 1968 that nearly half their respondents spontaneously mentioned Vietnam as the most important problem the government in Washington should try to take care of, far greater numbers than those who specified any other issues as important.[38] It did not follow, however, that the issue exercised greater influence over voting behaviour in the United States than in Australia, as its importance to the American voters was not matched by an ability to discriminate between the stances of the competing candidates, Nixon and Humphrey,

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35. Australian Gallup Poll, No.204, 21st June 1969.

36. Albinski, *op.cit.*, pp.192-3.

37. *ibid.*, p.199.

38. Page & Brody, *op.cit.*, p.982. See also, Kirkpatrick and Jones, *op.cit.*

at the 1968 Presidential election.[39]

Apart from the Vietnam war, the only other issue item amongst the eight specifically included in the ASP questionnaire which attracted a sufficient number of mentions to be studied as a salient problem in itself was that of conscription. Here the 1969 voting distribution was 48.4% Liberal/Country Party and 45.0% Labor (n=31). These figures were perhaps linked to the polarization of views on the subject of conscription already observed amongst the group, but they were more likely to have resulted from party ties (the distribution of which favoured the government coalition[40]), except for a small proportion of Liberal/CP identifiers who voted Labor. Numbers in this category were unfortunately too small to pursue the implications of the interesting variation in the intensity with which opinions were held, in the light of the actual voting figures.

It was also unfortunate that the distribution of opinions amongst respondents who were concerned about the other more salient issues of education and pensions could not be ascertained from the coded data. The 1969 voting pattern of those who nominated pensions (34.0% Lib/CP; 56.0% Labor) could largely be explained by the respondents' party loyalties. This was not the case with education, however, where those who felt it to be the most important problem voted for the Labor Party in 1969 in greater numbers (44.0% Labor) than would be expected from an analysis of their party ties (38.2% identified with the Labor Party). Clearly, some factor other than partisanship affected voting behaviour here and, given the great

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39. Page and Brody, *op.cit.*, p.994.

40. As none of the 31 respondents for whom conscription was most important agreed with the government's ballot system of selecting national servicemen, the views of the Liberal/Country Party identifiers within the group were most likely to have favoured the option of *"conscription for all young men"*.

importance attached to education as a problem area, it is possible that some Liberal/Country Party identifiers were influenced to change their vote by their views on the issue.

The data analysis undertaken in this chapter has suggested a number of issue areas (education, pensions, defence, Vietnam) likely to have been of relevance to the voting decisions of significant proportions of the Australian electorate in 1969. The design of the ASP questionnaire was such that it has been possible to study only one of these issues, the Vietnam war, at any great depth. On a general level, however, attempts have been made to assess the relative contributions of party identification and issue concern to the voting decisions of those respondents who nominated particular problems as important. The implications of this for the actual electoral outcome in 1969 can only be fully realised if the focus of study is further narrowed to those respondents who decided to switch their voting support to another party at the Federal election.

CHAPTER 9

SWITCHES IN THE VOTE

Information on voting patterns recorded at a single election can only be of limited value in explaining the determinants of voting behaviour. As researchers and practical politicians are primarily interested in the occurrence of *change* in voting habits (or, conversely, the maintenance of stable patterns of behaviour), an analysis which is to have some predictive value requires data accumulated over a period of time.

A characteristic of recent voting studies in the United States and Great Britain has been their longitudinal nature, using the responses of a panel of voters over a series of time intervals. The use of this technique reflects a realisation that knowledge of changes over time in the attitudes of voters and in their perceptions of political reality is essential to an understanding of what motivates a person to switch his vote from one party to another. In his analysis of American electoral behaviour between 1968 and 1972, Gerald Pomper described the problems inherent in reliance on *"synchronic"* data, derived from a single election study - that attempts to generalise from time-bound results gave the illusion of a static system as they were insensitive to long-term movements in opinion and were restricted to a particular historical period which may have been atypical.[1]

The Australian Survey Project was designed to overcome such limitations in earlier studies of Australian voters[2] by analysing the opinions of a single electorate sample in two interview waves, one conducted in 1967 and the other in 1969. It represented the first comprehensive attempt to map the forces for stability and for change operating on the Australian electorate over a period of time.[3] Aitkin was able to observe movements in

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1. Pomper, *op.cit.*, p.187.

2. Gallup Polls of Australian political attitudes are repeated over regular time intervals, particularly near an election, but the problem in using this data is that the wording of questions is changed from time to time.

3. Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics (forthcoming).

opinion on issues such as Vietnam which corresponded with changes in voting behaviour from one Federal election to the next.

Although the present study makes no assumptions about the permanence of attitudes recorded in 1969, it can be criticised for neglecting the dynamics of opinion formation as its coverage has been restricted to the second wave of the A.S.P. survey. Because of this restriction, it has not been possible to undertake any assessment of the links between changes in electoral opinion on issues of public policy and changes in the levels of voting support for the opposing parties.

One vital aspect of the time dimension has, however, been included in the analysis. The 1969 questionnaire asked respondents to recall their vote at the previous Federal election, held three years earlier. Data from this item provided a base for comparing the attitudes held in 1969 by people who had decided to switch their votes with those of voters who had remained faithful to the same party over the two elections. Although this procedure would not allow any inferences of causality, the finding of substantial differences between the opinions of *"switchers"* and party *"faithfuls"* on any of the relevant issues would constitute persuasive evidence that these issues were in some way associated with the voting changes, provided that the effects of other variables (such as party identification; socio-demographic characteristics) had been simultaneously controlled. The ability of alterations in party identification or differences in the intensity of party loyalties to explain movements in the vote could provide important indications, even if mainly negative ones, of the extent to which issue opinions played an identifiable role in prompting voting change.

A word of caution must be expressed as to the accuracy of the data recording changes in voting behaviour between the two elections. The 1966 voting figures relied on the respondents' accurate recall of a voting act they had performed three years earlier. 15% of the sample either

refused to answer this question or admitted that they did not know how they had voted on the previous occasion. An 85% response rate was not particularly encouraging, especially as some respondents undoubtedly gave incorrect answers, perhaps confusing their former Federal vote with a vote they had cast at State government elections in the intervening period.

Some confidence in the recall data could, however, be gained from the similarity between movements registered in the sample's voting patterns and the size of the actual net swing recorded for the total Australian electorate between the elections of 1966 and 1969. The swing figure for the 1969 Federal election calculated on the basis of the *"two party preferred vote"*[4] was 7.1% towards the Labor Party. As data on the A.S.P. respondents coveredonly their first preference votes, the most valid comparison was not with this figure, however, but with the changes in the parties' share of first preferences throughout Australia. The Labor Party's total first preference votes at the 1969 Federal election increased by 7.0% from the 1966 figure. This accompanied a drop of 7.9% in the Liberal/ Country Party coalition's share of first preferences, the difference of 0.9% benefiting the smaller parties in 1969. In comparison with these figures, Labor's share of the votes case by the 1,517 A.S.P. respondents who recalled how they had voted on both occasions increased by a net 7.7%, from 38.2% in 1966 to 45.9% in 1969. Although this was very close to the actual increase recorded in Labor's voting support across Australia at the 1969 election, there was a much larger discrepancy between the survey's results for the drop in Liberal/Country Party support (down 11.7% from 58.0% of first preference votes recalled for 1966 to 46.3% of votes in 1969) and the actual drop of 7.9% registered in the electoral returns for 1969. As will be seen when the complex movements in voting support amongst A.S.P. respondents are analysed, rather than merely the net percentage swings,

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4. Mackerras, *op.cit.*, p.211.

the survey recorded a greater movement from the Labor Party in 1966 to the smaller parties in 1969 than, in fact, occurred within the wider electorate.

Most of the attention in this chapter will be given to the swing *towards* Labor, where the magnitude of new swings recorded in the general electorate and within the A.S.P. sample were sufficiently similar to give confidence in the validity of the survey figures. The number of survey respondents swinging towards the government coalition in 1969 was too small for reliable analysis (N=36) and, it would seem from the above comparison, may have represented an underestimation of the actual trend within the Australian electorate.

The full circulation of votes within the A.S.P. sample (excluding those respondents who refused to answer either question or who did not know how they had voted) between 1966 and 1969 is set out in Table 9.1.

TABLE 9.1 PATTERN OF VOTING CHANGES 1966-1969 AMONGST A.S.P. RESPONDENTS

1966 Vote	1969 Vote: Lib/CP	Labor	DLP	Other	Didn't Vote	
Lib/CP	42.5	9.9	2.2	1.5	0.9	57.0
Labor	1.9	33.7	1.0	0.4	0.2	37.2
DLP	0.3	0.6	2.1	0.1	0.0	3.1
Other	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.6
Didn't Vote	0.5	0.8	0.1	0.2	0.5	2.1
	45.3	45.2	5.4	2.5	1.6	100.0% (n=1568)[5]

5. This figure excludes 305 respondents who refused to answer either question or who did not know how they had voted on one or both occasions. The figures in each cell represent percentages of the total (N=1568). Row and column totals add to 100.0% - they do not correspond to the percentage swings of first preference votes cited in the text, as this particular table includes non-voters.

Considering the compulsory nature of voting in Australian Federal and State elections, it was not surprising that only very small proportions of the sample said they had failed to vote at either of the elections. A large number of those respondents who said they had not voted in 1966 were, in fact, too young to have registered at the time. Only 7 respondents said they had omitted to vote at both elections - the sample included 34 non-voters in 1966 and 24 non-voters in 1969.

The cells outlined heavily in the middle of the table indicate the overall stability of voting patterns across the two elections.[6] In all, 78.3% of those respondents who answered both questions voted consistently for the government parties, the Labor Party or the D.L.P. Most of the changes amongst the remaining voters were confined to straight conversion[7] between the two major party groupings. 72.8% (N=213) of those who defected from the Liberal/Country Party coalition in 1969 switched their vote to Labor, whilst 58.0% (N=52) of those switching away from the Labor Party voted for the government coalition in 1969. The D.L.P. gained the votes of 16.4% (N=213) of Liberal/Country Party defectors and 28.8% (N=52) of Labor defectors. The greater attraction of the D.L.P. for those switching away from Labor[8] fitted the hypothesis that the D.L.P. has performed the function of a stepping-stone for upwardly mobile Catholics, moving away from traditional working class loyalties to the Labor Party, ultimately towards identification with the Liberal Party. The proportions, however, were not

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6. Respondents in the *"Other - Other"* cell may not, in fact, have voted for the same minor party at both elections, but as there were only 4 respondents in the cell, this would not affect the level of stability within the sample.

7. For the explanation of *"conversion"* as a concept in describing voting change see Butler and Stokes, *op.cit.*, Chapter 12.

8. D. Kemp, "Swingers and Stayers: The Australian Swinging Voter, 1961-72", in H. Mayer (ed.) Labor to Power (Sydney, 1973), p.284.

in keeping with the net swing figures towards the minor parties actually recorded in the 1969 election, and the numberswere too small to warrant further investigation.

The degree of conversion within the sample favoured the Labor Party in 1969, with five times as many respondents switching their support from the government parties to the opposition (155) as switched in the opposite direction (30). 92.3% (N=168) of the votes gained by Labor in 1969 from those who had previously supported other parties, in fact, came from 1966 Liberal/Country Party voters. Thus, most of the circulation of votes which did occur between 1966 and 1969 could be accounted for by straight conversion between the major parties which benefitted Labor overall.

Despite the stability of most respondents' voting behaviour, the percentage who did alter their voting pattern between the two elections (18.2% of 1568 respondents who answered both questions) was rather higher than might have been expected as a result of the forces against change exerted by feelings of party identification common amongst most members of the sample. In fact, the proportion was not very different from an estimated percentage of 14.0% who were *"swinging voters"* at the 1969 election, calculated by David Kemp on the basis of Gallup Poll data.[9]

We have already observed variations in the strengths of respondents' feelings of party loyalty, and it would be expected that the *"inertia component"*[10] of party identification would have much less effect on those who felt only weakly committed to one or other party. Not surprisingly, the likelihood of changes in voting behaviour on the part of the A.S.P. respondents did increase as the intensity of party loyalties decreased. This relationship held both for respondents defecting away from the party with which they identified in their 1969 vote and for those who, in addition,

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9. *ibid.*, p.282.

10. Campbell, *et al.*, Elections and the Political Order, p.140.

actually switched their vote to the opposing party at the 1969 election (see Tables 9.2 and 9.3).

TABLE 9.2-% OF LIB/CP IDENTIFIERS RECALLING 1966 LIB/CP VOTE WHO DEFECTED AWAY FROM LIB/CP AND SWITCHED TO LABOR IN 1969

	Lib/CP Very Strong	Lib/CP Fairly Strong	Lib/CP Not Very Strong
Defection away from Lib/CP in 1969	7.1 (196)	9.9 (362)	25.7 (136)
Switched to Labor in 1969	3.1 (196)	5.0 (362)	16.9 (136)

(* Nos. in parentheses represent totals of Lib/CP identifiers who recalled voting for that party in 1966)

TABLE 9.3-% OF LABOR IDENTIFIERS RECALLING 1966 LABOR VOTE WHO DEFECTED AWAY FROM LABOR PARTY AND SWITCHED TO LIB/CP IN 1969

	Labor Very Strong	Labor Fairly Strong	Labor Not Very Strong
Defection away from Labor in 1969	3.9 (259)	7.1 (197)	12.8 (78)
Switched to Lib/CP in 1969	1.5 (259)	2.5 (197)	12.8 (78)

(* Nos. in parentheses represent totals of Labor identifiers who recalled voting Labor in 1966)

Respondents who did not identify with any of the parties were the most susceptible of all to voting change in 1969. Of those non-identifiers who recalled both their 1966 and 1969 votes (N=125), 50% altered their votes, whilst the remaining 50% stayed faithful to the party for which they had voted in 1966. This compared with only 13.3% of Liberal/Country Party identifiers (N=716 - only respondents who recalled both their 1966 and 1969

votes) whose voting patterns underwent change between the 1966 and 1969 elections, and 16.6% of Labor identifiers (N=626) who changed their votes.

In addition to the presence and strength of feelings of party loyalty, the persistence of such feelings over time was related to the likelihood of voting change in 1969. The majority of respondents who voted for the same party at each election comprised those party loyalists who had never identified with any other party. 70.9% of the Liberal/Country Party faithfuls (N=667) both identified with the coalition in 1969 and had never preferred a different party. Permanent loyalty was even more a feature of the Labor faithfuls, 84.8% of whom (N=528) preferred the Labor Party in 1969 and had never changed their allegiance.

The pattern of party identification amongst the two groups who switched from the Liberal/Country Party coalition in 1966 to Labor in 1969, and the reverse, was very different. Each group of switchers was divided in its loyalties, unlike the bulk of party faithfuls, whose loyalties lay with the parties they supported in the ballot box (see Table 9.4). The group of 155 Liberal/Country Party → Labor switchers was split three ways, with roughly equal proportions identifying with each of the two opposing sides and a further third lacking any party identification. The small number of respondents (30) who switched their votes in the opposite direction included a much higher proportion of Labor identifiers.

TABLE 9.4 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN 1966-1969 VOTING CHANGES AND PARTY IDENTIFICATION

1966/1969 Votes	Lib/CP	Labor	DLP/ Other	No Party Identification	No Answer	
Lib/CP Faithfuls	91.3	2.1	0.3	6.3	0.0	100% (n=667)
Lib/CP → Labor	31.0	38.7	1.3	27.7	1.3	100% (n=155)
Labor Faithfuls	1.3	95.3	0.2	3.0	0.2	100% (n=528)
Labor → Lib/CP	20.0	63.3	3.3	10.0	3.4	100% (n=30)

The presence of differing party loyalties amongst those who switched their votes in 1969 raised questions concerning the nature of their decisions to change. Was the switch a result of temporary disillusionment with a favourite party? Did the 1969 vote represent a return to the party with which the voter usually associated himself/herself? Was the change only one in a series of swings? Was the swing accompanied by a change in party identification, marking a permanent transition to a new pattern of voting behaviour? These questions are of importance in assessing the relevance of issue opinions to voting changes in 1969, as the roles played by issues may have differed considerably in each case.

An analysis of the changes over time in the party identification of Liberal Country Party → Labor switchers (unfortunately, the size of the other group was too small for any detailed breakdown to be meaningful) provided some clues as to the composition of the group. 27.7% (43) of these switchers admitted to no feelings of party loyalty. 20.0% (31) identified with the Liberal/Country Party coalition in 1969 and had never changed (temporarily disillusioned?); 6.5% (10) identified with the Labor

Party and had never changed (temporarily disillusioned in 1966 and now returning to the fold?); 31.6% (49) identified with Labor in 1969 but had preferred the Liberal/Country Party coalition in the past (in transition to becoming stable Labor supporters?); and an inexplicable 7.1% (11) identified with the government parties in 1969 and had preferred Labor at some time in the past. Of the 49 whose change in party identification corresponded with the change in voting direction, 71.4% said they had actually switched their loyalty since the 1966 election. The influence of party identification alone could perhaps account for the voting changes within this sub-group. Any speculation as to the precise role of issues in these, or other voting changes would prove fruitless unless it could be established that respondents who altered their votes in 1969 differed in their opinion from those who continued to support the party they had voted for in 1966.

