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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Political Cognition Among Split Identifiers: A Schema Theory

Approach

by

Daniel M. Biocchi

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

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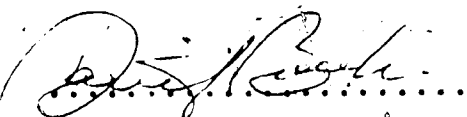
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Abstract

Until recently, party identification theory has provided the most widely accepted basis for understanding political cognition. However, over the past decade critics have questioned the adequacy of the psychological account it provides and the cross-cultural robustness of that account, arguing that its utility is limited by those weaknesses. In this thesis, I re-examine the theoretical basis of the traditional interpretation of party identification and its influence on political cognition in light of those criticisms and more recent theory and research on social cognition. This is done with special reference to the phenomenon of "split party identification" as it occurs in the Canadian political context.

A review and critique of the conventional version of party identification theory as it applies to the study of political cognition is presented. This critique is then extended to a revised version of that theory put forward recently by Canadian scholars. Recent theoretical arguments deriving from research on cognitive psychology and social cognition which are relevant to these matters are discussed and the merits of using a "schema theory" approach to study party identification and its impact on political cognition are considered. Finally, this new approach is demonstrated by using it to develop a model of the cognitive bases of partisanship that explains the nature of split party

identification and the unusual volatility of party identification in Canada.

Several conclusions are drawn from this effort. First, a schema theory approach indicates that the role party identification plays in shaping political cognition is much more complex than the conventional approach indicates. Second, the schema theory approach also draws attention to ways in which political cognition might affect party identification, as illustrated in the case of split party identifiers. Finally, that approach offers a better means of dealing with individual differences in the ways people perceive issues, leaders, candidates, parties, institutions and events, allowing us to understand how they organize that information along concrete or abstract lines in forming political schemas.

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I. Introduction: The Experience of Politics

William James noted nearly a century ago that our experiences are composed of a "blooming, buzzing, confusion" of features and events which we perceptually order through our mental capabilities, creating an organized, consistent, and meaningful understanding of our world. James marvelled at our ability to make this transformation, and others came to share his intrigue and fascination with that ability. How we accomplish the task of meaningfully understanding our world continues to interest both psychologists and others, and serves as a focal concern for modern cognitive psychologists.

Our ability to understand our world generally applies equally to our experiences of the world of politics. But to understand that which we experience in the political world may be an even more difficult task than that associated with our understanding of the more familiar, mundane, and tedious activities which are a part of our everyday activities. Political activities are usually collective enterprises, commonly perceived in terms of high-level abstractions. They are usually couched in strongly affective and symbolic terms, and deal with complicated social concerns which

extend beyond the personal concerns that attract our attention in the everyday conduct of our lives. Yet, we are able to impose enough order and consistency on our understanding of such political experiences to render them meaningful. While the quality and content of our understanding of politics are varied, we nevertheless are able to perceive it in meaningful terms.

The study of politics has long been concerned with the content of the political understanding that citizens acquire and the way in which that content affects their behavior. Yet it has been only over the last four decades that an effort has been made to study the psychological structures and processes through which those contents are acquired, stored in memory, recalled, and used in influencing a person's political thinking and behavioral patterns. Much of that effort has centered on studying the role partisanship plays in influencing how we interpret political circumstances. The development of this work has largely been a by-product of the study of the influence of party identification on American voting behavior.

The concept of party identification focusses on a kind of reference group behavior that a person exhibits as a result of his or her identification with a political party. The argument holds that an individual identifies with a political party in much the same way as he or she might identify with religious, social or ethnic groups. The party thus becomes a source of standards and values used to

interpret and understand his or her political experience and behavior. The party identification concept has been used widely over the years, and applied not only as a general explanation of voting behavior in the American context, but also of electoral behavior in other countries. Moreover, the body of theory and research developed from the concept of party identification, has also been applied to the study of political belief systems and attitudes, public opinion and, more generally, political behavior.

Until recently, party identification theory has provided the most widely accepted basis for understanding political cognition. However, its dominance has not gone unchallenged. Two lines of research have called into question the generality and utility of the concept of party identification as an appropriate basis for understanding political cognition. First, research dealing with the cross-cultural robustness of the concept of party identification has challenged the claim that party identification is a stable, long-term attitudinal commitment as indicated by the theory. Especially prominent in mounting this challenge have been Canadian researchers, who question the extent to which party identification influences political perception and voting choice in Canada (Jenson, 1975, 1976, 1978; Clarke, Jenson, LeDuc, and Pammett, 1979; LeDuc, Clarke, Jenson, and Pammett, 1981; LeDuc et al., 1984; and Clarke and Stewart, 1987). Second, political cognition research has recently moved away from notions of

attitude consistency and cognitive dissonance employed within party identification theory to explain the organization of political beliefs and attitudes. This newer research instead has focussed on models of information processing employed by cognitive psychologists, as well as the use of schema theory currently popular in literature on social cognition. (Axelrod, 1973; Conover and Feldman, 1981; Fiske and Kinder, 1981; Lodge and Wahlke, 1982; Fiske, Kinder, and Larter, 1983; Conover and Feldman, 1984; Hamill, Lodge, and Blake, 1985; Lau and Sears, 1985; Bolland, 1985; Lodge and Hamill, 1986). Moreover, this newer approach has been applied to areas of political cognition other than those dealing with partisanship. But, more to the point, this research offers a means of examining more closely the consistency theory notions central to the concept of party identification, placing them in a theoretical context which deals with political cognition in broader terms. These two lines of research offer both a motivation to re-examine the role that partisanship plays in political cognition and a framework for conducting that re-examination.