At this stage, the possibility that switchers could be differentiated from party faithfuls on the basis of socio-demographic characteristics alone could not be discounted. Significant differences in the social and cultural backgrounds of respondents, as well as their age and sex, might have been sufficient in themselves to explain voting change, without any need for further explanatory variables.

Analysis of the A.S.P. data showed, however, that there was no simple way in which socio-demographic variables alone could account for decisions to switch votes in 1969. Differences in the educational level, occupation and interest in politics of those who did defect from their 1966 votes compared with the party faithfuls could not explain the *direction* in which the former voters swung.

Reports of previous research on *"floating voters"* and results recorded earlier in this study suggested, as a plausible hypothesis, that those who switched their votes (in whatever direction) in 1969 would be less

well educated, possess less interest in politics and be located at lower points in the occupational scale than would those respondents who remained faithful to one or other of the parties. As earlier analysis of the A.S.P. data showed that interest in politics (which was itself associated with higher education and higher level occupations) was greater amongst strong party identifiers, it could be expected that the social characteristics of the swinging voters in the sample, who were more likely to identify only weakly with a political party, would fit this hypothesis. Although admitting that belief in the hypothesis advanced here had been stronger amongst American survey researchers (as expressed, for example in Campbell's American Voter) than the actual evidence might warrant, Converse did establish in 1962 a correlation between instability of voting patterns in U.S. Presidential and Congressional elections and low levels of involvement in politics.[11] More recent Australian research into the links between vote switching and interest in politics at the time of the 1972 and 1974 Federal elections produced equivocal results[12] which were of little help as a guide to predicting the behaviour of the A.S.P. respondents some years earlier.

In fact, the hypothesis was not confirmed on any of the three variables of self-expressed interest in politics, education or occupation. Instead, those respondents who changed their vote between 1966 and 1969 were *more* likely to be interested in politics and showed slightly *higher*

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11. *ibid.*

12. Whilst R. Cameron found that voters switching from the Liberal/Country Party coalition to Labor at the 1972 election were less interested than Liberal/Country Party faithfuls, D. Kemp could find no links between interest in politics and tendency to swing at the 1972 election. See articles by Cameron and Kemp in H. Mayer (ed.), Labor to Power. Two years later, a 1974 ANOP poll found greater awareness and interest in politics amongst swinging voters than amongst average voters, see L. Oakes and D. Solomon, Grab for Power (Melbourne, 1974).

levels of education and occupation than their fellows whose votes remained stable. Table 9.5 shows the different degrees of interest in political affairs common to switchers and to party faithfuls.

TABLE 9.5 PROPENSITY TO CHANGE VOTE BY INTEREST IN POLITICS

	Good Deal of Interest	Some Interest	Not much Interest	No Interest	
1966-1969 Switchers	25.7	52.8	18.3	3.2	100% (284)
1966-1969 Faithfuls	21.7	45.6	28.3	4.4	100% (1233)
Total who Recalled 1966 & 1967 votes	22.5	46.9	26.4	4.2	100% (1517)

In addition to possessing higher levels of interest in politics, the switchers within the A.S.P. sample were slightly more likely to have experienced secondary or tertiary level education than the stable voters, and were more likely to be found in professional or semi-professional occupations.[13] No consistent differences were found between the two groups of voters on the variables of age or sex.

The failure of these results to meet the expectations engendered by earlier analysis of the characteristics of weak party identifiers can be explained by the tendency for a large number of non-identifiers to switch their vote between elections. Although interest in politics was positively related to strength of party loyalty amongst identifiers, the relationship did not hold for those who lacked any party identification. This group did include some respondents who expressed no interest in politics at all, but a quarter of its members were voters with *"a good deal of interest"* (a proportion only exceeded by the *"very strong"* Liberal/Country Party and Labor identifiers). If the latter were disproportionately represented in

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13. See Appendix V for tables giving details of these relationships.

the 50% of non-identifiers who swung between 1966 and 1969, their high interest in politics may have accounted for the generally greater interest amongst switchers, as a whole, than amongst faithfuls.

As the social characteristics of switchers in the A.S.P. sample differed from those expected on the basis of overseas research, the data need to be placed in perspective. The relationship between voting change and interest in political affairs was by no means a strong one and it may have been specific to the circumstances of the 1969 election.

David Kemp emphasised the importance of situational factors in suggesting that the absence of any link between interest in politics and propensity to swing at the subsequent Federal election held in 1972 was due to the campaign having stimulated a higher than usual degree of interest in politics throughout the electorate.[14] His argument was unlikely to account completely for the A.S.P. results, however, as the interest levels for the total sample, although higher than those recorded in the 1967 first wave of the survey project, were lower than those suggested by the ASRB poll figures for the 1972 election. Table 9.6 sets out the comparative spreads of interest in politics recorded throughout the electorate at the three separate time intervals.

TABLE 9.6 ELECTORAL INTEREST IN POLITICS OVER 3 FEDERAL ELECTION PERIODS

Interest in Politics	1967	1969	1972[15]
	%	%	%
Good deal of interest	18	22	37
Some interest	37	46	37
Not much interest	34	26	20
No interest	12	6	6
	100% (2044)	100% (1873)	100% (2497)

14. Kemp, *op.cit.*, p.287.

15. *ibid.*, p.287, footnote 40.

As Kemp attributed the *absence* of any interest - swing relationship to temporary and inordinately high levels of political involvement in 1972 (in explaining why low levels of interest were not associated with voting change), it would be highly unlikely for the presence of a relationship in the *reverse* direction from that expected (however small its size) to be explicable in terms of interest levels which were lower, overall, than those observed by Kemp.

Although Kemp's explanation could not account for the 1969 A.S.P. data, it must be recognised that the survey's measure of voters' psychological involvement in politics was time-bound and could not be used to overturn any long-standing hypothesis about political behaviour. It was also a blunt instrument, by no means approaching the refinement of measures of political awareness which have been associated with research into the nature of the *"floating voter"* in the United States. Converse showed in 1962 that the vital variable in the relationship between voting change and political involvement was the mass of information about politics possessed by each voter, itself dependent on both the degree of voter interest in politics and the political circumstances of the time.[16] In an election involving a high output of political information, even those voters normally uninterested in politics could be expected to acquire a large mass of new information.

Convincing evidence to supplant the present view of the *"swinging voter"* as uninformed and uninterested would necessitate the measurement of varying levels of political information and awareness amongst switchers and faithfuls over a number of time intervals, including non-campaign periods. The results reported here, however, should have provided sufficient reason to, at least, query the application of the traditional picture of the *"floating voter"* to the Australian electorate.

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16. P. Converse in Campbell, *et al.*, Elections and the Political Order.

Knowledge of the *direction* of voting change between 1966 and 1969 did not help substantially in explaining the differences in interest, education and occupation observed between those A.S.P. respondents who switched their votes and the party faithfuls. Although the circulation of votes was comprised largely of those switching from the Liberal and Country parties in 1966 to the Labor Party in 1969, the social characteristics of these respondents failed to account fully for the observed differences. The higher levels of interest in politics noticed amongst those who switched their votes were attributable to the fact that one quarter of the Liberal/Country Party → Labor switchers (N=155) expressed *"a good deal of interest"* in political activity. But the educational and occupational differences between switchers and faithfuls could not be explained in this fashion.

The occupational backgrounds of Liberal/Country Party → Labor switchers were of slightly lower status than those of switchers generally, and substantially lower than those of Liberal/Country Party faithfuls. This contrasted with the earlier finding that those who altered their votes between 1966 and 1969 were characterised by higher level occupations than were those whose voting patterns remained stable. Unfortunately, any study of the contribution made to this discrepancy by the occupational characteristics of those who switched their support in the reverse direction, from Labor to the Liberal/Country Party coalition, was precluded by the small size of the group (N=30).

The higher educational levels common to switchers as a whole were not attributable to unusually high concentrations of educated voters amongst any one group of respondents.[17] Instead, the educational backgrounds of

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17. This can be compared with Kemp's 1972 finding that the positive relationship between tendency to swing and education level could be attributed to the defection of better-educated voters away from the Liberal/Country Party coalition, Kemp, *op.cit.*, p.286.

those switching their votes in either direction in 1969 were remarkably similar to those of the voters from amongst whom they had defected:

TABLE 9.7 PROPENSITY TO CHANGE VOTE BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

	None/ Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	
Lib/CP Faithfuls	24.4	68.7	6.9	100% (661)
Lib/CP → Labor	25.8	67.7	6.5	100% (155)
Labor Faithfuls	42.7	54.6	2.7	100% (524)
Labor → Lib/CP	43.3	53.3	3.4	100% (30)

The numerical sizes of the various groups in this table (where there were 5 times as many Liberal/Country Party → Labor switchers as the reverse) can be taken to account for the overall difference observed in the educational levels of switchers as compared with party faithfuls.

The underlying reason for these results, where educational level appears to have been more closely related to 1966 vote than to behaviour in 1969, may have been the retention of a stable party identification, despite voting changes, amongst those with similar educational backgrounds. Controlling for party identification demonstrated that this was, indeed, the case amongst those who had voted for the coalition parties in 1966. The distribution of educational qualifications remained similar for Liberal/Country Party faithfuls and Liberal/Country Party → Labor switchers who had retained a psychological identification with the Liberal/Country Party coalition in 1969. The educational patterns of these same groups of switchers and faithfuls diverged, however, where party identification was anything other than pro-Liberal/Country Party in 1969.

Examination of such additional variables as direction of voting change and party identification has demonstrated the tenuous nature of

any generalizations which can be made about the characteristics of *"swinging voters"* from this type of data. The socio-demographic makeup of that 10% of the A.S.P. sample who switched their voters from one major party to the other between 1966 and 1969 did raise queries about the accuracy of previous portrayals of the *"swinging voter"*. However, on further examination, the data did not provide the basis for any new picture of those voters who have a propensity to swing at an election.

The A.S.P. respondents who swung towards the Labor Party in 1969 were clearly more interested in politics and better educated than the sample as a whole. As they outnumbered switchers in the reverse direction by 5 to 1, it was not surprising that their characteristics dominated the comparison between switchers and party faithfuls. The differences between pro-Labor and pro-Liberal/Country Party switchers on the variables of interest in politics and education were sufficiently great, however, that in an election where the predominant swing had benefited the government parties, instead of Labor, the social characteristics of *"swinging voters"* would have appeared to be quite different. The findings suggest a need to study voting changes, and accompanying alterations in party identification, over a series of elections in order to produce a profile of the *"swinging voter"* which is not specific to the circumstances of any one election.

Although some estimation of a voter's propensity to switch parties between the 1966 and 1969 elections was possible on the basis of information about his interest in politics, and knowledge of his educational and occupational status, it was clear that these variables alone could not explain the size or direction of the swing. In order to study the forces prompting voters to defect from the party of their 1966 vote, the size of the swing in both directions was computed for the range of opinions expressed in answer to the eight issue items included in the A.S.P. questionnaire. Keeping in mind that different party loyalties and socio-demographic backgrounds would ultimately need to be controlled, the finding of an unusually

strong swing towards one of the parties amongst the holders of a particular opinion would suggest that the issue concerned had some bearing on the outcome of the election.

The general pattern of voting changes amongst members of the A.S.P. sample has already been described. The Labor Party gains in 1969 could be attributed mostly to straight conversion, with five times as many respondents switching their support from the government parties to the opposition as the reverse. When the changes were expressed as percentages of the totals of 1966 votes for both party groupings, however, the degree of movement did not appear to be quite so one-sided. 17.0% of all those who recalled voting for the Liberal/Country Party coalition in 1966 (N=911) switched their vote to Labor three years later, whilst 5.1% of previous Labor voters (N=587) changed their vote in the opposite direction. As might have been expected, these overall levels of defection from 1966 voting patterns did not always persist when the sample was divided into sub-groups on the basis of attitudes expressed on the eight issue questions. The percentages changing their votes in one or the other direction were higher than the overall figures for some attitudes, and lower for others. When the percentage swing amongst respondents sharing a common attitude was much larger than for the whole sample (indicating a higher defection rate[18] amongst these respondents), it would appear that the possession of this opinion was in some way related to the respondents' decisions to switch their votes in 1969. The likelihood that this relationship had significantly affected the size of the swing actually recorded across the whole sample would depend on the numbers involved in the attitude group.

Two of the four possible alternative viewpoints on Vietnam proved to

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18. The term *"defection rate"* applied to the percentage of one party's 1966 supporters holding a particular opinion, who defected to the other party in 1969.

be associated with particularly high defection rates which benefited the Labor Party in 1969. 30.5% of 1966 Liberal/Country Party voters who believed that all troops should be withdrawn from the Vietnam war but some civilian experts retained (N=95) switched their votes to Labor in 1969. The more radical view, that Australia should stay out of Vietnam altogether had a defection rate of 26.8% of former supporters of the government parties (N=82). As Table 9.8 indicates, a number of other attitudes were also associated with movements towards the Labor Party considerably in excess of the 17.0% defection rate of 1966 Liberal/Country Party voters for the sample as a whole:

TABLE 9.8 DEFECTION RATES TO LABOR IN 1969 RECORDED ON 6 DIFFERENT ISSUE OPINIONS

	% of 1966 Lib/CP voters holding this view who swung to Labor in 1969	N
Vietnam War - only civilian experts to be retained (C)	30.5	95
Vietnam War - stay out altogether (D)	26.8	82
Communist China - no problem for Australia	24.6	260
Conscription - abolition (D)	24.4	86
Censorship - freedom to read, see what one likes	23.1	334
Relations with U.S.A. - fairly close	21.7	396

The small size of the swing in the reverse direction, from Labor to the Liberal and Country Parties, made any estimation of the attitudes associated with that swing particularly difficult. One attitude, however, when held by respondents who had voted for the ALP in 1966, was associated with a markedly high swing to the government parties. In comparison with an overall level of 5.1% of 1966 Labor supporters switching in this manner,

19.6% of the sub-group feeling that all troops, including conscripts, should be retained in Vietnam (N=46) changed their vote to support the Liberal/Country Party coalition in 1969. Although the size of the sub-group was too small to draw reliable conclusions, the fact that the swing registered amongst its members was four times greater than normal did suggest that the possession of a hardline attitude towards Vietnam by 1966 Labor supporters was linked with voting change in some cases. The only other opinions associated with notably high defection rates amongst those who had formerly voted for the Labor Party were that civilian alternatives should be provided for national service, and that Communist China would give Australia a lot to worry about in the future:

TABLE 9.9 DEFECTION RATES TO LIBERAL/COUNTRY PARTY COALITION IN 1969 RECORDED ON 3 DIFFERENT ISSUE OPINIONS

	% of 1966 Labor voters holding this view who swung to Lib/CP in 1969	N
Vietnam War - all troops, including conscripts, to remain (A)	19.6	46
Conscription - provision of civilian alternatives (C)	7.8	153
Communist China - a lot for Australia to worry about	7.5	239

The uneven distribution of the swing in both directions across the range of alternative views on Vietnam indicated that this issue may have had considerable significance in determining voting change amongst a proportion of the A.S.P. switchers (see Table 9.10). The only option on the Vietnam war which registered swings close to the size of those for the general sample was (B) - that only volunteer troops should continue fighting.

TABLE 9.10 DEFECTION RATES AMONGST THOSE HOLDING DIFFERENT OPINIONS ON VIETNAM

1966/1969 Votes	(A) Troops & Conscripts to remain	(B) Volunteer Troops only to remain	(C) Civilian Experts only to remain	(D) Stay Out of Vietnam Altogether
Lib/CP → Labor	6.4	19.9	30.5	26.8
N	(295)	(413)	(95)	(82)
Labor → Lib/CP	19.6	5.6	1.2	3.1
N'	(46)	(251)	(85)	(191)

N = no. of 1966 Lib/CP voters of this opinion.

N'= no. of 1966 Labor voters of this opinion.

Alternatives (C) and (D) were associated with extremely high defection rates amongst those who had voted for the government parties in 1966 and alternative (A) with a similarly high defection rate for 1966 Labor supporters. In each of these three cases, the rate of vote switching in the opposite direction was much lower than normal for the sample.

As alternative (B) was the most frequently expressed opinion on the Vietnam, however, whilst options (C) and (D) were not particularly popular amongst 1966 Liberal/Country Party voters and option (A) was very rate amongst 1966 Labor voters, the number of respondents who were in a position where they were likely to be influenced to change their votes by their opinions on Vietnam was relatively small. The finding that Vietnam was likely to have prompted voting change amongst only a restricted portion of the A.S.P. sample, confirmed suggestions arising from other sources. In a more refined measure of the links between changes in attitudes towards the war and voting swings between 1966 and 1969, Aitkin estimated that only 4% of the A.S.P. panel, whom he labelled the *"Vietnam switchers"*, could be said to have altered their votes in either direction in response to changed

opinions on the issue.[19] Aitkin commented that the fraction of this percentage swinging towards Labor comprised less than half of the net gain by Labor from conversion in 1969. Earlier findings of this study on the relative salience of the Vietnam war issue to the A.S.P. respondents also suggested that the proportion of the sample sufficiently concerned about the war to change their vote on the basis of their opinion towards it would have been very small. Nevertheless, the defection rates reported here suggest that Vietnam was the most powerful of the eight issues surveyed in prompting voting change amongst respondents holding certain attitudes towards the war which were in conflict with the policies of the parties for whom they had voted in 1966.

Communist China as a future problem for Australia was a further issue on which voting changes were unevenly distributed according to the opinions held by respondents. Although the swings were not so greatly exaggerated as with the Vietnam war issue, the percentages of voters defecting from the party of their 1966 choice were sufficiently different from those for the general sample to suggest that Communist China be included as an issue which may have influenced the voting decisions of some A.S.P. respondents in 1969 (see Table 9.11). In the case of each attitude towards Communist China, a higher than expected swing towards one party was accompanied by a low rate of change in the opposite direction.

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19. Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics (forthcoming). Aitkin's measure has been described here as being more *"refined"* because it was derived from panel data which included respondents' 1966 votes as recorded in the first wave of the survey conducted in 1967 (rather than relying on respondents' recall 3 years later) and it therefore allowed the study of opinion changes between 1967 and 1969 in relation to voting changes over the same period.

TABLE 9.11 DEFECTION RATES AMONGST THOSE HOLDING DIFFERENT OPINIONS ON COMMUNIST CHINA

1966/1969 Votes	Communist China a lot to worry about	Communist China No Problem
Lib/CP → Labor	13.4	24.6
N	(546)	(260)
Labor → Lib/CP	7.5	3.1
N'	(239)	(257)

N = no. of 1966 Lib/CP voters of this opinion

N'= no. of 1966 Labor voters of this opinion

On the conscription issue, one alternative - that of abolishing national service altogether - was associated with a very high defection rate of 24.4% amongst 1966 Liberal/Country Party supporters advocating this action (N=86) and a markedly low swing of 1.2% of 1966 Labor voters (N=171) in the reverse direction. Although the percentage of 1966 Labor voters in favour of civilian alternatives to national service who converted their votes to the government parties in 1969 (7.8% of 153 respondents) was listed earlier (see Table 9.9) as having exceeded the 5.1% defection rate recorded for the general sample, the proportion of like-minded respondents who swung in the opposite direction (19.6% of 341 1966 Lib/CP supporters) was also higher than the overall percentage swing in this direction of 17.0%. This occurrence could have resulted from the uncertainty of some respondents as to which party was most likely to introduce civilian forms of service, and need not necessarily have indicated that the attitude itself was irrelevant to voting change. It would be safer, however, to restrict any inferences on the links between the conscription issue and voting behaviour to the suggestion that a number of 1966 Liberal/Country Party supporters who subsequently switched to Labor may have been influenced to do so by their belief that conscription should be abolished.

A higher percentage of those who held the view that people should

be able to read and see whatever they liked with no censorship swung to Labor in 1969 than was recorded throughout the general sample. The defection rate amongst previous government supporters of this opinion was 23.1% (N=334), whereas only 4.2% of 1966 Labor voters who were of the same opinion (N=284) swung in the opposite direction. The desire to abolish censorship, therefore, may have been responsible for some voting changes in 1969.

Respondents who chose *"fairly close"* as a description of the desirable state of relations between Australia and the United States were also more likely to defect from the Liberal and Country Parties (21.7% of 396 1966 Lib/CP voters) and less likely to defect from Labor (4.3% of 277 1966 Labor voters) than was the sample taken as a whole. However, the relatively small size of the deviation from the normal defection rates, and the lack of clarity in the options provided to respondents on the issue (a choice of *"very close"*, *"fairly close"* and *"not very close"*) should lead to caution in the interpretation of these results.

This examination of relative defection rates has indicated that the possession of certain attitudes on the four issues of the Vietnam war, Communist China, conscription and censorship may have prompted voting change amongst respondents who had previously supported parties whose stances were opposed to these attitudes. The Vietnam war appeared to be the most potent of the eight issues in this regard. Opinions on the three issues of migration, State aid for non-government schools, and foreign investment had defection rates which did not deviate markedly from those recorded for the sample as a whole. This did not constitute proof that the attitudes concerned were irrelevant to voting behaviour in 1969, but they were unlikely to have had much influence under such circumstances.

Although this analysis has enabled certain issues to be isolated as *possible* contributors to voting change amongst segments of the A.S.P. sample, no conclusions could be reached as to the causal processes involved.

Additional, uncontrolled variables may have been partially responsible for the relationships observed here. Also, some allowance should be made for the presence of purely accidental relationships between voting changes and the possession of particular views, as was indicated by the persistence of small percentage swings in directions not logically related to the respondents' attitudes (e.g., 3.1% of 1966 Labor voters who wanted total disengagement from Vietnam (N=191) but switched to the Liberal and Country Parties in 1969).

A fuller picture of the attitudes most likely to be associated with voting change, particularly in Labor's favour, in 1969 emerged from a comparison of the distribution of opinions amongst switchers with those of the respondents who remained faithful to one or other of the major parties at both elections. It proved impossible to differentiate between the opinions of switchers and the party faithfuls on the two issues of foreign investment and State aid, thus confirming the suggestion made above on the basis of defection rates that these issues did not play a significant part in prompting respondents' decisions to change their votes. Four items - the Vietnam war, Communist China, conscription, relations with the USA - did prove to be effective discriminators between *both* sets of switchers and their respective groups of faithfuls, with the attitudes of those who changed their votes lying, for the most part, somewhere in the middle ground between the opinion distribution characteristic of the two opposing groups of party faithfuls. The position of the two remaining issues, censorship and migration, was somewhat unclear, with some differences between the opinionsof Liberal/Country → Labor switchers and the Liberal/ Country Party faithfuls, but little distinction between those who switched in the reverse direction and the Labor Party faithfuls.[20]

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20. In the following analysis, the alternatives available on each issue have been collapsed into binary form, as any more detailed breakdown of the views of the small number of Labor → Liberal/Country Party switchers (30) would not be reliable.

As stated above, the opinion which was associated with the greatest movement of votes towards the Labor Party in 1969 was the view that Australian troops should be withdrawn from the Vietnam war, but that some civilian experts should remain. Further analysis showed that the likelihood of voting change in either direction was related to the degree to which respondents favoured the withdrawal of troops. Collapsing the four alternatives into binary form resulted in the following distribution of opinion:

TABLE 9.12 1966/1969 VOTING CHANGE BY OPINION ON COMMITMENT OF TROOPS TO VIETNAM WAR

1966/1969 Vote	Some degree of troop commitment	No troop commitment	
Labor faithfuls	50.7	49.3	100% (517)
Lib/CP → Labor Switchers	66.4	33.6	100% (152)
Labor → Lib/CP Switchers	76.7	23.3	100% (30)
Lib/CP faithfuls	83.5	16.5	100% (648)

The opinions of both groups of switchers clearly occupied the middle ground between the Liberal/Country Party faithfuls, who predominantly favoured intervention in the war, and the Labor Party faithfuls who were evenly divided. This type of distribution was not surprising, as those who changed their votes between elections could be expected to be less polarised in their opinions on relevant issues than the consistent supporters of either side. If Vietnam had been the decisive issue for all switchers, we would hypothesize that none of those respondents who altered their votes would have continued to hold an opinion supported by the party from which they were defecting. This case would be unlikely to arise, however, for at least three reasons:

(a) all those who switched would not have made their decision on the basis of the same issue;

(b) some of the party faithfuls, even, had opinions which diverged from their parties' stances (e.g., 50.7% of Labor Party faithfuls still felt that there should be some degree of Australian troop commitment in Vietnam);

(c) these figures did not take into account whether switchers correctly perceived the parties' policies on the issue.

The distribution of opinion outlined above did show that attitudes on the Vietnam war issue were associated with voting changes for at least some of the A.S.P. respondents, as those who swung to Labor in 1969 were clearly less interventionist overall than consistent Liberal/Country Party voters, and vice-versa. The causal factors underlying this association, however, remained unclear. The demographic variables of age and sex could be discounted on the basis of their failure, earlier in the chapter, to show any relationship to the likelihood of voting change. The education level of respondents, however, was positively related to their propensity to swing and also bore some relationship to opinions on Vietnam. As the association between educational background and Vietnam opinion was of a complex nature (see Chapter 5) which differed in direction for 1969 Liberal/Country Party and Labor voters, higher levels of education amongst switchers could not in themselves be responsible for the total set of relationships observed here. Educational differences could have contributed to the particularly large swing to Labor recorded amongst those in favour of alternative C(the retention of civilian experts only in Vietnam), as this opinion increased in popularity with higher education.

The exact contribution of possible influential variables, such as education, could not be established with the small number of switchers present within the sample - and even with larger numbers, more sophisticated statistical techniques of causal path analysis would be required. At this stage it was only possible to differentiate between those extraneous variables which may have affected the relationship between issue opinion and

voting change and those variables, such as age and sex, whose contribution could be discounted. Party identification was also eliminated from consideration as an influential variable in this case, as controlling for party loyalties did not alter the less interventionist pattern of opinion amongst both sets of switchers despite the fact that some had retained loyalties which were inconsistent with their 1969 votes. Despite the possible contribution of other variables, the evidence of this chapter suggests that the issue of Australian intervention in Vietnam was a likely influential factor in the voting decisions of those who swung to Labor, in particular, at the 1969 elections. How this accorded with the relatively low salience of Vietnam amongst the general sample will be investigated at a later stage.

Conscription was another issue on which the distribution of opinions amongst both groups of switchers could be clearly distinguished from those who continued to vote for the same party in 1969. The distinction was most clearly observable when the question was collapsed into the two alternative approaches of retaining conscription in some form or abolishing it altogether. The most meaningful comparisons in Table 9.13, as with the Vietnam war issue, were between the Liberal/Country Party → Labor switchers and the Liberal/Country Party faithfuls, the former being rather less likely to favour any form of conscription than the latter; and between the Labor → Liberal/Country Party switchers and their counterparts who remained faithful to Labor, the former being more favourably disposed towards conscription than the latter.[21] The views of the small number of respondents who defected from the Labor Party in 1969 were, in fact, virtually identical with the views of the consistent Liberal/Country Party supporters.

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21. As the number of Labor → Liberal/Country Party switchers with opinions on conscription was only 27, the percentages in this row of the table are likely to be unreliable.

TABLE 9.13 1966/1969 VOTING CHANGE BY OPINION ON ABOLITION OF CONSCRIPTION

1966/1969 Vote	Some form of Conscription	Abolish Conscription	
Labor faithfuls	68.4	31.6	100% (513)
Lib/CP → Labor Switchers	86.1	13.9	100% (150)
Labor → Lib/CP Switchers	92.6	7.4	100% (27)
Lib/CP faithfuls	91.3	8.7	100% (652)

Educational differences between switchers and faithfuls alone could not account for the decreased popularity of conscription amongst those who defected from the Liberal/Country Party in 1969 as secondary education was generally associated with a drop in support for the abolition of conscription amongst 1969 Labor voters (see Chapter 5). Controlling for party identification, too, failed to explain the differences in the distribution of opinions in terms of this variable alone.

Slight differences of opinion on the issue of Australia's relations with the United States were recorded between those who switched their votes and those who continued to support the same party in 1969 (see Table 9.14). Although the percentage differences did appear to constitute a meaningful trend, two qualifications were necessary - firstly, the response categories of *"very close"*, *"fairly close"* and *"not very close"* were not particularly meaningful in comparative terms; and, secondly, the three-way division of responses produced a result which was likely to have been highly unreliable for the small number of Labor → Liberal/Country Party switchers (30). With these qualifications in mind, the data showed that those respondents who switched to Labor in 1969 were less likely to favour a *"very close"* alliance with the USA than the Liberal/Country Party faithfuls, but generally favoured

a closer alliance than did the Labor stalwarts. The small group of Labor → Liberal/Country switchers could be distinguished, in turn, from these Labor faithfuls by their greater support for a *"very close"* alliance.

TABLE 9.14 1966/1969 VOTING CHANGE BY OPINION ON THE U.S. ALLIANCE

	Relations with USA			
	Very Close	Fairly Close	Not Very Close	
Labor faithfuls	36.6	48.6	14.8	100% (513)
Lib/CP → Labor Switchers	38.2	56.5	5.3	100% (152)
Labor → Lib/CP Switchers	46.7	40.0	13.3	100% (30)
Lib/CP faithfuls	54.9	40.6	4.5	100% (663)

As the effect of higher educational levels on attitudes towards the United States was to increase the proportion of respondents opting for a *"fairly close"* alliance, it was possible that the education variable accounted for the greater popularity of this alternative amongst those who switched to Labor in 1969. Those respondents who retained an identification with the Liberal and Country parties despite voting changes shared similar opinions to the Liberal/Country Party faithfuls on the US alliance, but this was not the case amongst respondents who identified with Labor.

The opinions of those who switched their votes on the issue of Communist China differed quite markedly from those of respondents who continued to support the party of their 1966 choice (see Table 9.15). Greater optimism about Australia's relations with Communist China was to be found amongst voters who swung away from the Liberal/Country Party coalition in 1969; conversely, Labor → Liberal/Country Party switchers were almost as pessimistic as those faithful to the government parties across the two elections.

TABLE 9.15 1966/1969 VOTING CHANGE BY OPINION ON COMMUNIST CHINA

	Communist China as a Problem for Australia: Lot to Worry About	No Problem	
Labor faithfuls	46.7	53.3	100% (445)
Lib/CP → Labor Switchers	53.3	46.7	100% (137)
Labor → Lib/CP Switchers	69.2	30.8	100% (26)
Lib/CP faithfuls	71.3	28.7	100% (588)

The presence of a greater proportion of tertiary educated respondents amongst the switchers may have been responsible for the greater optimism of those who swung to Labor; but party identification did not appear to have any effect on the distribution of opinions.

The Liberal/Country Party → Labor switchers were evenly divided in their attitudes towards censorship. With 50% opposing any form of censorship at all, this group was more permissive in its opinions than either group of party faithfuls (see Table 9.16). Those who switched their votes in the opposite direction could not be differentiated from the Labor faithfuls on the basis of their opinions on this issue.

TABLE 9.16 1966/1969 VOTING CHANGE BY OPINION ON CENSORSHIP

	Censorship: Some Censorship	People to Read What they Like	
Labor faithfuls	51.1	48.9	100% (519)
Lib/CP → Labor Switchers	50.0	50.0	100% (154)
Lib/CP faithfuls	66.4	33.6	100% (657)

Education level clearly was not a contributing factor in this relationship between voting change and increased opposition to censorship. Earlier in the analysis it was demonstrated that the more highly educated respondents, who were present in greater numbers amongst the switchers than amongst the party faithfuls, were increasingly in favour of some form of censorship - the reverse relationship to that outlined here. Shared feelings of party identification also failed to explain the differences in opinion distribution between those who swung to Labor and the remaining party faithfuls.

A comparison of attitudes towards Asian migration did not elicit any meaningful differences between the four groups of voters when responses were divided amongst the five options offered in the questionnaire. However, when the response categories were reclassified into *"some level of Asian migration"* as opposed to *"no Asian migration"*, clear differences of opinion became apparent (see Table 9.17). Labor party faithfuls emerged as the hard-liners, with their Liberal/Country Party counterparts being more favourably inclined towards the entry of Asians. A very large majority of those who swung towards Labor in 1969 was in favour of some Asian migration. This result renedered voting change in this direction virtually inexplicable in terms of the issue of Asian migration, as it was the only case where the views of switchers were more pronounced in a direction which was favoured by consistent supporters of the party from which they defected and was less popular amongst the faithfuls of the party to which they swung. The attitudes of the Labor → Liberal/Country Party switchers were characterised by slightly greater liberality than was displayed by those who remained faithful to the Labor Party.

TABLE 9.17 1966/1969 VOTING CHANGE BY OPINION ON ASIAN MIGRATION

	Migration of Asians to Australia: Some Asian Migration	Migration of Asians to Australia: No Asians in Australia	
Labor faithfuls	56.9	43.1	100% (508)
Lib/CP → Labor Switchers	74.2	25.8	100% (151)
Labor → Lib/CP Switchers	60.0	40.0	100% (30)
Lib/CP faithfuls	67.8	32.2	100% (643)

On this issue, it was possible that the higher educational levels of respondents who switched their votes to Labor were responsible for the distribution of opinions amongst this group, rather than that the issue itself influenced their voting decisions. Higher education was associated with more favourable attitudes towards Asian migration and, as the views of these particular switchers did not relate logically to a move away from the government parties and towards Labor, the evidence suggested that some factor (or factors) apart from migration caused the swing to Labor. As the observed differences of opinion persisted when party identification was controlled, they could not be explained by the intervention of this variable.

To sum up, those who switched their voting support from the government parties to Labor in 1969 were more likely to favour a reduction in troop commitment to Vietnam and the liberalising of conscription, less likely to want very close relations with the US or to regard Communist China as a problem, more likely to favour the abolition of censorship, and more likely to favour some Asian migration than those who continued to vote Liberal/Country Party in 1969. On each of these issues except Asian migration, the switchers' attitudes lay somewhere between those of

the Labor and Liberal/Country Party faithfuls. The few who changed their votes from Labor to Liberal/Country Party, on the other hand, were more likely to favour the commitment of troops in Vietnam and the continuation of conscription, and more likely to favour very close relations with the US and to regard Communist China as a problem than consistent Labor supporters.