This thesis will attempt to re-examine the matters previously discussed, with particular emphasis on the phenomenon commonly referred to as "split identification". Split identification is peculiar to federal systems such as is found in Canada. In the context of a federally organized state, political competition and the general practice of politics can, and often does, differ substantially between

the national and provincial levels of government. It is sometimes the case, particularly in Canada, that different political parties and political concerns dominate at the two levels of government. Consequently, split identification can be seen as a response to this type of bi-level political activity, which results in some persons forming simultaneous identification with different parties at each of the levels of government. This suggests that such persons view the central concerns of politics differently at each level of government. If this is so, then split identifiers present a special case-in-point for examining the viability and limits of the arguments derived from party identification as they pertain to the role of partisanship in political cognition.

Unfortunately, very little research has been done on split identifiers, and none as it is dealt with in this thesis. Consequently, most of what will be investigated in the following chapters will largely focus on the theoretical aspects of the topic. The arguments will be framed predominantly within a discussion of the role that partisanship plays in shaping the political cognition of split identifiers in Canada. To do so is especially appropriate, since Canada has the highest frequency of split identifiers of any other country where such a phenomenon exists. This finding, coupled with the challenge to the applicability of party identification theory to the study of the Canadian political environment made by Canadian political scientists, suggests that the character of the

Canadian federal system shapes the impact of partisanship on political cognition in ways which the traditional treatment of party identification theory does not consider. The major contention of this thesis is that the traditional treatment of party identification theory does not provide an adequate account of how partisanship influences those cognitive processes through which an individual understands the politics of his or her society. The traditional treatment provided by party identification theory is deficient in three ways. First, it does not provide an adequate account of the types of cognitive processes involved in the formation of partisan attachments. Secondly, it does not incorporate the evidence and theory which results from current work in political cognition. Lastly, it fails to deal with the cognitive implications of split party identification. Having examined the bases from which these claims are made, an attempt to provide an alternative theoretical framework will be presented, focussing its application on the split identifier within the influence of the Canadian federal system.

Chapter II presents a review and critique of the conventional version of party identification theory as it applies to the study of political cognition. This critique is then similarly applied to the revisions of identification theory which have evolved in Canada. The latter part of this chapter will discuss the phenomenon of split identification in Canada as a special case of the problems and ambiguities

exhibited by the theory of party identification's treatment of political cognition.

The third chapter will review theoretical work from cognitive psychology and social cognition which is relevant to these matters. An introduction to schema theory will provide a means of resolving the problems arising from the inadequacy of the account that the theory of party identification provides of the role that political cognition plays in the formation of an individual's perception of the political world. In this regard, I will build the theoretical framework for the application of schema theory as a more effective way of explaining political cognition, using the phenomenon of split identification as a theoretical test case.

In chapter IV, I will attempt to construct a theoretical model for study of political cognition among split party identifiers based on schema theory. This model will present some predictions relating to the structure of political cognition among kinds of split party identifiers and their likelihood to change their party identifications over time. However, its main concern will be to explicate the rationale for the hypothesis that split identifiers will have more differentiated and integrated knowledge structures.

The fifth chapter will review the main topic areas with the intention of briefly tying together the claims made throughout the thesis. It will delineate the central

arguments about party identification as they apply generally to political cognition, as they apply specifically to the split party identifier. Finally, it will reiterate why it is necessary to study this phenomenon from a cognitive perspective using a schema theory approach and, more generally, why this approach should be used to study party identification.

II. Party Identification and Political Cognition

Party identification, which is viewed conceptually as a reference group attachment that an individual forms toward a political party, has been shown to influence various aspects of the way in which such individuals understand the character of their political environment and react to events within it. Much has been written about these matters over the past thirty-five years since Belknap and Campbell first suggested that individuals relate to parties in much the same way they do other social groups. An elaborate theory of party identification has been developed over that time which argues that such individuals exercise considerable "perceptual screening" in their intake of information about politics and organize that information along partisan lines. A major part of this argument holds that such individuals seek to reduce inconsistency in the portrayal of such matters as stored in memory. Hence, it is argued that partisanship becomes a salient dimension along which political cognitions are structured in memory, leading to an understanding of politics that appears to have coherence and stability.

Much of this theory was developed in the context of research on voting behavior in the United States, with the primary emphasis being placed on voting in national elections. Ironically, little attention was paid to the existence of the federal system of government in the United States and the ways in which that organization of government and political activities might affect the formation of party identification and the impact they have on political cognition. That, however, has not been the case in Canada. Here the decentralized form of federalism has been recognized as an important determinant of the ways in which politics is practiced and understood. Consequently, recent research on party identification in Canada has led to significant modifications in the "conventional" interpretation of the concept of party identification.

The conventional theory of party identification

Belknap and Campbell (1952) are credited with making the first statement of the party identification concept, although they really only suggested that we look at party allegiance in a particular fashion. Their proposal suggested that:

The assumption that individual perceptions, evaluations, and behavior are determined in large part by the standards and the values of the groups with which the person identifies has become accepted doctrine. The present report is concerned with a study of the relationship of the identification with political

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parties to attitudes regarding certain issues of foreign policy. (Belknap and Campbell, p. 601, 1952)

The claim is simply that individuals identify with political parties in the same way as they do with religious, ethnic, or other social groups, and that what is true of such other identifications insofar as they affect psychological responses to social stimuli is true of party identification. Thus, parties are seen by a person as political group-objects which have salient characteristics that activate in the person mental organizing mechanisms, enabling the person to make reference to parties as a means of knowing more about the political world (Franklin and Jackson, 1983). This claim is formulated more explicitly in the The Voter Decides:

The sense of personal attachment which the individual feels toward the group of his choice is referred to...as identification, and with respect to parties as groups, as party identification. (Campbell Gurin, and Miller, p. 88-89, 1954)

Parties, as social groupings, account for the need to represent this "personal attachment" as a psychological bond. This bond substitutes, in some fashion, for the ties of formal membership in organized groups. The basis of this sense of "personal attachment" as a psychological bond was extrapolated by the Michigan school from the work of Kurt Lewin who suggested that groups are real because they have real effects (Lewin, 1939). The Michigan school developed this notion further, arguing that a chosen political party acts as a reference group for the individual who identifies with it. This identification acts as a psychological tie

that influences the individual's behavior and thought patterns. In the absence of formal membership ties, this "sense" of group membership binds the individual to the party of his or her choice in a psychological sense (Campbell, Gurin, et al., 1954).

This original version of the theory of party identification was set out in terms of reference group theory. It focussed on the "normative functions that political parties carry out as reference groups for those persons who psychologically identify with them. This led the authors of The Voter Decides to assert that:

The present analysis of party identification is based on the assumption that the two parties [Republican and Democrat] serve as standard-setting groups for a significant proportion of the population. (Campbell, et al., 1954, p. 90)

Party identification provided a means of circumventing problems created by the fact that most people lacked any formal membership ties to a party. Through self-identification with a party as a reference group, an individual was thought to become susceptible to some normative controls over his ideas and behaviors, as would be the case if there had been some formal group membership. The standards of the party would become the person's standards, and in relevant political situations the person's behavior would be governed by the norms associated with loyalty to the party. Thus, in The Voter Decides, political parties serve as standard-setting groups through the medium of party identification.

This thesis was continued and further extrapolated by Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, in The American Voter, (1960). These authors describe the kind of "psychological identification" characterized by party identification in the following terms:

We use the concept here to characterize the individual's affective orientation to an important group-object in his environment. Both reference group theory and small-group studies of influence have converged upon the attracting or repelling quality of the group as the generalized dimension most critical in defining the individual-group relationships, and it is this dimension that we will call identification. (Campbell et al., p. 121, 1960)

In addition, they made a slightly different and particularly germane claim about the notion of parties as social groups. They reinterpreted the concept to represent party identification as an attitudinal orientation toward a preferred party, and asserted that party identification serves as a means of ensuring the durability of the influence that other, non-political, social groupings have over party supporters' behavior and thought through the connection such groups have with that party (Campbell, et al., 1960): Thus, when the political salience of these groups is not high, the role of party identification is particularly important to their conditioning of an individual's behavior (Campbell, et al., 1960).

The underlying social-psychological theory regarding the notion of party identification relates to parties as reference groups in a broader social context. Consequently, the authors claim that: "The psychological economy of the

individual demands parties as an organizing principle, and if bereft of this, there might be much more straightforward dependence on other groups for guidance" (Campbell et al., 1960, p. 328). What follows from all this, it seems, is that a sense of party identification is necessary in order for an individual to have an efficient and organized set of cognitive structures through which political objects might be meaningfully understood.

As stated in the The American Voter, the conventional Michigan school account of the psychological functions of having a sense of party identification is focussed on individual cognitive processes. It treats party identification as providing the means by which the "perceptual screening" of information available in a person's immediate political environment takes place, information which is used by that person in framing a cognitive image of what takes place there (Campbell et al., 1960, see chapters 6-10). From this viewpoint, political parties serve as suppliers of "cues" about the nature of political persons, groups, issues, and events. The authors maintain that the individual attempts to reduce these cues to an integrated conceptual understanding of the nature of whatever political element is at the time a salient perceptual object in his or her consciousness (Campbell et al. 1960). In short, what the individual has attempted to do is "make sense" of the wide variety of information in any given political situation (Johnston, 1975).

While not rigidly fixed in the psyche of an individual, party identification would be expected to be relatively resistant to change. In the early American studies this resistance to change was manifested in findings depicting stable and relatively consistent partisanship. Cross-sectional surveys showed that the aggregate distribution of partisanship was stable, with most people claiming never to have changed their partisan commitments (Campbell et al., 1960). Moreover, studies indicated that, among political attitudes, party identification set the standard for individual stability over time (Converse, 1964). This stability was not viewed as precluding change, however.

Although stable, party identification was not portrayed as fixed and immutable. Campbell, et al., (1960), pointed out that some change in identification did occur for some people, and suggested that factors such as short-term electoral processes (pp. 133-35) and ideological preferences (pp. 212-14), resulting in the phenomenon of cross-pressures and ensuing psychological conflicts (pp. 80-88), were the causes for such shifts in partisanship. In this regard, cross-pressures arising within the electoral process required the individual to reduce psychological conflict by the perceptual balancing of short-term forces, thereby allowing the voter to achieve a resolution of the psychological conflict so that a decision could be made (Campbell, et al., 1960).