Concern over foreign investment in Australia and the question of State aid for non-government schools were the only issues which could be eliminated, at this stage, as possible determinants of voting change in 1969. Although Asian migration could not be completely discounted, it was unlikely to have had any independent influence on the swing and the opinion differences on the issue of the US alliance were too small to be meaningful. The censorship issue could only have been influential in the voting decision of those who swung to Labor. The remaining issues - the Vietnam war, conscription and Communist China - seemed likely to have had some bearing on decisions to switch votes in both directions between 1966 and 1969. Whether they influenced some or all of the switchers, in conjunction with other variables or independently, or whether the associations between opinion and voting change were entirely spurious could not be proven at this stage of the analysis. The inability of such variables as age, sex and education to explain the opinions of those who switched their votes showed that socio-demographic variables alone were not responsible for voting change. Alterations in party identification or inconsistencies between partisanship and 1969 vote also could not account for the differences in opinion observed here. However, it would be wrong to discount the possibility that some other factor, perhaps an issue not identified in the A.S.P. questionnaire but related to the remaining issues, could have been of primary importance in the movement of votes between 1966 and 1969.

It would seem reasonable to concentrate the search for further explanatory factors amongst those issues which the voters themselves nominated as important problems. An analysis of the association between salient

problems and the likelihood of voting change between 1966 and 1969 revealed a number of issues which registered comparatively high percentage swings amongst those voters listing the issues as important problems requiring Federal government action. Only one of these self-nominated issues, the Vietnam war, also appeared amongst the questionnaire items isolated so far as possible contributors to voting change.

TABLE 9.18 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN 1969 SWING TO LABOR AND SALIENT ISSUES

	% of 1966 Lib/CP voters who listed issue as *"most important problem"* and swung to Labor in 1969	N
Housing	29.0	31
Health	25.0	48
Vietnam War	22.9	48
National Development	19.7	66
Pensions	19.2	104
Education	17.3	168
Defence	14.3	84

Table 9.18 lists the seven *"most important problems"* which were associated with the greatest gains for Labor in 1969 amongst former Liberal/Country Party voters. The issues which were most frequently nominated as important problems by the A.S.P. respondents as a whole, pensions and education, were not the most effective predictors of defections. Higher proportions of the relatively few 1966 Liberal/Country Party voters for whom housing, health or the Vietnam war were salient actually switched their support to Labor in 1969. It was unfortunate for the reliability of the swing estimates that the numbers nominating each of these three issues as *"most important"* were so small.

The same problem was evident when the links between salient issues and the size of the swing in the reverse direction were examined:

TABLE 9.19 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN 1969 SWING TO LIB/CP AND SALIENT ISSUES

	% of 1966 Labor voters who listed issue as *"most important problem"* and swung to Lib/CP in 1969	N
Defence	9.4	32
Health	6.7	45
Housing	6.1	33
Pensions	5.3	114
Education	5.3	95

The combination of low numbers nominating defence, health and housing as salient problems with the small size of the swing to the Liberal/Country Party coalition meant that it was not feasible to allocate responsibility for the movement of votes in this direction to any of these issues in particular - the voting changes recorded here could have been purely accidental. It was interesting, however, to compare the relative contributions of the issues which appeared to be associated with this swing against those of the issues which, when salient, elicited markedly high swings in the opposite direction.

The Vietnam war figured strongly as a salient issue in the swing towards Labor in 1969, but did not contribute significantly to the small swing recorded in favour of the government parties. Conversely, defence appeared to play a major role in the latter swing, but ranked only seventh amongst the issues linked with the highest percentage swings to Labor. These were quite predictable relationships, given the respective parties' policies and campaign biases.

Less easy to explain was the strong association between giving priority to health or housing and switching towards the Labor Party in 1969, in view of the appearance of these same two issues in the list of salient problems linked with voting change in the opposite direction. The

failure of the questionnaire to discriminate amongst respondents who held differing opinions on the problem they had nominated as important could help to account for this anomaly. Respondents giving priority to the problem of health, for example, could have been divided between a group wanting the introduction of a compulsory scheme of health insurance and tending to swing to Labor, and a group favouring the retention of private health insurance, some of whom switched to the government parties. Such an explanation assumes, however, a meaningful relationship between issue salience and voting change which may not have been warranted in the case of the very few respondents whose nomination of health or housing as important problems coincided with a switch from Labor to the Liberal/Country Party coalition in 1969.

The comparatively low ranking of pensions and education in the analysis of the swing to Labor demonstrated that issues which aroused widespread concern throughout the electorate were not necessarily those most closely linked with voting change. Concern with housing, health or even the Vietnam war was a more potent indication that a respondent would transfer his voting support from the government parties to the opposition in 1969 than was a concern with either education or pensions. This point would not be reflected in the raw data, as pro-Labor switchers for whom education or pensions were salient would have outnumbered others in the swing to Labor. For those interested in an electoral outcome, the *spread* of concern with an issue, or issues, amongst the voting population would continue to be of prime importance. The emphasis in this study on causal relationships, however, necessitated that a distinction be made between an issue's contribution to a voting swing as a result of variation in,

(i) the numbers of voters for whom the issues was important - *salience*;

(ii) the percentage of (i) who switched their votes - *potency* of an issue for voting change.

On the basis of this distinction, education and pensions were highly salient

issues amongst the members of the A.S.P. sample. The respondents concerned with these issues, however, did not switch their votes in either direction at the 1969 election with any markedly greater frequency than did the sample as a whole. The most potent issues for voting change were housing, health and the Vietnam war in relation to the pro-Labor swing, and defence in relation to the swing towards the government parties.

The finding that those issues which aroused the most widespread concern within the A.S.P. sample were not necessarily the best predictors of voting change confirmed the reservations expressed in Chapter 8 concerning any assumption that a salient issue would necessarily influence voting behaviour by virtue of its importance to the electors alone. On an individual level, the commonsense proposition that an issue must bear some importance to a voter *if* it is to influence his voting decision was valid. It could not be assumed, however, that issues nominated as important by equal segments of the sample bore an equal potential to influence votes. Although some level of salience was a pre-condition for issue voting, it did not follow that the most salient issues had the strongest connection with voting swings. The intervention of some other factors besides the perceived importance of the issues themselves must have accounted for the difference in the percentage swings recorded. Although the perception of an issue as important might have provided the *motivation* for voting change, other conditions would need to have been fulfilled in order for a swing to occur.

Three additional conditions were necessary for voting change to have been prompted by concern for an issue:

(a) the presence of an opinion (preferably held with some intensity) on the issue concerned;

(b) the perception that a different party from the one previously voted for would be most likely to initiate action in accordance with the voter's opinion on the issue;

(c) the possession of a party loyalty which was not so strongly felt as to outweigh (a) and (b).

Unfortunately, the only information obtainable from the questionnaire on the application of these three conditions to the issues commonly nominated as important problems was in relation to the Vietnam war (see previous chapter). As a result, it was impossible to say why the two most salient issues within the sample, education and pensions, were not good predictors of voting change, whilst health and housing, which ranked respectively sixth and eighth in the list of *"most important problems"*, were each associated with large percentage swings towards the Labor Party.

The available evidence on the Vietnam war issue did indicate that the above conditions were likely to have been fulfilled for a proportion of those respondents who regarded the war as the most important problem necessitating Federal government action. Analysis undertaken in the previous chapter showed that the views of those for whom Vietnam was salient were skewed towards the reduction of Australia's troop commitment, although their opinions were not necessarily held with any greater intensity than those of the rest of the sample. Most of the respondents concerned identified the Labor Party as the party most likely to take appropriate action on the problem. The widespread knowledge recorded within the sample about the major parties' stances towards Vietnam made it highly likely that most of the 22.9% of 1966 Liberal/Country Party voters concerned about the war who switched their votes to Labor in 1969 had perceived that the latter party would do what they wanted on the issue. The ties exerted by party loyalty, also, were likely to have been at a minimum within this group owing to the relatively high representation of non-identifiers amongst those for whom Vietnam was salient. As non-identifiers were found to be the most susceptible of all respondents to voting change between 1966 and 1969, this constituted further evidence that concern with the Vietnam war had prompted a number of the changes in party

support recorded at the 1969 election.

Unfortunately, the status of this evidence linking Vietnam, as a salient issue, to voting change had to remain at the level of inference, based on the analysis of the data carried out up to this point. When an attempt was made to test the validity of the points made here by isolating from the sample those respondents who had expressed concern about the war and had switched their votes, the size of the group turned out to be far too small for reliable analysis.

The small size of any group of voters within the total electorate who could be expected to have changed their vote on the basis of a single policy issue has constituted a severe handicap to any researcher attempting to assess the role of issues in voting behaviour. In comparison with party identification, which has proved the best predictor of voting so far, the amount of change in voting behaviour between elections attributable to the influence of a single issue has rarely proved large enough to register in statistical analyses of variance. As a result, some researchers have experimented with using scales of issue partisanship which score respondents' opinions on a multiplicity of issues,[22] on the assumption that some voters are oriented more towards policy issues *per se* than other voters.

From the outset, the emphasis of the present study has been on the contribution of *individual* issues to the 1969 election campaign and to voting decisions made at, or before, the Federal election. Using simple bivariate tables, it has not been possible to draw any finite conclusions as to the degree of influence exerted by any one issue. From the analysis so far, it can be inferred with reasonable confidence that the Vietnam war was the issue which would have exerted the most powerful pressures towards voting change, *but only over a very small proportion of the total A.S.P. sample*. Three other issues - Communist China, conscription and censorship -

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22. *"Issue partisanship"* scales were used by RePass, *op.cit.*

were associated with voting changes in ways which could not be accounted for by the influence of party identification or other variables such as age, sex, education and interest in politics. As these issues did not rate independent mention as salient problems,[23] it was possible that they did not initiate voting swings but were merely associated with movements in the vote through their linkage with some other influential issue, such as Vietnam. There were other issues - health, housing and defence - which recorded higher than usual percentage swings amongst those respondents who perceived them to be important problems, but these had to be excluded from further analysis as there was no provision for them in the questionnaire design. Keeping in mind that some issues of significance for voting change may have been ommitted in this fashion, the next step in analysing the data was to carry out a more complex multivariate procedure of statistical analysis which was capable of arranging a number of variables in sequence, according to their relative contributions to the vote.

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23. This was not completely true, as conscription was listed as the *"most important problem"* by 31 respondents. The number of these respondents who also switched their vote in 1969 was likely to be so small, however, that the association could not be attributed to anything more than accident.

CHAPTER 10

A MULTI-VARIATE ANALYSIS

To this point, the linkages between issue opinions and voting behaviour in 1969 have been studied through an exhaustive process of crosstabulating two single variables (usually an issue with 1969 vote) in order to observe the associations within each set of variables. Composite variables, such as 1966-1969 vote, have been constructed where necessary and controls have been applied to counteract the influence of such additional variables as party idenfitication and socio-demographic factors. However, with simple cross-tabulation it has only been possible to control for the influence of one or two additional variables at a time and the intercorrelation existing between the different issues have largely had to be ignored. Despite these limitations, a large body of information has been compiled about Australian voters' attitudes towards policy issues, their perceptions of party differences and their own issue priorities, in relation to their party loyalties and to their actual voting behaviour. The analysis led, in the preceding chapter, to the formulation of a hypothesis that four of the ASP issue items, in particular, were associated with the swing to Labor recorded at the 1969 election.

To be of more than passing value, however, the findings so far need to be incorporated within a theory of the dynamics of voting behaviour in a liberal-democratic polity. Construction of such a theory for Australia would require a comparison of the relative influence of different variables on voters which is beyond the scope of simple bivariate analysis. We need to be able to compare the relative contributions of the different issues and of such additional factors as party identification to voting decisions in 1969.

Statistical techniques have been developed which allow the simultaneous analysis of relationships between a series of variables and a single dependent variable. The complexity of the statistical operations involved

ensures that this type of analysis is almost always performed with the aid of a computer. One such program which is particularly suited to the ASP data is the University of Michigan's Automatic Interaction Detector (AID).[1] This program analyses the relative effectiveness of a multiplicity of variables in predicting the value of a dependent variable with allowances for interaction effects and for intercorrelations amongst the explanatory variables. It can be used with nominal data, where variables are expressed in the form of classifications, rather than being continuous.

Because the nominal nature of the ASP data was known, the presence of intercorrelations amongst the issues had been established and interaction effects were also suspected,[2] AID was chosen as a suitable program for multi-variate analysis of the ASP respondents' opinions on the issue items in relation to their 1969 vote. Although this technique could not be used to predict the likelihood of changes in voting behaviour between 1966 and 1969, it could be used to test the hypothesis that opinions on the Vietnam war, conscription, Communist China and censorship were more effective as predictors of 1969 vote than attitudes towards any of the other issues in the ASP survey. More precisely, it could be expected to discriminate amongst these four issues, arranging them in order of their effectiveness in explaining the respondents' 1969 votes.

As described by its designers, the program *"employs a non-symmetrical branching process, based on variance analysis techniques, to sub-divide the sample into a series of sub-groups which maximize one's ability to*

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1. See J.A. Sonquist and J.N. Morgan, The Detection of Interaction Effects (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1964) for a description of the AID program and the reasons for its development.

2. A possible example of an interaction effect operating amongst the different variables in the ASP data would be that opposition to conscripts fighting in Vietnam might prompt a Labor vote amongst respondents with no feelings of party identification, but would still be associated with a Lib/CP vote amongst those who identified strongly with the government. See Appendix J in Sonquist and Morgan, *op.cit.*, for a discussion of interaction effects.

predict values of the dependent variable".[3] Instead of asking the question, *"What is the effect of x on y when everything else is held constant?"*, which has been implicit in the type of analysis performed so far in this study, Sonquist and Morgan have based their approach on a different question - *"What do I need to know most in order to reduce predictive error a maximum amount?"*[4]. Using analysis of variance techniques, the program sequentially splits the sample in a binary fashion, so that at each step in the procedure the means of the two sub-groups chosen in the split account for more of the total sum of squares than the means of any other combination of sub-groups.[5] The computer output takes the form of an asymmetrical tree, with each branch accounting for more of the variance in the dependent variable than the following branch.

It could not be expected that all, or even most of the ASP issue items would appear in the AID output as effective predictors of respondents' 1969 vote. Restraints have been written into the program to ensure that the sample will not split on variables which do not describe a minimum proportion of the variance, nor will it split into groups where the numbers of observations are so small that the split may have been influenced by sampling error.

The splitting process employed in the program was suitable for predictor variables which were of a nominal or ordinal nature. However, the dependent variable needed to be in the form of an interval scale, if the program was to produce sub-groups whose means could easily be identified as representing high or low values of the dependent variable. For this reason, the data on 1969 vote was converted into binary form with a Labor vote being recorded as 1 and a vote for any other party as 0. The resultant AID analysis, using 1969 Labor vote as the dependent variable and the eight issue items, unchanged, as predictors, split the sample into a

3. Sonquist and Morgan, *op.cit.*, p.1.
4. *ibid.*, p.iv.
5. *ibid.*, p.4.

series of sub-groups whose means represented percentages of the 1969 Labor vote. The decision to employ the Labor versus non-Labor form was made as a result of preliminary AID analyses which demonstrated that Liberal and Country Party votes could not be combined into a composite dependent variable as each was explained by a different set of predictors. Although the combined form had been used earlier in the study, for the reasons outlined in Chapter 2, the emphasis where possible had been on explaining votes cast for the Labor Party, rather than for the government parties. It was decided, therefore, to conduct the multivariate analysis of 1969 voting behaviour on the basis of isolating those issues which best explained a decision to vote for the Labor Party.

Figure 10.1 shows the results of the first AID analysis. The Vietnam war was clearly the issue which most effectively discriminated between those respondents who supported Labor and those who voted for other parties. Conscription and Communist China also explained some of the Labor vote, but no other issues were sufficiently significant as predictors to appear in the analysis.

The tree was of a pronounced asymmetrical shape, with respondents who felt that troops, including conscripts, should continue to fight in Vietnam (A) recording such a low percentage Labor vote (Y = 16.3%) that the group could not be split on any other predictor variables. The sample split twice on Vietnam, with opinions on the two issues of conscription and Communist China explaining a significant amount of the variance in the Labor vote amongst those who thought, respectively, that volunteer troops should be retained in Vietnam (B), and that all troops should be withdrawn (C,D).