In order to explain how this resolution was achieved the authors of The American Voter turned to cognitive consistency theory (Sears, 1969). That theory maintains that when persons experience inconsistencies of an unpleasant nature they are motivated to reduce the inconsistencies by changing the belief that is simplest to revise (Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958). Thus, in terms of the party identification concept, voters who perceive the candidate whom they favour as supporting some issue, group, or person (political object) with which they disagree will be motivated to eliminate that inconsistency in one of three ways. First, they might revise their perception of the object; second, they could change their view of the candidate; or third, they can revise their perception of the candidate's opinion of the object (Sears, 1969). However, such circumstances were considered to affect only a small number of people. The major sources of change were said to stem from changes in personal circumstances -- such as a new

Note: This particular application of the cognitive consistency theory, herein after called the Cognitive Consistency Paradigm (CCP), is to some degree only a practical development of the concept of party identification insofar as it can effectively deal with short-term forces as they affect the voter. [see Nie, Verba and Petrocik (1979), for an example of the CCP's application to issues consistency, chap. 9]. However, I am skeptical about its application, primarily because the Michigan studies on the cognitive functions of party identification tended to focus on the diffusion of the CCP in terms of mass belief systems rather than on its individual psychology. Also, as we shall see, it is not readily transferable to studies of the Canadian political environment. Moreover, it may be that its incorporation into the concept of party identification may have come as a response to the inroads into the area made by the rational choice model of political behavior (e.g., Downs, 1957; Shapiro, 1969; Davis, 1970; Fiorina, 1981).

job, a change of residence, or marriage --which while meaningful to the individual, were not the result of political events (Campbell et al., 1960, p. 150). As well, social events of a significant magnitude (e.g., the Civil War, the New Deal, the Vietnam war, or Watergate) could produce extensive realignment in partisanship, but such events are rare and could be ruled out as a source of ongoing partisan instability.²

Finally, the authors of The American Voter argued that, if political attitudes covaried with party identification, and party attachments were stable while political attitudes changed from election to election, this could be taken as indicating that it is party identification that influences political attitudes and not the other way around. In this regard, it would appear that party identification has a ubiquitous influence over the perceptions of things political, such as issues, events, persons, and policy. (Campbell, et al., 1954, 1960, 1966; Jennings and Niemi, 1968; Converse, 1964, 1969; Converse and Markus, 1979). Based on these claims and subsequent research, that until recently reinforced the earlier claims, the Michigan school scholars asserted that party identification is a key long-term, stabilizing influence on voting behavior.

Thus, the authors of The American Voter interpreted the informal relationship between political parties and their

² For a conflicting viewpoint regarding the effects of "significant social forces on partisan shifts", see Nie, Verba, and Petrocik (1979), or Franklin, and Jackson (1983).

supporters as an attitudinal orientation towards a preferred party. Their application of attitude theory argued that there are certain features of the individual psychology of attitudes which tie together a person's party identification and his or her understanding of the political environment. In this way an individual was said to be able to "frame" an efficient and organized set of cognitive categories consonant with his or her party identification which could be used to understand the political environment in consistent and meaningful terms.

Concerns about cognitive emphasis and cross-cultural robustness

Recently, there have been two lines of research that have called into question the utility and generality of party identification theory. One of these contends that cross-cultural applications of party identification theory show that party identification is not as stable and long-term as it was originally thought to be. The second critique argues that party identification theory has not adequately treated the role that cognitive structures and processes play in explaining the acquisition and organization of political attitudes and beliefs. These latter objections are, in a sense, anticipated by the former line of argument. In the next few pages I will attempt to

describe the basic flaws of party identification theory with respect to the role that the cognitive explanatory emphasis has played in its development, and review the problems the theory has encountered in its cross-cultural applications. Specifically, I will consider the objections raised by the studies conducted in Canada, and attempt to show that, even with the "refinements" Canadian researchers have made, the Canadian version of party identification theory is nevertheless flawed in much the same ways as its American counterpart.

Although party identification is presented as carrying out major cognitive functions in shaping how an individual understands politics, little was actually said about specific cognitive processes and structures and how they are involved in carrying out those functions. The notion in party identification theory that a group serves as a reference point that a person uses to form a coherent view of the political world and to guide his or her behavior in the environment is flawed in two ways. First, the original version of party identification theory maintained that an individual's attitudes are formed within the frame of reference adopted from the group with which the individual identifies: This frame of reference, which the group provides, transmits social norms through the process of socialization (Hyman, 1947; and Cantril, 1947). However, the transmission of group norms is only one of the functions that reference groups perform. Harold Kelly identified

another equally important function: reference groups provide standards for making social comparisons and evaluations of other groups and individuals (Kelly, 1968). This function deals with the way in which individuals perceive and judge various elements encountered in their political environment and encode the information taken in about them. However, the Michigan analysts say little about the way in which party identification accomplishes this, an even less about the cognitive mechanisms and processes involved in that task. Instead their account is largely limited to a discussion of the normative functions connected with party identification. In this regard, the early formulation of party identification presupposes that parties as groups are supposed to serve as norm-setting reference groups leading to the conformity of behavior of its members (Campbell, et al., 1954). However, there is both an empirical and theoretical problem with this contention. A re-analysis of the data has indicated that the supporting evidence for this contention arises only with respect to strong identifiers (Johnston, 1975). For example, with regard to the implicit norm that a loyal party supporter should vote a "straight ticket" for his or her party's candidate in national elections, Johnston (1975), shows that 36.6% of the strong identifiers and 54.4% of the weak identifiers reject their party as indicated by the data provided in The Voter Decides. A surprising 40% of strong identifiers and about 65% of weak identifiers indicated that they would vote for

the other party's candidate if presented with an unattractive candidate nominated by their own party. Hence, the prediction that party identification serves as a sort of group attachment through which the norms of the chosen party, qua reference group, exerts an influence over an individual's political behavior, cannot be accounted for in 36.6% of the strong identifiers and 54.8% of the weak identifiers who do not conform to the party norms (Johnston, 1975). Hence, it does not seem that having a sense of party identification necessarily leads to the acceptance of the norms of one's party, qua reference group.