The Labor vote for the entire sample was 43.9% (N=1873). Amongst those holding opinion (A) on Vietnam (and, incidentally, the few respondents who answered *"don't know"*) it was 16.3% (N=491), whereas those holding all other views on the same issue recorded a Labor vote of 53.8% (N=1382). This particular split amongst the options provided on the Vietnam issue was the

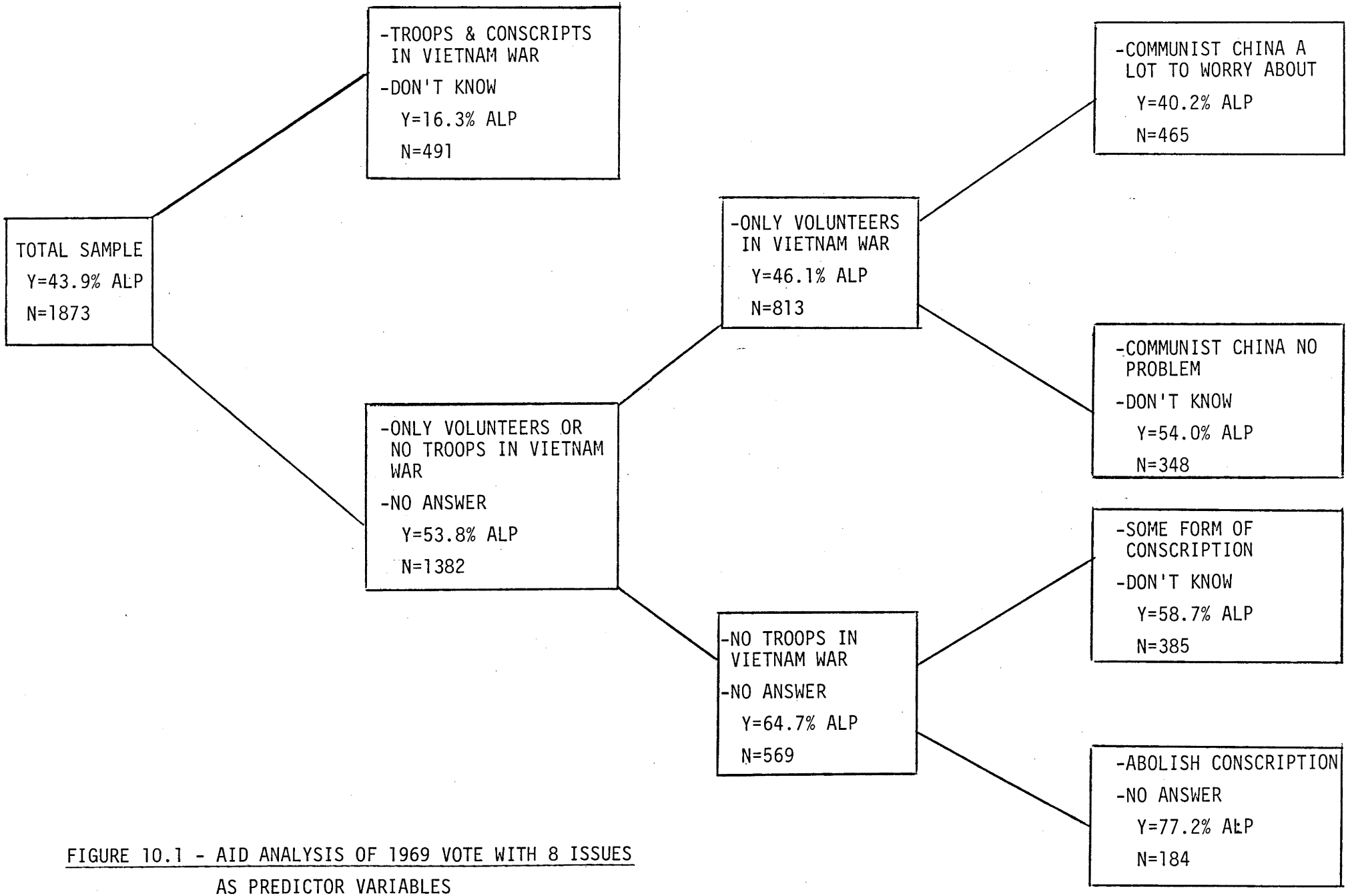


FIGURE 10.1 - AID ANALYSIS OF 1969 VOTE WITH 8 ISSUES AS PREDICTOR VARIABLES

most effective predictor of whether a respondent would support the Labor Party at the 1969 election. Subsequently, the program split those holding opinions (B,C,D) into two groups - the most likely to vote Labor being respondents who favoured the complete withdrawal of troops (C,D) (Y = 64.7% Labor; N=569); and the least likely to vote Labor being those who supported the retention of volunteer troops in the war (B) (Y = 46.1% Labor; N=813).

The most effective predictor of a Labor vote in 1969 amongst the latter group of respondents was the view that Communist China did not constitute a future problem for Australia. Those wanting the retention of volunteer troops in Vietnam were split on the issue of Communist China into a group feeling that China would not be a problem (Y = 54.0% Labor; N=348) and a group believing that China would give Australia a lot to worry about in the future (Y = 40.2%; N=465).

Amongst respondents who wanted a complete withdrawal from Vietnam, the AID program split on opinions towards conscription. The view that conscription should be abolished explained a greater proportion of the Labor vote (Y = 77.2%; N=184) than all other attitudes which supported some form of national service (Y = 58.7%; N=385).

As a general statement, it could be said that respondents who wanted the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, in addition to the abolition of conscription were the most likely of all to vote for the Labor party in 1969 - 77.2% of them, in fact, voted Labor. The general hypothesis that opinions on the Vietnam war, conscription, Communist China and censorship would be the most effective items for predicting voting behaviour in 1969 was confirmed for the first three issues, but not with regard to censorship.

To put the results of this AID analysis into perspective, it needs to be noted that many other variables could have been included as possible predictors of voting behaviour at the 1969 election. Those which immediately spring to mind are the socio-demographic variables of education, occupation, age and sex, which have been utilised at earlier points in this study, and

the measure of voters' attitudes towards the political parties which is commonly represented by party identification.

Although education, occupation, age and sex displayed some relationships with 1969 vote in the simple cross-tabulations performed earlier in the study, I would suggest that the relationships were not sufficiently strong for any of these variables to register in an AID analysis of the Labor vote. Once the focus of research has moved from investigating one-to-one relationships to that of multi-variate analysis, socio-demographic variables as separate measures are likely to be of little utility in explaining voting behaviour.[6] The dynamics of a voting decision would be almost impossible to conceptualise in terms of individual variables such as age, sex, etc.[7] For this reason, measures which attempt to summarise the influence on voters' attitudes of a wide range of variables are more commonly used in analysing the influence paths leading up to a voting decision.

Although not itself a composite variable, party identification is a construct which purports to measure voters' attitudes towards the political parties which have themselves been shaped by a whole host of variables. Numerous researchers in Australia and overseas have hypothesised that it plays the role of an intervening variable, filtering the voters' perceptions

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6. Educational level may well be a variable which constitutes an exception to this hypothesis. In their analysis of the 1972 U.S. Presidential election, A.H.Miller and his colleagues at the University of Michigan Survey Research Centre found that education played a role in determining whether issue attitudes or candidate preferences were used as bases for voting choices. They observed, *"It is apparently far easier for college educated individuals to directly translate issue attitudes into a vote decision than for the relatively less well educated who use the candidate as an intervening focus for their ideology"*. A.H. Miller, *et al., op.cit.,* p.71.

7. The difficulty in conceptualising the contribution of individual variables to voting decisions may be applicable to issues just as much as to socio-demographic variables (see concluding comments to this chapter), but the former have been included in the AID analysis as separate entities because they constitute the focus of this thesis.

of the outside world.[8] If so, it is likely to be a highly effective predictor of voting behaviour and it would be a mistake to conclude the multi-variate analysis without assessing its contribution, in relation to those of the issues already studied.

A further AID analysis was therefore performed, with the inclusion of party identification as a predictor variable. It was expected that the sample would split first on party identification, and that this variable alone would explain most of the variance in 1969 vote. This expectation was fulfilled by the results, with the sample splitting twice on respondents' party identification, before the Vietnam war issue appeared in the analysis. No other issue was capable of explaining any further variance in the dependent variable.

The tree produced as a result of the second AID analysis is set out in Figure 10.2. At the first stage, the sample was split into two groups of relatively even numbers. One contained Labor party supporters, those who identified with other, small parties, and independents, of whom 80.4% voted for the A.L.P. in 1969 (N=936). The second group comprised all other categories of identifiers (Liberal, Country Party, DLP), in addition to those who refused to answer the question, and recorded a Labor vote of only 7.5% (N=937). A further split separated the Labor identifiers (Y = 88.9% Labor; N=739) from those respondents who supported one of the minor parties and the independents (Y = 48.7% Labor; N=197).

The possession of a particular party loyalty explained so much of the variance in 1969 vote that neither of the two remaining groups of major party identifiers could be split on any of the issue items included in the analysis. Sufficient variance in the voting behaviour of independents (including a small number of respondents who had identified with one of the minor political parties) was, however, explained by the Vietnam war

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8. See Chapter 6.

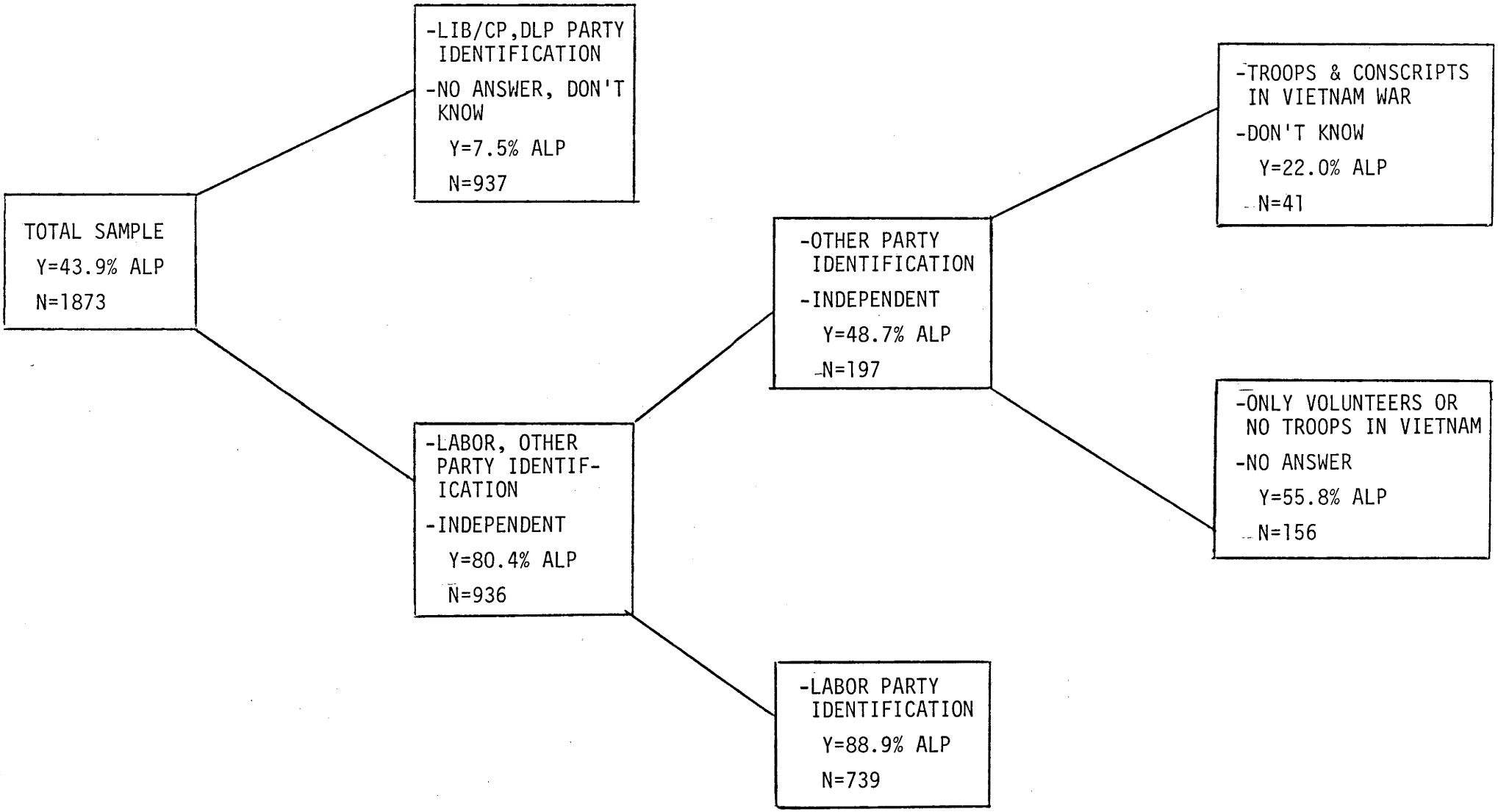


FIGURE 10.2 - AID ANALYSIS OF 1969 VOTE WITH PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND 8 ISSUES AS PREDICTOR VARIABLES

issue for this group to be split into those who wanted to retain troops, including conscripts, in the war (Y = 22.0% Labor; N=41) and those who were against the involvement of conscripts, or wanted all Australian troops withdrawn (Y = 55.8% Labor; N=156).

The analysis clearly showed that the best predictor of a Labor vote in 1969 was the knowledge that a respondent identified with the Labor party regardless of his opinions on the eight policy issues. 88.9% of Labor identifiers voted for the A.L.P. in 1969, whereas only 55.8% of the group of independents and minor party identifiers who opposed government policy on Vietnam actually voted for Labor. The results upheld the earlier finding that the Vietnam war was the most effective of all the issue items in explaining 1969 vote,[9] whilst placing the contribution of issues to voting behaviour in a more realistic perspective in relation to party identification. The overwhelming significance of party identification in this analysis corresponds with previous American research findings that the party identification variable *"blocks out"* the possible contributions of any other variables to voting decisions because of its enormous predictive capacity.[10] For this reason, it has proved extremely difficult to identify the role played by issues in the voting process if the voters concerned are known to possess standing party loyalties. The Vietnam war was the only one of the eight issue items included in this study which could be shown, on the basis of quantitative tests, to have played a part in voting decisions in

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9. Regardless of there being any other issue which explained a significant degree of variance in 1969 vote after the contribution of party identification and the Vietnam war had been taken into account, the group of *"independent"* or *"other party"* identifiers in favour of keeping troops, including conscripts, in Vietnam was of too small a size to be split any further (see Figure 10.2 - N=41). The minimum size sub-group allowable under the constraints of the program was 25.

10. See Campbell, *et al.*, The American Voter; Goldberg, "Social Determinism and Rationality as Bases of Party Identification"; Converse, *et al.*, "Continuity and Change in American Politics"; Boyd, *op.cit.*; Miller, *et al.*, *op.cit.*; Pomper, *op.cit.*

1969 in addition to that played by party identification.

The diagrammatic presentation of the two AID analyses in Figures 10.1 and 10.2 shows that the data included cases where respondents had failed to give an opinion on the particular issue and/or had not volunteered a description of their partisan affiliation. Likewise, the calculation of percentage Labor vote for the dependent variable included respondents who had failed to vote in the 1969 elections or who refused to divulge their vote. For ease of explanation, these cases were not always mentioned in the verbal description of the analyses. Their inclusion in the data analysed by the AID program was not strictly in keeping with the objectives for performing the multi-variate analysis and their presence did introduce unnecessary complications to the explanation of the output.

It was, therefore, decided to re-run the two analyses excluding cases of no answer, *"don't know"* and *"didn't vote"* from the program by classifying them as missing data. As the party identification variable in its original form was also not consistent with the form of the dependent variable (percentage Labor vote in 1969), it was recoded to form three categories: Labor, non-Labor and independent. Liberal, Country Party, DLP and other minor party identifiers were thus included within a single category. Unfortunately, the AID program did not allow the nomination of specific missing data cases for each predictor variable, so a respondent was eliminated completely from the analysis if he had failed to answer any one of the questions on 1969 vote, party identification or the eight issues. The number of cases available for analysis by the program was thus reduced from the total sample of 1,873 respondents to only 834 cases.

The breakdown trees which resulted from the two re-runs of the program are reproduced in Figures 10.3 and 10.4. The elimination of missing data cases resulted in a tidier form of output which bore a closer logical relationship to the dependent variable, 1969 Labor vote. The number of respondents involved was substantially reduced, however, and the form of the trees slightly altered.