As noted above, party identification seems to neglect those ideas concerned with the "comparison functions" of attitudinal perception (Kelly, 1968), which are more closely related with the earlier work on cognitive processes. There is, as it were, an inadequate treatment of and concern about those topics in both The Voter Decides and The American Voter. The Michigan analysts do not indicate how the political party provides a frame of reference within which such comparisons are made. Rather, they appear simply to assume that this happens and that individuals perceptually reinterpret the content of information they acquire about that political environment to render it consistent with the frame of reference. They say little about the cognitive dynamics by which this occurs, other than to invoke the logic of cognitive consistency theory (Festinger, 1957). However, this adoption of cognitive consistency theory

created yet another problem for the concept of party identification. The Michigan School approach was initially based on a social-psychological model of human decision-making derived from the work of Kurt Lewin (Lewin, 1939, 1951). Within this context, the addition of cognitive consistency theory allowed the Michigan analysts to deal with the supposedly disconcerting effects of inconsistencies among one's beliefs and attitudes about politics. For a while this reformulation of party identification theory smoothed out some of the theoretical problems related to accounting for attitudinal consistency. However, further research on cognitive consistency theory showed that people apparently can tolerate a great deal of inconsistency in their daily lives and that it often serves as a source of differentiation in their understanding of politics (Kiesler, Collins, and Miller, 1969). This later research tended to present what the Michigan analysts regarded as a problem in a different light. The more interesting question arising from this research would seem to be: How is an individual able to maintain a stable party identification while accommodating such cognitive inconsistencies in his or her view of politics? With its commitment to cognitive consistency theory the Michigan School appears unable to deal with this matter.

The criticisms just considered focus on the psychological status of party identification and the account given of the cognitive dynamics connected with its impact on

political cognition. A second line of criticism has emerged from the attempts to apply the concept and its related theory in non-American settings (Butler and Stokes, 1969; Shively, 1972; Borre and Katz, 1973; Kaase, 1976; Thomassen, 1976; and Clarke et al., 1979). Canadian research along these lines is especially pertinent to the matters dealt within this thesis; hence, it will be discussed in some detail in the remainder of this section.

In Political Choice in Canada, Clarke, et al., (1979) challenged the applicability of party identification theory within the Canadian political environment. Specifically, they maintained that the so-called "long-term partisan" forces at work in the American milieu do not have the same strength of influence in Canada. Their claim is based on data from their election studies, which indicated that the vote choices of Canadians are more likely to be influenced by short-term forces, such as immediate political issues or the character and charisma of political leaders and candidates (Clarke, et al., 1979). They proposed a refinement of the party identification concept and theory as it applies in Canada to accommodate these findings. While at first it might seem that the authors are "throwing out the baby with the bath water", they do acknowledge that the standard version of party identification theory does apply to a large minority of Canadians (37%) who do report holding strong, stable and consistent partisan attachments. Thus, they present their challenge to the theory of party

identification as more akin to a "refinement" which puts greater emphasis on the short-term forces affecting political attitudes in the Canadian context. That refinement seems to suggest that only those people with strong, stable, and consistent party identification experience the psychological influence of long-term partisanship. Thus, they claim that weak and flexible identifiers "deviate" from true partisanship in the traditional "long-term" sense (Clarke et al., 1979). To understand why they adopt this position one needs to review their findings regarding the nature and impact of party identification in Canada.

The authors' investigation into the cross-level variations, or "split-party identification," indicates that there are marked differences between the federal and provincial party systems in Canada which lead to a greater variability in federal and provincial patterns of partisanship. This phenomenon they suggest can be attributed to differing federal-provincial party alignments in the ten Canadian provinces. These alignments are categorized by the authors into three types:

The first type is characterized by strong provincial parties which either do not exist or fail to compete at the federal level. The Union Nationale and Parti Québécois are confined exclusively to the provincial arena in Quebec, while the Social Credit party in Alberta and British Columbia has been highly successful at the provincial level but has been characterized by electoral weakness federally. In the second type, parties of the same name compete at the federal and provincial level, but often with substantial variations in electoral strength and party platforms. Manitoba,

¹The Social Credit party of Alberta has gone the way of the dinosaur.

Saskatchewan and Ontario would be included in this group, since certain parties in these provinces cannot be easily recognized in successive federal and provincial elections as being the same thing. Third there are provincial party alignments, such as those of the Maritimes, which historically have been quite similar at both the federal and provincial levels. (Clarke et al., 1979, p. 96)

The authors maintain that these observed differences between federal and provincial party alignments "...may both cause and effect an individual's federal and provincial partisan attachments" (p. 96). With respect to this type of systemic effect on partisan attachments, their data indicated that in 1965 one-fifth of the total national sample reported cross-level differences in partisan attachments. In 1974, 14% of party identifiers reported maintaining partisan attachments at only one level of government. Those people who reported maintaining different partisan attachments at each level totaled 18%. Together, these two groups of "inconsistent partisans" made up nearly one-third of all party identifiers and 30% of the total national sample.

Almost two-thirds of all party identifiers in Canada identify with the same party at both levels of government, but 23% of these persons (or 21% of the national sample) vary their intensity of partisan attachment across the two levels. Identifiers who are fully consistent across both levels make up 45% of all partisans (and 41% of the entire national sample).

 "These respondents are labelled 'partially consistent'... and are distinguished from those who are fully consistent in both intensity and direction and from those who are split or single-level identifiers". Clarke et al., 1979, p. 97-98.