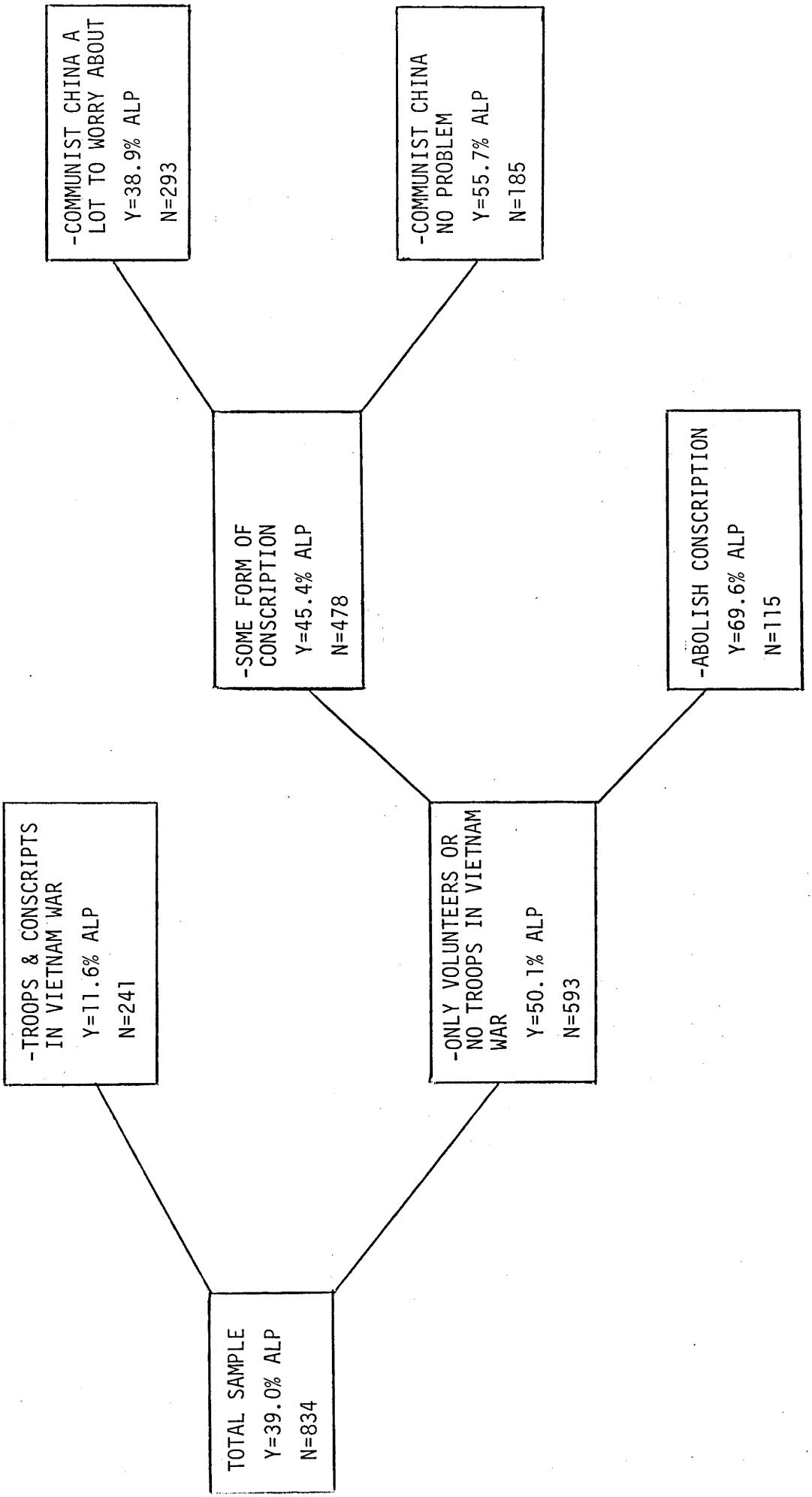


FIGURE 10.3 - AID ANALYSIS OF 1969 VOTE WITH 8 ISSUES AS PREDICTOR VARIABLES

(1039 MISSING DATA CASES)

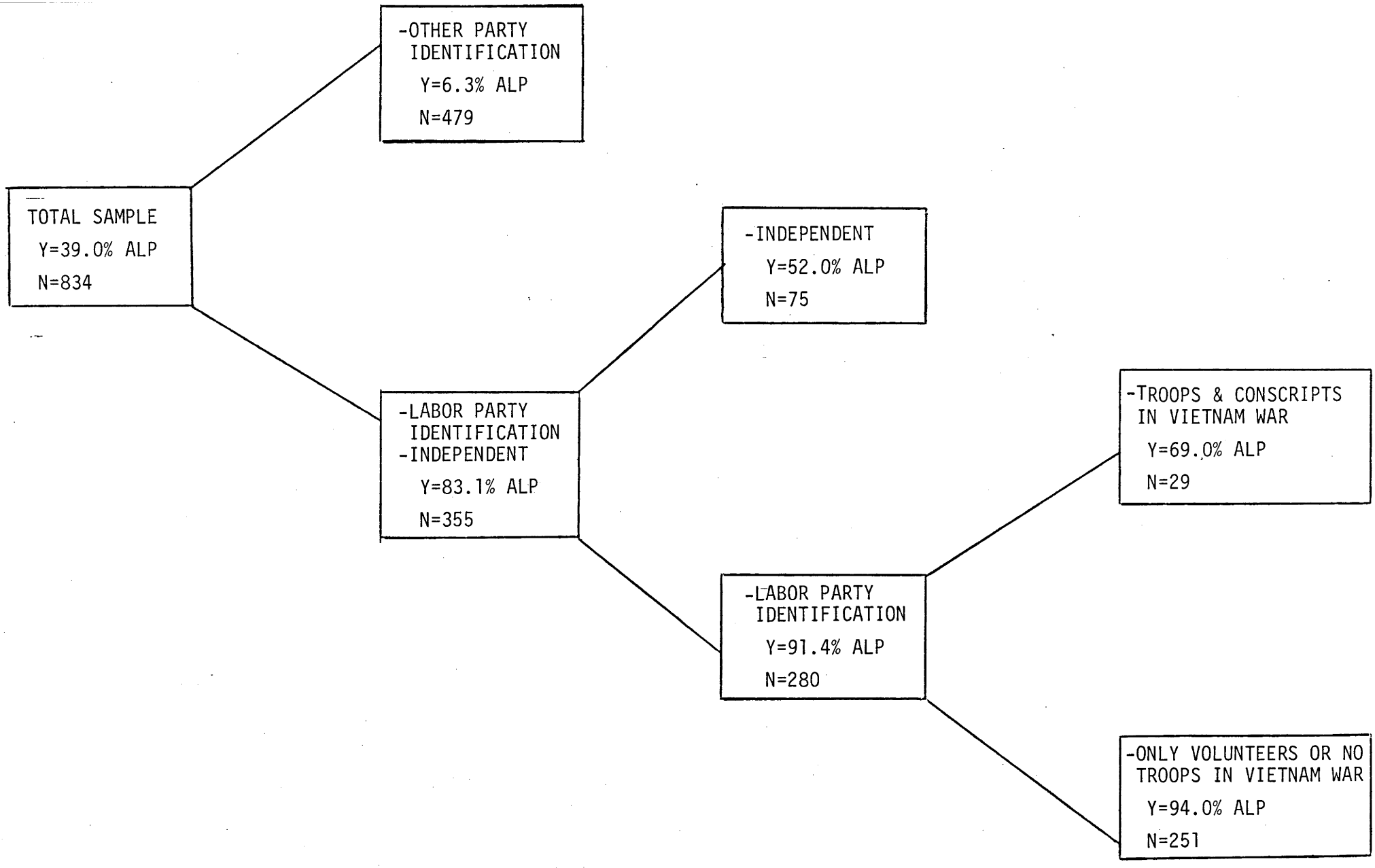


FIGURE 10.4 - AID ANALYSIS OF 1969 VOTE WITH PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND 8 ISSUES AS PREDICTOR VARIABLES
(1039 MISSING DATA CASES)

The significant predictor variables of party identification, the Vietnam war, conscription and Communist China remained the same as in the original analyses, and their order of importance in explaining the dependent variable was unchanged. The changes which did occur served to demonstrate, however, that too much reliance should not be placed on the absolute levels of r^2 recorded for each predictor variable, which determines the particular sequence in which the AID program splits the sample. With missing data cases eliminated, the analysis using the eight issues as predictors split only onceon opinions towards the Vietnam war, and the issue of conscription appeared in the breakdown prior to that of Communist China (see Figure 10.3). Very little alteration in the meaning of the analysis was conveyed by these changes. A change of greater significance was apparent when party identification was included as a predictor - with fewer cases, and party identification recoded, the Vietnam war was used by the program to explain further variance in the 1969 vote of *Labor party* identifiers, rather than of independents (see Figure 10.4). The overwhelming ability of an identification with one of the major parties to predict voting behaviour in 1969, to the exclusion of all issue opinions, in the original analysis, was not replicated in the re-run of the program. This modification in the AID output demonstrated that the ability of an issue, such as Vietnam, to explain further variance in voting behaviour after the influence of party identification had already been accounted for, should not be dismissed, despite the apparently overwhelming significance of party identification as a predictor.

The AID program proved particularly suitable for an initial multivariate analysis of the ASP data because of its ability to choose the predictor variables on which to split the sample, and the order of the split, in addition to combining values of each predictor variable into different sub-groups to achieve the maximum explanation of variance which could be contributed by each predictor. Thus, for each run of the program, the most

effective split on the Vietnam issue was found to be between those wanting the retention of all troops, including conscripts, in the war and those wanting some form of reduction in troop commitment; and, for conscription, the most fruitful division was to split between those who wanted some form of conscription and those who favoured its abolition. In order to fully investigate the differences in percentage Labor vote in 1969 for each value of each predictor variable (or each of the different opinions included in the issue items), it was necessary to employ another form of hierarchical analysis which would split the sample on every variable in an order determined by the researcher. The Breakdown program provided in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences[11] (SPSS) was used to perform this analysis of 1969 Labor vote with party identification, Vietnam, conscription and Communist China as predictor variables, in that order.[12] The result was a symmetrical tree which gave the percentage Labor vote recorded for each of the successive combinations of identification and opinions, represented by different branches of the tree. The tree itself incorporated a massive amount of information, parts of which were converted into tabular form for explanation in the following pages.

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11. Nie, *et al.*, *op.cit.* Unfortunately, the Breakdown option in this program did not allow for interaction effects, but it was used to analyse the ASP data in the absence of any similar program which did make this allowance.

12. Vietnam, conscription and Communist China were the only three issues which could feasibly be included in the Breakdown analysis, as the remaining issues had not been chosen for splitting in the AID analysis which used the 8 issues as the predictor variables. Their absence from the AID analysis meant that they could not be expected to add any further explanation of 1969 vote to the Breakdown tree which was forced to split on each value of each predictor variable. Two runs were actually performed using the Breakdown program. On the second run, opinions on the two issues of Vietnam and conscription were recoded as follows: Vietnam war - alternatives A and B retained, but C and D combined together; conscription - alternatives A, B and C combined, with D retained separately. This re-coding, which was logically meaningful, was valuable in providing larger numbers for each of the sub-groups in the Breakdown tree.

The Breakdown program was also used to perform a series of variance analyses to ascertain the relative levels of variance in the 1969 vote which could be accounted for by each of the issue items and by party identification. Table 10.1 presents the r^2 ratios for these variables without, at this stage, controlling for intercorrelation effects:

TABLE 10.1 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE IN 1969 VOTE FOR PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND 8 ISSUES

	F	df	Significance level	r^2	% of variance
Party identification	913.3	3	p .001	.598	59.8
Vietnam war	147.4	2	p .01	.140	14.0
Conscription	90.9	1	NS	.047	4.7
Communist China	81.0	1	NS	.047	4.7
U.S. relations	28.7	2	NS	.030	3.0
Censorship	33.4	1	NS	.018	1.8
Migration	5.9	4	NS	.013	1.3
Foreign investment	4.8	2	NS	.005	0.5
State aid	-	3	-	-	-

Too much reliance should not be placed on the absolute levels of variance included in the table, as no attempt was made to control for the influence of other variables. For this reason, the actual percentages are likely to represent inflated estimates of the amounts of variance in 1969 vote attributable to each individual issue item. Viewing the percentages in relative terms, however, the table does show that the Vietnam war accounted for considerably more of the variation in voting behaviour than did any of the other issues. The AID program's decision to split between those respondents favouring the retention of volunteer troops in Vietnam and those wishing to withdraw all troops, rather than on opinions towards conscription or Communist China, clearly was not a choice amongst items whose contributions

to the variance only differed because of errors in the sample.

As the percentages, if anything, overestimated the levels of variance explained by the issue items, there was little point in proceeding to refine the data for any item apart from Vietnam. As attitudes on the Vietnam war were correlated with the direction of party loyalty (Cramer's V=+.22, see Chapter 6), it was hypothesised that much of the 14.0% of variance in 1969 vote attributed to the issue in the above table would disappear when the analysis of variance was controlled for the contribution of party identification. A two-stage analysis was necessary to test this hypothesis. Firstly, r^2 was computed for Vietnam using the residuals from the mean values of 1969 vote associated with each value of party identification:

TABLE 10.2 VARIANCE IN 1969 VOTE EXPLAINED BY VIETNAM OPINIONS (STAGE 1)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	r^2
Vietnam	4.1	2	2.0	21.2	.023
Error	172.8	1803	0.1		
Total	176.9	1805			

Multiplying the r^2 ratio of .023 by the residual remaining after party identification had explained 59.8% of the variance in 1969 vote (Residual = 1-.598 = .402) resulted in an r^2 ratio of .009. Only 0.9% of the variance in 1969 vote was directly accounted for by the Vietnam war after the variance attributable to party identification had been explained. The full analysis of variance for both party identification and Vietnam is summarised in Table 10.3.

TABLE 10.3 VARIANCE IN 1969 VOTE EXPLAINED BY VIETNAM OPINIONS

(STAGE 2 PARTY IDENTIFICATION CONTROLLED)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	r^2	% of variance
Party identification	269.0	3	89.7	934.0	.598	59.8
Vietnam	4.1	2	2.0	21.2	.009	0.9
Error	172.8	1800	0.1			
Total	445.9	1805				

Controlling for party identification alone resulted in such a large reduction in the percentage of the variance in 1969 vote which could be explained by opinions on the Vietnam war, that it would have been a fruitless exercise to perform a similar two-stage analysis of variance with party identification and any of the other seven issues. The small amounts of variance attributed to conscription, Communist China, and U.S. relations in the initial analysis of variance would have vanished entirely under such conditions.

The inability of the Vietnam war to add anything more than a further 0.9% of the variance in 1969 vote to that already explained by party identification corresponded with the results of a comparable piece of American research, which studied the contribution of Vietnam to the 1968 presidential election result. Using a linear regression procedure, which controlled for party identification, Page and Brody found that Vietnam opinions alone accounted for only between one and two percent of the variation in voting behaviour.[13] They suggested that the low impact of the issue on voting decisions in 1968 was due to the electorate's inability to perceive

13. Page and Brody, *op.cit.*, p.982. As Page and Brody used a different technique to estimate the variance in 1969 vote explained by the Vietnam war, comparisons between their findings and mine cannot be taken beyond the general observation that the percentage variance was approximately the same in each case.

differences between the stances of the two main contestants, Nixon and Humphrey, towards the war. Their reasoning was clearly not applicable to the Australian election a year later, as it has already been shown that voters included in the ASP survey perceived the differences between government and opposition policies on Vietnam with a high degree of accuracy (see Chapter 7). It has been pointed out, however, that concern with the issue was not nearly so widespread amongst Australian voters in 1969 as it had been amongst the American voters studied by Page and Brody (see Chapter 8).

Although the analyses performed here have not described the causal processes involved in voting behaviour[14], the enormous explanatory power of party identification did suggest that the variable played a mediating role between the impact of political events on voters and their ultimate decisions at the polls. This did not mean that policy issues had no indirect influence on voting decisions, but only that such influence would be extraordinarily difficult to measure. The results of this chapter have shown that, where voters were not bound by any feelings of party identification, their opinions on the Vietnam war issue were related to the way they voted. According to the second AID analysis (see Figure 10.2), 7.5% of the variance in 1969 vote amongst independents could be explained by their attitudes towards Vietnam. Table 10.4, extracted from the SPSS Breakdown tree, shows differences in the percentage Labor vote according to Vietnam opinion for those with no party identification, as well as for those who identified with one or other of the political parties.

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14. Statistical techniques do exist for erecting causal models of voting behaviour. See Goldberg, "Discerning a Causal Pattern among Data on Voting Behaviour" and Just, *op.cit.*

TABLE 10.4 PERCENTAGE LABOR VOTE IN 1969 BY PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND VIETNAM OPINION [15]

	PARTY IDENTIFICATION				
	Lib/CP	Labor	Other	None	
(A) Troops, including conscripts in Vietnam	2.2 (320)	73.5 (68)	8.7 (23)	24.1 (29)	15.0 (440)
(B) Only volunteer troops	7.5 (374)	90.7 (324)	16.7 (24)	52.9 (85)	46.0 (807)
(C) & (D) Withdraw all troops from Vietnam	15.7 (153)	90.7 (332)	25.0 (12)	59.7 (62)	65.3 (559)
	7.0 (847)	89.1 (724)	15.3 (59)	50.6 (176)	1806

Comparisons from top to bottom of the table show the association between Vietnam opinion and 1969 Labor vote, with party identification controlled, and comparisons from left to right show the strong influence of party identification on 1969 vote, independent of Vietnam opinion. The high levels of voting support for the ALP amongst Labor identifiers, in contrast to the low percentages recorded amongst those who identified with the government parties or other parties explained the findings of the analysis of variance. The percentages entered in the last column of the table, which dealt with independents, accounted for the results of

15. Figures in this table are expressed in percentages of the total n for each cell (in brackets). The n's can be summed, but the percentages cannot. Figures at the extreme right and bottom of the table are the percentage Labor votes for values of each of the two variables, with the other variable uncontrolled. The total n of 1,806 in the bottom right-hand corner represents the total sample minus 67 missing data cases (no answer or *"don't know"* on either of the two variables).

the AID analysis recorded in Figure 10.2. Very little, or no difference, could be observed in the percentage Labor votes recorded by those who wanted volunteer troops retained in Vietnam and those who wanted all troops withdrawn when respondents either identified with the Labor Party or lacked a party identification. The decision of the AID program to split independents into a sub-group which amalgamated respondents holding both of these views in opposition to a sub-group consisting entirely of those favouring the retention of conscript troops in the war, was explained by the contrast in voting behaviour amongst independents, according to their Vietnam opinion (24.1% of independents supporting (A) voted Labor, whilst 52.9% of independents supporting (B) and 59.7% of independents favouring (C) and (D) voted for the Labor party in 1969).