The authors' data also indicates that "...there are considerable inter-provincial differences in the degree of cross-level consistency". (p. 98). Quebec and the four Western provinces have the largest number of split identifiers, and Quebec and British Columbia have the highest number of persons who identify with a party at only one level of government ("single-level identifiers"). Almost all provinces, however, show only a nominal degree of full consistency and substantial variation of intensity in partisanship.³

Split identifiers favour provincial identification, 34% of this group reports a stronger attachment at the provincial level, compared to only 18% who have a stronger tie to the federal level. However, relative to all identifiers, split identifiers tend to have a more weakly held attachment with just 5% maintaining "very strong" identifications at both levels compared to the 27% of consistent single-party identifiers who maintain "very strong" attachments at both levels.

There is considerable instability over time in Canada. In 1974, thirty-five percent of the party identifiers at the federal level reported not having kept the same party ties throughout their lifetime. While across-time stability for the provincial level is higher, the incidence of instability is nevertheless high for the country as a whole.⁴ The

³Consistency ranges from 34% in British Columbia to 64% in the Maritimes.

⁴Provincial instability for 1974 = 21%, 1971-73 = 26%, 1967-70 = 30%, before 1967 = 23%; federal instability for

authors claim that this is not a function of the multi-party system, which has had a relative plethora of new parties appearing and disappearing in the course of Canadian political history.' The data show that 31% of the people sampled reported changing their party identification at the time of the last election (1972). They show that motivations for change are more often a result of repulsion from a party rather than an attraction to another one. On this point the data show that even 45% of the strongest identifiers do not give positive reasons for their instability.' Similarly, only 38% of self-described "fairly strong" identifiers claimed support for a party due to its attractiveness.'

The authors make the final point that unlike partisan instability in the United States which is usually a consequence of major political upheavals, change took place in Canada even during a relatively calm period. Finally, they point out that Canadians change party identifications for relatively "short-run" reasons, responding to the strategic manoeuvres of parties competing for their support, changes in political leadership, or an alternative to policy or issue positions.

(cont'd) 1974 = 31%, 1971-73 = 21%, 1967-70 = 20%, before 1967 = 28%. See Table 5.3 in Clarke, et al., 1979, p. 101. In some cases new parties appear which have a new name, but the same platform. Dr. E. Engelmann in a seminar class at the University of Alberta, speaking about the Alberta case of this phenomenon, once referred to it as "yet another version of the Front for the Liberation of Alberta". These data are replicated in more current studies conducted by the authors. See LeDuc et al., 1984; and Clarke and Stewart, 1987.

The authors conclude that people were more likely to characterize themselves as "weak" identifiers if they had changed their party identification "at some time in their life", or if they currently identified with a single party at only one level of government, or with different parties at the different levels of government (Clarke, et al., 1979). This suggests that a Canadian who changes either the direction or intensity of his or her party identification is more likely to be a weak identifier. This phenomenon is produced by the psychological influence of the Canadian federal system which enables Canadians to perceive the national and provincial governments as having "equal status" (Clarke, et al., 1979; LeDuc et al., 1984; Clarke and Stewart, 1987).

There are two notions which seem to be implicit in the contention made by Clarke, et al., that Canadians view the national and provincial levels of government as having "equal status" in the political environment. The first notion seems to suggest that Canadians are predisposed positively or negatively to one or both levels of government, in much the same way as an American might be with respect to his or her party identification. The second implication is that it is one's orientation toward the federal system which acts as the perceptual screen through which the individual judges political matters as favourable or unfavourable within the context of his or her partisan-regional frame of reference. With respect to this

notion, Clarke, et al., seem to argue that the images that Canadians have of parties do not make for long-term stability in the Canadian political environment: "If images are an important element in the linkage of partisanship, political interest, and electoral behavior in Canada, it is not not because they constitute a stable, long-term element of the Canadian political psyche, but rather precisely because they do not" (1979, p. 204). [Regarding his notion, the authors argue that a cross-level consistency exists in the minds of some Canadians because the two levels of government are perceived as "two parallel reference groups".] Evidently, the upshot of this claim is that images of parties, as such, are short-term factors which lead to a volatile and flexible type of partisanship in Canada. Moreover, the impressive frequency with which Canadians party identifiers report both positive and negative images of their own party and of the other parties, indicates that such images are prevalent among both inconsistent and consistent identifiers.

Finally, like their Michigan School counterparts, these authors claim that both stability and consistency of party identification are related to indications of "perceptual screening", but suggest that such perceptual screening induces a selective organization of content information in both consistent and inconsistent identifiers.' The authors

'Note the similarity between this idea as presented in Clarke, et al., (1979), and the statement, "Identification with a party raises a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan

suggest that this is the result of the nature of Canadian federalism which produces sharply differentiated contexts within which politics can take place along party lines in differing ways.

The traditional notion of party identification claims that a party furnishes a powerful set of "cues" about political objects. It further maintains that a mere symbolic association with a party will "...encourage those identifying with the party to develop a more favorable image..." of such objects (Campbell, et al., 1960, p. 129). In this regard, the traditional approach points out that the influence that a party has in shaping the partisan attitude of an individual towards a variety of political objects should be profound. This leads the traditional approach to expect that:

Identification with a party raises a perceptual screen through which the individual tends to see what is favorable to his partisan orientation. The stronger the party bond, the more exaggerated the process of selection and perceptual distortion will be. (Campbell et al., 1960, p. 130)

This explanation is also indicated in the discussion by the Michigan authors about the organization of partisan attitudes held by those who claim to be independents:

Without this psychological tie, or perhaps with

(cont'd) orientation." (Campbell et al., 1960). However, Campbell, et al., (1960), argue that only consistent and stable partisans are induced by their party identification to apply "perceptual screening". Thus, if the inducement to use "perceptual screening" arises in Canada, not from party identification but rather from the federal system, qua reference groups, then it would seem to me that the authors' "refinement", in effect, stands the concept of party identification on its head.

commitments to symbols of another kind, the independent is less likely to develop consistent partisan attitudes. (Campbell et al., 1960, p. 130)

Finally, the traditional approach maintains that positive and negative feelings and perceptions, which arise through both the invocation of cues and perceptual screening in the case of party identifiers, are said to attract the individual to his or her party and repel him or her from the opposition.

The authors of Political Choice in Canada would probably take the view that Canadians take their cues from the different levels of political activity in the federal system. Rather than being affectively attached to a party as a reference group, Canadians understand the dynamics of the federal system and therefore perceive the two levels as having an equal status in a number of issue areas or in certain political arenas (Clarke et al., 1979, see chap. 3). Thus, the Canadian voter does more than is suggested by the traditional approach; he or she may indeed form a kind of reference group identification with the units of the federal system, producing a frame of reference within which not only parties but many other elements of the political environment are perceived and evaluated.

The Canadian version of party identification theory suggests that political parties are only one element, albeit an important one, affected by the psychological attachment Canadians have to the units of the federal system, qua reference groups. This, however, is not to suggest that

Canadians are necessarily guided by their loyalties to regions or levels of government. The authors simply argue that the federal system, acting as a contextual factor, affects the psychological proclivities of Canadians with respect to their formation and maintenance of a party identification. Party attachments are influenced by a person's perception of the two levels of government as having "equal status" as reference groups. The consequences of this impact on the formation and maintenance of party identification are suggested in the following comments:

The proportion of flexible partisans in all regions, including Quebec, is sufficiently high to suggest that presently observed regional differences in support for various parties may be subject to substantial change in any given election.

Thus, it appears that party identification is affected by any number of short-term factors which have in turn been affected by the character of the federal system. In this regard, the authors indicate that:

...the feeling many Canadians manifest towards elements of the political [federal] system may inhibit the development of long-term^o loyalties, and enhance the effects of short-run factors in the electoral arena. (Clarke, et al., 1979, p. 259)

Thus, party identifications are subject to such cross-pressures as may arise from any number of social forces. It would seem, then, that the sense of emotional involvement directed toward a political party in the United States (Campbell, et al., 1960), is directed towards the federal system as the reference group objects in Canada.

^o My own emphasis.

Thus perceptions of political parties in Canada become subject to the reference group influence exerted by the two levels of the federal system.

This refined application of the concept of party identification in Canada succeeds in two ways. First, it is able to show that short-term forces have a greater impact on partisanship in Canada, and in this sense that attitudes about politics affect partisan ties and not the other way around. Second, in the sense that long-term forces exist, they do so not because of the hierarchical and ubiquitous influence of party identification, but rather because of the influence of the federal system on the psychological dispositions which Canadians form towards political objects, including political parties. Thus, partisan attachments are formed, but nested within the parallel reference group identification formed with the federal system. However, at this point the concept of party identification, as presented in both The American Voter, and in Political Choice in Canada models, run into similar and distinct problems which are germane to this investigation. Let us briefly consider these two works with respect to each other.

The authors of Political Choice in Canada, did not advance any argument that would contradict the claim made by The Michigan School scholars about party identification as it applied in Canada. In fact, I would suggest that their more current works even seem to "branch-plant" some of the Michigan school's more questionable and theoretically

problematic arguments north of the 49th parallel. And this is done in no meek way. For example LeDuc, et al., (1984), observe that:

One might hypothesize that inconsistency of identification is an inherently unstable condition, creating a dissonance which must eventually be resolved in favor of one level or the other. Alternatively, the salience of both levels of government and the federalized nature of the Canadian party system suggest that this may not be the case. If the adoption of two separate identification is consonant with the broader realities of Canadian politics, and if these identifications are to some degree compartmentalized within their respective sphere of relevance (i.e., federal and provincial politics), then no dissonance will be created and the inconsistency will prove to be relatively enduring, both at the individual level and the aggregate. (LeDuc et al., 1984, p. 480)

It is evident from the quotation, that the authors borrow from the conventional treatment of party identification, which stresses cognitive consistency, particularly as the explanatory emphasis begins to take a more psychological direction. This tendency is further illustrated by the comment that:

Also conducive to partisan change are highly salient federal and provincial party systems which compete for the attention of the electorate....[and]...The substantial separation of these party systems diminishes opportunities for cross-level reinforcement of partisan attitudes at either level. (p. 482).

Thus, in spite of their doubt about its applicability in Canada, their revisions of the conventional treatment of party identification, Clarke et al. nevertheless inherited the inadequate treatment of the psychological proclivities of a person's partisan attachments found in the standard

 "In this and the following quotation the emphasis was added by me.

version of party identification theory. In fact it seems that they have simply carried over the implicit application of political cognition from the American studies. Canadian students of partisanship have followed the lead of the Michigan School. This is further illustrated by the inadequate concern about the role that cognitive structures and processes have in the development of so-called psychological proclivities. Thus, they give an inadequate explanation of partisanship in Canada. Yet, surely we mean something more when we speak of a person's psychological proclivities, be they affected by party identification or by the Canadian federal system. I will take up this matter with respect to a special case of partisan inconsistency most commonly referred to as the phenomenon of split-party identification.

III. Political Cognition and the Schema Theory Approach

The conventional treatment of party identification and its refined version applied to the Canadian political context ignore the role that cognitive structures and processes play in the formation of partisan attachments. These schools of thought have assessed partisan attachments on the basis of logical reasoning or attitude consistency theories with a disregard for the many errors and inconsistencies in human cognition such that the applications of their theories may not be a very precise description of how people usually think about politics.