The greater utility of Vietnam in accounting for voting behaviour amongst independents than amongst other categories of identifiers was of some importance in explaining the outcome of the 1969 election, owing to the links already established between the absence of party identification and the likelihood of voting change between 1966 and 1969. The main handicap in assessing the significance of Vietnam in the voting decisions of independents, however, lay in the small number of respondents involved. Although the *rate* of voting change amongst independents was higher than for the rest of the sample, the actual numbers in this category were very small - of 186 respondents lacking any party identification, 43 swung from Liberal/Country Party in 1966 to Labor in 1969 and only 3 swung in the opposite direction. Allowing for a slight reduction in these numbers to account for those respondents who failed to give an opinion, the final number of cases would be too small for any reliable analysis of the distribution of attitudes towards the Vietnam war. Our inability to pursue the analysis any further, however, did not mean that the findings bore no significance for the 1969 election. As the proportion of respondents who reported switching to Labor in 1969 corresponded closely with the

percentage increase in first preference votes for Labor actually recorded at the election, there was no reason to expect that the ASP sample underestimated the proportion of independents in the total Australian electorate who switched their votes at the election. A much larger sample than the 1,873 respondents obtained by Aitkin and Kahan would be needed to test the hypothesis that Vietnam opinions accounted for a significant proportion of voting changes amongst those electors who did not identify with any of the political parties.

The two-stage analysis of variance reported in this chapter did result in the finding that the Vietnam war, as a single issue, was only of marginal assistance in explaining 1969 voting behaviour across the total sample. Similar results could be expected for the other seven issues,[16] which contributed little or nothing to the variance in 1969 vote, even when no other factors were controlled. The combined influence of the eight issues, therefore, would have been unlikely to add a great deal to the 59.8% of the variance in voting behaviour explained by the single variable of party identification. It was possible that other, more salient issues could have accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance; but this was rendered unlikely by the finding, reported in the previous chapter, that the highly salient issues of education and pensions were not associated with particularly high rates of voting change. Apart from issues, other variables which may have helped to explain voting behaviour were

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16. The seven remaining issues (except Communist China) were not as strongly correlated with party identification as was Vietnam (see earlier chapter for Cramer's V correlation coefficients), and the r^2 ratios obtained for each issue in the one-stage analysis of variance may therefore not have been reduced by quite so much in a two-stage analysis, controlling for party identification, as was the case with the Vietnam war. However, the percentage of the variance accounted for by each of the issues even in a one-stage analysis was so small that any reduction at all would have reduced the r^2 ratios to near-zero. It was therefore pointless to pursue the analysis any further for these issues.

candidate preference[17], evaluations of the parties' past performance,[18] and/or a composite measure of respondents' socio-economic status.[19] The possibility that the remainder of the variance could be attributed to the influence of one or all of these factors was not pursued any further, however, as it fell beyond the scope of this thesis.

Only very limited conclusions have been made possible by the multivariate analysis performed here. Although the null hypothesis, that the policy issues surveyed in the ASP project had no relationship to voting behaviour in 1969 was not confirmed, it could not be replaced with any quantitative measure of the degree of variation in 1969 vote attributable to issue opinions, except in relation to the Vietnam war. The contribution of Vietnam to explaining the total vote recorded for the Labor party in 1969 was extremely small (0.9% of the variance in 1969 vote, with party identification controlled), and the evidence in the data that opinions on the issue were associated with switches in the vote amongst those who did not identify with a political party could not be tested in quantitative

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17. RePass, *op.cit.*, showed that a *"candidate image"* variable had a relatively high weighting in a multiple regression analysis of data on voting behaviour at the 1964 U.S. Presidential election. For similar results see R.W. Boyd, "Presidential Elections: An Explanation of Voting Defection", American Political Science Review, 63 (1969), pp.498-514. Candidate preferences may not be expected to figure so highly in Australian voting decisions, however, as elections in this country choose a governing political party and, only indirectly, a Prime Minister. In order to utilise the variable in an analysis of Australian voting behaviour, distinctions would have to be made between images of the party leaders and of individual candidates for House of Representatives seats.

18. Downs *op.cit.*, stressed that a voter's assessment of the past performances of the competing parties was an essential component of his theoretical model of voting decisions.

19. The most common of such measures would be the respondents' class membership. Although at least two *"class"* variables were included in the ASP data, their interpretation itself constituted such a challenging task (see D.Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics) that it extended beyond the scope of this thesis.

terms because of the small number of cases involved.

It was evident that a theory encompassing the role of issues in the dynamics of voting decisions could not be established on the basis of the issue questions included in the ASP survey. Although the preponderant position of party identification as a variable which mediated the influence of issue opinions *appeared* to have been confirmed, the data could not actually be used to support any inferences about causality. None of the individual issues, apart from Vietnam, exerted any measurable influence on voting behaviour, and the format of the items prevented the construction of any composite scale which might have been used to summarise, in quantitative form, respondents' stances on a variety of issues.

Research conducted in the United States which has made use of such composite scales has come closer to estimating the overall role of issue opinions in voting behaviour. Employing a scale of *"issue partisanship"* based on a comparison between respondent and party positions on a series of salient issues, RePass found that issue attitudes carried slightly less weight than candidate image and party identification in a multiple regression analysis of 1964 presidential vote.[20] Using a measure which incorporated respondents' perceptions of the relative distances between their own issue opinions and the candidates' stances on a variety of issues, A.H. Miller found that *"issue proximity"* accounted for an additional 31% of the variance in 1972 presidential vote after party identification had been controlled.[21]

In the absence of these more sophisticated data scaling techniques, it would have been futile to attempt to erect a statistical model of voting behaviour which included issue opinions as predictors of vote at the 1969

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20. RePass, *op.cit.*, p.400

21. Miller, *et al.*, *op.cit.*, p.68.

Australian Federal election. Such models, using simultaneous equations, and/or computer simulation techniques, have been employed to map the causal sequences in voting decisions in relation to American and British elections[22] and it was unfortunate that the ASP data on issues were not in a form suited to this type of analysis.

22. See Goldberg, "Discerning a Causal Pattern among Data on Voting Behaviour" Just, *op.cit.*; Nie and Anderson, *op.cit.*; Pomper, *op.cit.*

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION

The analysis conducted in this study of the relationships between certain policy issues and voting behaviour at the 1969 Federal election has proceeded from an initial description of the patterns in voters' opinions and their variation along lines of cleavage in the electorate to the testing of certain hypotheses known to be necessary prerequisites for the existence of issue voting. As each stage of the analysis has been, to a certain extent, dependent on the previous stage, the process has been one of gradual accumulation of evidence, culminating in a multi-variate analysis which assessed the relative contributions of the eight ASP issue items and of party identification to explaining 1969 vote.

The final outcome of the study has been the rejection of the null hypothesis, that issues bore no relationship to voting behaviour at the 1969 election. It has not been possible, however, to replace this hypothesis with a quantitative measure of the degree to which policy issues, as a whole, were associated with the electorate's voting decisions. The range of issues covered was not broad enough, nor was the form in which the data were collected sufficiently refined to support the complex statistical procedures necessary for this type of assessment. The analysis should thus be regarded as an exploratory study, for it has raised more questions than have been conclusively answered.

In order to appreciate what has been achieved in the course of the study, in comparison with the further questions which the analysis has failed to answer, we need to summarise the findings reported in the preceding chapters.

Initial analysis of the distribution of opinions on each of the issue items showed only two, conscription and censorship, to be issues on which attitudes within the sample were evenly divided. Skewed distributions of opinion were recorded on two further issues, the Vietnam war and the

provision of State aid for non-government schools. Although similarly skewed patterns appeared on the remaining items, there were grounds for questioning whether the items represented valid measures of opinion distributed along an ordered scale. High levels of uncertainty were registered in responses to items covering Australia's future relations with Communist China and attitudes towards foreign investors, whilst the options provided to respondents in answering questions on the alliance with the United States and on migration did not appear to constitute any meaningful scale of policy alternatives.

Even assuming a simplified situation of two party competition in Australian politics, it was extremely difficult to apply Butler and Stokes' hypothesis,[1] that skewed distributions of opinion were necessary if issue opinions were to produce any alteration in the electoral balance of the parties, to the issues covered in the ASP survey. In addition to deficiencies in the format of some items, and uncertainty of opinions on others, the alternatives did not always correspond to actual differences in party policy stances on the issues. Only if opinions were ranged along a single dimension on which the policy position of each party could readily be located, could Butler and Stokes' hypothesis as to the possible electoral outcomes be fruitfully applied to the data. On the basis of making reasoned judgements about the proximity of various attitudes to actual party policies, it could be concluded that opinions were more favourably inclined towards the Government's stance on the issues of State aid, the U.S. alliance and Communist China, and towards the Labor party's stance on foreign investment, but the reliability of the results on each of these issues except State aid was questionable owing to the difficulties outlined above. On the Vietnam war, a pronounced skew was recorded in the direction of an option which was not supported by either of the main political parties in 1969, and opinions on migration favoured

1. Butler and Stokes, *op.cit.*, pp. 411-3.

an approach which was shared by both parties. Thus, it would have been fallacious to conclude that patterns of opinion on any of the issues surveyed markedly favoured one party over the other at the time of the 1969 election. The analysis did, however, display clear divisions of opinion on some of the issues and showed that attitudes aroused intense feelings amongst some respondents on questions regarding Vietnam, conscription, censorship and migration policies.

Although no conclusions could be drawn as to the nature of the influence processes at work, the simplest step in examining the relationships between opinions and voting behaviour lay in cross-tabulating the two variables. This procedure could be used to eliminate from further consideration those issues which displayed no significant association with 1969 vote. Such was not to be the case with the issue items in the ASP survey, all of which bore some statistically significant relationship to the voting pattern of the sample, although the strength of the correlation was particularly weak on a number of items. In preference to correlation statistics, a better idea of the implications of issue opinions for voting behaviour could be gained by deriving measures of the degree of partisan cleavage within the sample from the cross-tabulations for each item. Using Goot's criteria of partisanship,[2] opinion distributions on five of the eight issues - the U.S. alliance, foreign investment, migration, State aid and censorship - could be classified as bi-partisan, or recording only a *"trivial"* degree of partisanship. Issues which did score as moderately partisan were the Vietnam war, Communist China and conscription. Measures of the intensities of opinion on two of these issues, the Vietnam war and conscription, suggested that they were the policy areas with the greatest potential for conflict within the sample. In both cases, partisan cleavages were roughly aligned with

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2. Goot, *op.cit.*, pp.8-10 and 66-68.

divisions of the sample into a relatively unconcerned majority, opposed by an intense minority.

An examination of the distribution of opinions on each of the issues by the four variables of education, occupation, age and sex with 1969 vote controlled, showed a complex pattern of cross-cutting cleavages with interaction effects between some of these variables. Although some interesting relationships between issue opinions and socio-demographic background were discovered, none of the four variables chosen could account completely for the differences in opinion.

In the same way, the variable of party identification was unable to explain the different attitudes adopted by the respondents on the issue items. Opinions were, however, associated with the direction of voters' partisan loyalties, particularly on the issues of Vietnam and Communist China. In these two cases, the more strongly a respondent claimed to identify with a particular party, the more likely his opinion was to correspond with the stance of that party as approximated in the list of policy options provided for the question. The finding of a relatively strong association between the two issues and party identification meant that the correspondence between opinion distribution and the pattern of 1969 vote already recorded may have been due purely to the influence of partisan affiliation, if, as indeed was the case, there was a strong correlation between party identification and 1969 vote. Although issue opinions were clearly not entirely derived from partisan loyalties, the influence of party identification needed to be controlled in all subsequent attempts to assess the contribution of issues to voting decisions.

The use of party identification as a guide to the perception of party stances was suggested by the respondents' choice of parties to solve the problems they had nominated as most urgently needing Federal government attention. Although some problems appeared to be seen as the province of the government parties and others as suitable for Labor to handle,

controlling for party identification showed most of this apparent difference to have stemmed from a tendency for each bloc of party supporters to nominate rather different sorts of problems which they then saw as being best handled by the party with which they identified.

No substantial evidence for the operation of perceptual balance mechanisms was forthcoming, however, when the accuracy of respondents' perception of party policies was tested on the issue of Vietnam. A high level of knowledge of both government and opposition stances towards the war was evident within the sample. Only a maximum 31.8% of the sample could possibly have been using their partisan loyalty as a guide to their perception, whilst 43.4% recognised that their own opinion did not correspond with the policy adopted by either of the major parties. The latter result showed that a substantial number of the ASP respondents were not basing their attitudes towards Vietnam on irrational perceptions of the political environment, according to the criteria of inductive rationality. The form of questioning employed in the ASP survey failed to establish, however, that all respondents were successfully linking their own opinions on the war with the policies of one or other of the parties contesting the election. In the absence of information as to which party each respondent felt most nearly approximated his own opinion on the issue, the linkage between self and party which was a necessary prerequisite for issue voting could not be demonstrated. It was unfortunate, also, that data were not available on the respondents' perceptions of party policies on the remaining seven issue items. It could be hypothesised that respondents would be more likely to use their partisan loyalties as perceptual cues in such cases, as the high degree of knowledge observed on the Vietnam issue would most probably not be replicated on other issues which had not been the subject of such intensive political debate.

In keeping with the suggestion that issue voting is most likely to occur on those issues which are subjects of personal concern to voters, the

relative salience of different policy issues amongst members of the ASP sample was investigated. The issue areas arousing the most widespread concern in the sample - education, pensions - were not included in the selection of fixed-choice opinion items in the questionnaire. Vietnam, and to a much lesser extent, conscription, were the only items to register as salient issues, on which information was also available about voters' opinions. The distribution of opinions amongst those concerned with the Vietnam war was skewed towards a position more closely represented by the policy of the Labor party than by that of the government parties. Although the voting pattern of this sub-sample at the 1969 election also favoured the Labor party, it could not be assumed that issue voting had occurred in this instance without first controlling for the influence of party identification. Partisan loyalties, rather than opinions on Vietnam, were in fact, found to account for the voting behaviour of most of those respondents who had expressed personal concern with the war. Investigation of the voting decisions of independents, who lacked any psychological commitment to the parties, was prevented by the small size of the group for whom Vietnam was salient (N=21). The results did not disprove the hypothesis that respondents concerned with Vietnam had cast their votes at the 1969 election on the basis of their opinions on the issue, but did demonstrate the difficulty of reaching any meaningful conclusions about issue voting, independent from the complicating influence of party identification.

Narrowing the focus of the analysis to the decisions of those who switched their votes between the elections of 1966 and 1969 proved to be the best way of exploring the possibility of issue voting, as independents were more likely to alter their behaviour in this fashion than were strong identifiers. A comparison of the relative defection rates recorded amongst those holding different opinions on the eight issue items showed the largest swings to Labor to have occurred amongst those espousing certain

views on the issues of Vietnam, Communist China, conscription, censorship and the U.S. alliance. As an opposing viewpoint on the Vietnam issue was associated with a high proportionate swing in the opposite direction, this, of all the issues, appeared to have been most closely associated with voting change. The issues of high salience within the sample were not necessarily associated with the greatest movement of votes between the parties. When salient, the Vietnam war, for instance, was characterised by higher rates of voting change than were the issues of education and pensions. The influence of party identification, although minimised, could not be entirely removed from the analysis of voting change, owing to the very small number of respondents remaining when it was utilised as a control variable.

The use of multi-variate techniques of analysis provided an opportunity to assess the contribution of the eight issues to 1969 voting behaviour, in relation to each other, and to the influence of party identification. An AID analysis of the vote recorded by the Labor party in 1969 showed the enormous predictive capacity of the party identification variable. The only policy issue which was able to explain sufficient variance in the vote to qualify for inclusion in this analysis was the Vietnam war, and then only as a secondary predictor, following party identification. Although Vietnam opinions had accounted for a great deal more of the variance in 1969 vote than opinions on each of the other ASP issue items, as shown in a succession of single-stage analyses of variance, the strong correlation between the Vietnam war issue and party identification meant that Vietnam opinions were only able to explain a tiny fraction of the additional variance remaining after partisan loyalties had been accounted for.

The multi-variate analysis conducted here provided a convincing demonstration that the existence of significant correlations between issue opinions and the vote could not be taken to constitute sufficient evidence

for the occurrence of issue voting. The ability of the Vietnam issue to predict voting behaviour amongst independents, and the greater frequency of voting change within this category of respondents, suggested that a more fruitful mode of analysis would confine the exploration of issue voting within such boundaries. This would necessitate a sample of the electorate deliberately designed to include independents, or those who had switched their votes between elections, in sufficient numbers for reliable observations to be made of their attitudes towards selected policy issues.

The data chosen for this study proved only partially suitable for the testing of those conditions whose fulfillment was a necessary requirement for the existence of issue voting. The conditions, set down at the outset of the study, were as follows:

(a) voters must be able to express an opinion on the issue;

(b) voters must have some minimal commitment to that opinion;

(c) voters must perceive that one party represents their own position on the issue better than do the other parties.

On most of the policy issues included in the study we could be confident that voters possessed opinions, but, whether they were even minimally concerned about the issues or could link party policy stances to their own opinions could not be established for most items. Although those issues for which the questionnaire provided estimates of intensity of feeling did appear to arouse strong feeling amongst some opinion holders, the findings of the chapter on salience suggested that the ASP issue items were not, on the whole, those issues which aroused the most widespread concern within the electorate. The only information available on the voters' perceptual links between the parties' stances and their own issue opinions was with regard to the item on the Vietnam war. Even on this item, the existence of such linkages could not be established for a significant proportion of the sample who had supported an option which did not correspond with policies adopted by either of the major parties towards the war.

Despite the patchy record of the ASP data in attempts to test the

preconditions for issue voting, various analytic techniques were employed to isolate *possible* instances of such voting behaviour amongst independents who switched their votes between 1966 and 1969. Although no proof could be established, it was highly likely that some independents who swung to the Labor party in 1969 based their decisions on their opposition to the continued commitment of Australian troops, particularly conscripts, to the Vietnam war. As the size of the swing actually recorded at the 1969 Federal election was small, in proportion to the total voting population, the possibility that issue voting on the basis of opinions towards Vietnam could have explained a sizeable portion of that swing could not be discounted.

Quantitative evidence of the extent of issue voting within the sample in 1969 would have necessitated a much more sophisticated data format than was provided for in the design of the ASP survey. Recognition of the methodological difficulties inherent in the precise assessment of the effect of issue opinions on voting behaviour led the American researchers, Page and Brody, to conclude three years ago that the impact of issue voting had probably never been adequately measured.[3] Their suggested procedure would not have been possible within the limitations imposed by the ASP data, whose basic outline was established in 1967, well before the introduction of refinements in the format of the questions on issues posed by the regular University of Michigan voting studies.

Instead of assessing voters' opinions on issues, in addition to a separate measure of their ability to form perceptual links between their own opinions and party policies, recent studies have utilised composite indices of *"issue proximity"*. Use of a *"relative proximity"* measure - *"how close a voter is to a particular candidate or party on a given dimension, relative to how close he sees himself as being to the other*

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3. Page and Brody, *op.cit.*, p.981.

candidates or parites on the same dimension" - on the dimension of Vietnam war opinions in the United States showed the issue to have explained a substantial proportion of the variance in the vote recorded, even at the 1968 presidential election.[4] Additional refinements in measurement techniques have taken the form of filtering opinion items through a test of issue salience, so that only those issues spontaneously mentioned by the respondents as being of concern to them are included in the analysis.

The use of more sophisticated techniques than the simple fixed-choice opinion item has allowed for the screening out of responses which do not fulfill the necessary preconditions for issue voting before analysis of the data has begun. Refinements in the process of measurement have not stopped here, however. Realising that issue voting cannot logically be taken to include the behaviour of those individuals *"who are either persuaded by the candidate to take a particular issue position or those who rationalise their vote by projecting their own policy preference onto their preferred candidate"*, American researchers have either taken to basing their measurements on individual attitude changes over time, or to utilising analysis methods which minimise the possibility of overstatement of issue voting arising out of projection or persuasion effects.[5] Although the possibility of rationalisation occurring, through the perceptual mechanism of a respondent projecting his/her own opinion onto the party of his/her own choice was explicitly recognised in the course of this study, the ASP data did not allow for such cases to be identified (except on one issue, the Vietnam war), nor for the effects of projection to be controlled through the measurement of individual attitude changes over time.[6]

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4. D.Kovenock, P. Beardsley and J. Prothro, "Status, Party Ideology, Issues and Candidate Choice", paper delivered at Congress of International Politica Science Association (Munich 1970) as cited by Pomper, *op.cit.*, p.192.

5. Miller et al., *op.cit.*, p.26. For a discussion of persuasion and projection effects also see R.A. Brody and B.I. Page "Comment: The Assessment of Policy Voting", American Political Science Review, 66 (1972), pp.452-8.

6. Although the 1969 A.S.P. survey constituted the second part of a two-wave study, panel data could not be used for this analysis.

Similarly, there was no means in this study to minimise or control for the impact of persuasion on voters' opinions. Thus, the data used in the analysis did not match up to the level of sophistication now recognised to be essential if the direct influence of issues on voting behaviour is to be accurately measured.

The possibility that the issues surveyed here could have exerted an indirect influence on voting behaviour through precipitating changes in voters' partisan loyalties should not be ignored, although such effects would have been almost impossible to measure. Indirect influences on party identification could not have been studied without a much more detailed analysis of the circumstances governing both the formation of, and subsequent changes in the partisan loyalties of each respondent. In the course of a seminar on issue voting, Brody and Page pointed out that the cross-section sample survey could not easily be adapted to studying the effects of feedback from respondents' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with government policy on the strength and direction of partisan affiliation.[7] Although most leading models of party identification do not conceive of it as being responsive to current issue concerns,[8] this is an artificial constraint which does not allow for the findings of causal path analysis, that issue orientations can affect partisan attitudes.[9] The partisan loyalties of voters may be resistant to change (recall data in the A.S.P. survey showed very few respondents to have remembered altering their party identification in the past), but it would be conceptually inaccurate to relegate issues entirely to the status of short-term influences on voting behaviour, even if their longer term impact is extraordinarily

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7. Brody and Page, *op.cit.*, p.450.

8. *ibid.*, pp.450-1.

9. Goldberg, "Discerning a Causal Pattern among Data on Voting Behaviour", pp.920-1.

difficult to measure.[10]

The results of this study have provided no evidence to question the common conception of party identification as a mediating variable, more often influencing the way voters perceive issues than the reverse. It has been shown to explain a massive 59.8% of the variance in 1969 vote, although the failure of the ASP issue items to account for much of the remainder may have been due to the nature of the items, rather than to the complete absence of issue voting. The unsuccessful nature of attempts during this analysis to extricate the influence of issue opinions on voting decisions from the blanket-like effects of party identification has led to the suggestion, previously advanced by V.O. Key in his *Responsible Electorate*,[11] that a more fruitful approach to the study of issues would be to concentrate on voting shifts between elections. In this way, the influence of party identification would be largely removed from the analysis. Assuming that a general explanation of voting behaviour is required, however, and recognising the severe limitations inherent in the ASP data, we are left with the conclusion that none of the eight issues surveyed had sufficient influence on the voting decisions of Australian electors in 1969 for a quantitative estimate of issue voting to be obtained.

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10. This is the assumption made by normal vote analysis, see Converse, "The Concept of a Normal Vote", in Campbell, et al., Elections and the Political Order. This analytic technique has proved so fruitful in the analysis of data on voting behaviour that its departure from reality in this regard is justified for the insights it has provided into the determinants of voting decisions. See J.H. Kessel's reservations about the concept of the normal vote in J.H. Kessel, "Comment: The Issues in Issue Voting", American Political Science Review, 66 (1972), p. 464.

11. V.O. Key, The Responsible Electorate.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

ISSUE ITEMS INCLUDED IN THE ANALYSIS

(Extracted from the Australian Survey Project Questionnaire, 2nd Wave, 1969.)

1. Vietnam War

As you know, there is a lot of discussion around Australia about what we should be doing about Vietnam. Which of these statements comes closest to what you yourself feel should be done? If you do not have any opinion about this, just say so.

(A) We should have troops fighting in Vietnam, including conscripts.

(B) We should have troops in Vietnam, but only volunteers.

(C) We should not have any troops in Vietnam, and only send civilian experts.

(D) We should stay out of Vietnam altogether.

(E) No opinion / don't know.

2. Migration

There's a good deal of talk these days about migration. Which of the statements comes closest to what you yourself feel should be done? If you do not have any opinion about this, just say so.

(A) Asians should be allowed to enter Australia as migrants just like people of European descent.

(B) There should be a small quota of Asian migrants.

(C) Asians should not be allowed to enter Australia as migrants.

(D) We should only allow people from Britain and northern Europe to enter Australia as migrants.

(E) We should not have any more migrants at the present time.

(F) No opinion / don't know.

3. U.S. Alliance

Do you think Australia's links with the United States should be *very* close, *fairly* close or *not very* close?

4. Censorship

Do you think that there should be some censorship of books and films, or do you think people should be able to read and see what they like?

5. State Aid

People have been talking a lot, too, about government aid to schools. Which of these statements comes closest to what you yourself feel should be done. If you do not have any opinion about this, just say so.

(A) The government should not give any financial help at all to private or church schools.

(B) The government should not give any financial help to these schools until state schools have been brought up to date.

(C) The government should give help, but only to really needy church schools.

(D) The government should give as much help as possible to both private and church schools.

(E) No opinion / don't know.

6. Conscription

There has been a lot of discussion in the last few years about conscription or national service. Which of these statements comes closest to what you feel should be done? If you do not have an opinion about this, just say so.

(A) We should have conscription for military service and it should be for all young men, not just some.

(B) The present system of the ballot for conscription should be continued.

(C) We should have conscription, but those who are opposed to fighting should be allowed to do their national service in other ways.

(D) We should not have any form of conscription at all.

(E) No opinion / don't know.

7. Communist China

Looking into the future, do you feel that Australia will have a lot to worry about in regard to Communist China, or do you feel that China probably won't be much of a problem for us?

8. Foreign Investment

Still thinking about the future, do you feel that Australia needs to be on its guard against foreign investors, or do you feel that we should welcome anyone who wants to invest in Australia?

- Should be on guard.
- Should welcome.
- It depends.
- No opinion / don't know.

APPENDIX II

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF FEDERAL LEADERS' ELECTION POLICY SPEECHES (OCTOBER 1969)

E.G. Whitlam - 1st October 1969

1. Introduction

   Nominates 11 items of policy dispute - attack on poverty; means test abolition; national superannuation scheme; pension increases; housing assistance; education; national health scheme; primary industries; water conservation; conscription; Vietnam war.

   Discusses three differences in parties' ability to govern - need for a rejuvenated government; failure of Liberal government to create opportunities for its citizens; divisive qualities of Liberal rule.

2. Education
3. Health
4. Housing and Urban Development
5. Taxation
6. Welfare
7. Development
8. Primary Industry
9. Defence and Relations with our Neighbours
10. Civil Liberties

J. Gorton - 8th October 1969

1. Introduction

   Nominates 14 areas of Liberal government policy achievement - defence; economic growth; housing; migration; health; pensions; means test; taxation; education; foreign investment; company takeovers; shipping; roads; US and UK alliances.

   Discusses four areas of difference in party style - Liberal concern with the individual; rate of progress under a Liberal

government; *"responsible economic management"* by the Liberals; nationalization, union control and Communist influence as characteristics of a Labor government.

2. Defence
3. Vietnam
4. Malaysia/Singapore
5. Taxation Reform
6. National Development
7. Education
8. Social Welfare
9. Health
10. Housing
11. Immigration
12. Arts
13. Trade
14. Primary Industry
15. Shipping and Transport
16. Supplementary statements on aboriginal policy and primary industry.

APPENDIX III

PERCEPTION OF PARTY POLICIES ON VIETNAM

(A) Troops, including conscripts, in Vietnam

(B) Only volunteer troops in Vietnam

(C) Only civilian experts in Vietnam

(D) Stay out of Vietnam altogether

1. Accuracy of perception of Lib/CP policy on Vietnam by interest in politics

	Good Deal	Some Interest	Not Much Interest	No Interest	No Answer
Correct Perception * (A)	91.9	88.6	79.4	53.4	0.0
(B)	2.0	3.7	3.9	4.9	0.0
(C)	0.7	0.6	1.4	1.9	0.0
(D)	0.5	0.6	0.4	1.9	33.3
Don't Know No Answer	4.9	6.5	14.9	37.9	66.7
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(407)	(869)	(491)	(103)	(3)

2. Accuracy of perception of Lib/CP policy on Vietnam by education level

	None/ Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	No Answer
Correct Perception * (A)	78.2	86.9	94.3	71.4
(B)	4.4	3.3	0.0	7.1
(C)	1.3	0.7	0.8	0.0
(D)	0.9	0.6	0.0	0.0
Don't Know No Answer	15.2	8.5	4.9	21.5
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(527)	(1209)	(123)	(14)

3. Accuracy of perception of Labor policy on Vietnam by interest in politics

	Good Deal of Interest	Some Interest	Not Much Interest	No Interest	No Answer
(A)	1.0	2.6	2.4	4.9	0.0
(B)	6.9	8.9	11.6	14.6	0.0
Correct Perceptions * (C)	23.8	16.0	11.8	5.8	0.0
* (D)	62.9	64.0	56.2	33.0	33.3
Don't Know No Answer	5.4	8.5	18.0	41.7	66.7
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(407)	(869)	(491)	(103)	(3)

4. Accuracy of perception of Labor policy on Vietnam by education level

	None/ Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	No Answer
(A)	2.7	2.4	0.8	0.0
(B)	10.4	9.3	5.7	14.3
Correct Perceptions * (C)	12.3	16.3	28.5	21.4
* (D)	58.6	61.0	57.7	42.9
Don't Know No Answer	16.0	11.0	7.3	21.4
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(527)	(1209)	(123)	(14)

APPENDIX IV

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SALIENT PROBLEMS

1. First mentioned problem by degree of interest in politics

	Good Deal of Interest	Some Interest	Not Much Interest	No Interest	Don't Know No Answer	
Education	24.6	47.4	23.7	4.3	0.0	100% (n=325
Pensions	17.6	41.6	34.4	6.0	0.4	100% (n=250
Vietnam	21.5	54.6	20.8	3.1	0.0	100% (n=130
Defence	26.1	55.4	16.6	1.9	0.0	100% (n=157
No Problem	5.4	28.3	45.8	19.3	1.2	100% (n=166
Total Sample	21.7	46.4	26.2	5.5	0.2	100% (n=1873

2. First mentioned problem by education level

	None/ Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	No Answer	
Education	18.2	71.4	9.2	1.2	100% (n=325)
Pensions	38.8	58.4	1.6	1.2	100% (n=250)
Vietnam	24.6	65.4	9.2	0.8	100% (n=130)
Defence	17.2	67.5	14.0	1.3	100% (n=157)
No Problem	41.0	57.2	0.6	1.2	100% (n=166)
Total Sample	28.1	64.5	6.6	0.8	100% (n=1873)

3. First mentioned problem by occupation

	Professional	Semi-Professional	Office & Sales	Skilled Workers	Semi-Skilled	Unskilled Workers	No Answer	
Education	12.0	30.8	11.7	15.4	13.2	12.9	4.0	100% (n=325)
Pensions	4.8	15.6	16.8	16.8	21.2	20.4	4.4	100% (n=250)
Vietnam	6.2	21.5	18.5	18.5	17.7	14.6	3.0	100% (n=130)
Defence	17.2	31.2	14.0	12.1	10.8	10.2	4.5	100% (n=157)
No Problem	4.2	20.5	9.6	15.7	18.1	21.1	10.8	100% (n=166)
Total Sample	9.0	26.2	13.5	15.3	16.0	15.6	4.4	100% (n=1873)

4. First mentioned problem by sex

	Male	Female	
Education	43.1	56.9	100% (n=325)
Pensions	41.2	58.8	100% (n=250)
Vietnam	59.2	40.8	100% (n=130)
Defence	59.2	40.8	100% (n=157)
No Problem	38.6	61.4	100% (n=166)
Total Sample	52.1	47.9	100% (n=1873)

5. First mentioned problem by age

	21-23	24-35	36-45	46-55	55-75	76-95	No Answer	
Education	9.5	27.1	28.0	13.2	14.8	2.5	4.9	100% (n=325)
Pensions	4.8	16.0	17.2	23.2	33.6	3.2	2.0	100% (n=250)
Vietnam	15.4	23.1	16.2	20.0	16.2	2.3	6.8	100% (n=130)
Defence	13.4	18.5	17.8	17.2	19.1	5.7	8.3	100% (n=157)
No Problem	13.9	20.5	15.7	16.3	24.1	8.4	1.1	100% (n=166)
Total Sample	9.3	22.3	21.6	18.4	20.2	3.4	4.8	100% (n=1873)

6. Distribution of sexes amongst those for whom Vietnam or conscription was most important problem

	Male	Female	
Vietnam	59.2	40.8	100% (n=130)
Conscription	61.3	38.7	100% (n=31)
Total Sample	52.1	47.9	100% (n=1873)

7. Education levels of those for whom Vietnam or conscription was most important problem

	None/ Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	No Answer	
Vietnam	24.6	65.4	9.2	0.8	100% (n=130)
Conscription	29.0	67.7	0.0	3.3	100% (n=31)
Total Sample	28.1	64.5	6.6	0.8	100% (n=1873)

8. Ages of those for whom Vietnam or conscription was most important problem

	21-23	24-35	36-45	46-55	56-75	76-95	No Answer	
Vietnam	15.4	23.1	16.2	20.0	16.2	2.3	6.8	100% (n=130)
Conscription	16.1	16.1	16.1	19.4	22.6	0.0	9.7	100% (n=31)
Total Sample	9.3	22.3	21.6	18.4	20.2	3.4	4.8	100% (n=1873)

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