An alternative theoretical paradigm for studying party identification suggests that people process information about external reality to give it a semblance of order and meaning. This information-processing paradigm has generated a portrait of people "...as having limited on-line information-processing capacities, with extensive long-term storage capabilities." (Lau and Sears, 1986, p.5). It has implied a description of human beings whose cognitive limitations often produce numerous errors and biases in the processing of that information. As a result, cognitive psychology and social cognition research have provided theoretical frameworks with which one may study how people think in and about external realities.

More recently, a number of theoretical frameworks based on this cognitive perspective have been applied to the study of party identification (see Conover and Feldman, 1984; Hamill, Lodge and Blake, 1985; Lodge and Hamill, 1986; Miller, 1986). The most notable of these efforts have been based on the notion of schema and the theory and research on schemas which has developed from the study of social cognition during the 1980s. Perhaps, as Richard Lau and David Sears (1986) claim, this is because the notion of schema "...interfaces with such older ideas from political behavior as ideology, belief systems, constraint, and so on." (p. 7). These ideas have focussed on the ways in which political beliefs come to be organized within the individual's understanding of political affairs, but have tended to stress the role that the social environment plays in shaping that organization of political beliefs. Indeed, some political scientists dealing with these matters have argued that people may acquire whole systems of political beliefs which are 'pre-packaged' for them by groups and other agencies within that external social environment. (Converse, 1964).

While such a possibility can not be denied, its emphasis diverts attention from the role that cognitive processes play in structuring political perception and thinking. As Conover and Feldman (1984) note, this is not the case in schema theory, which attempts to integrate these kinds of concerns: "a schema develops as a consequence of

interaction with the environment, and subsequently as an existing internal structure, it influences the way in which new information is organized, thus shaping its further development" (p. 99). Thus, the schema theory approach not only attempts to identify the structure of belief systems, but also gives considerable attention to the full range of effects that such structures might have on political perceptions and attitudes.

Adopting a schema-theoretic approach should provide a framework within which one is more likely to consider the variety of linkages between the structure of beliefs and the perceptual process. It would also help to resolve the theoretical problems, previously noted, encountered by the more conventional treatment of party identification. As well, it would help bridge the gaps among previous conceptualizations of the nature and structure of belief systems. Finally, it would provide a theoretical basis for understanding certain psychological phenomena presently left unexplained by the conventional treatment of the role that cognitive structures and processes play in influencing party identification itself and which may well be inexplicable within that conventional perspective. To that end, in this chapter I will (1) summarize relevant research findings from the cognitive literature on human information processing, (2) introduce the schema concept, and (3) develop a schematic theoretical framework for dealing with the cognitive aspects of partisan orientations.

Cognitive psychology and human information processing

In the last decade, cognitive psychology has made significant progress in the application of information processing models of human psychology in an effort to explore the effects of different types of knowledge structures on the processing of information (Hastie, 1981; Taylor and Crocker, 1981; Alba and Hasher, 1983; Fiske and Taylor, 1984). Contemporary theory in cognitive psychology has been concerned with four information-processing functions. The first of these is a concern with the processing and use of information by intelligent entities, like human beings. In this regard, the information a person has to work with at any moment comes from at least three internal sources: (1) memory, which is defined as information about past experiences; (2) current circumstances, which usually include some focal source of stimulation; and (3) feedback contingent upon action, that is, information derived from sensing one's own activity, and from the reactions of one's social and physical environment.

The information a person processes over time passes through three memory stages: sensory memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory. Sensory memory, which is the impression left by a sensory experience, has a large storage capacity, but remains relatively uncoded. Short-term memory is a lot like our state of consciousness in that it is associated with what we are aware of at the moment. It is an

active form of memory, consisting of information that has just been encoded or retrieved from the general storehouse of knowledge. Because it has limited storage capacity it is easily overtaxed by the constant incoming information from all the other external stimuli in our perceptual field.

Finally, long-term memory passes from attention and from awareness easily, but its large storage capacity enables it to include large quantities of stored information, as well as new incoming information. Information which has been encoded into long-term memory is likely to be remembered for a lifetime.

Long-term memory is associated with permanent knowledge, and is divided into episodic, semantic, and procedural memories. Episodic memory is the memory of one's personal history.¹² Procedural memory has to do with knowing how to do things. This type of memory is associated with the acquisition and use of skills, technical or otherwise. The last type of long-term memory, semantic memory, has to do with one's general knowledge---the meaningful discriminations or conceptual distinctions that a person can make without necessarily knowing how or when they were first encountered or learned.

The second concern of cognitive psychology is how the representation is structurally organized in semantic memory.

¹²A good example of this is those times when you or a friend begin to relate your life story. As you might recall, many details were omitted, unless they were particularly pertinent or they were asked to be explained, and most of the story was articulated in terms of a series of connected episodes.

Semantic memory, as noted above, is a part of long-term memory and takes the form of general knowledge about the world and about experiences. Tulving (1972) referred to semantic memory as:

...the memory necessary for the use of language. It is a mental thesaurus, organizing knowledge a person possesses about words and ...symbols, their meaning and referents, about relations among them, and about rules, formulas, and algorithms for the manipulation of these symbols, concepts, and relations. (pp. 385-386)

Semantic memory contains information that is not associated with a particular time or place. Tulving (1972) conceived of semantic memory as part of an information processing system, which it shares with episodic memory, that (1) selectively receives information from perceptual and cognitive systems, (2) retains various aspects of that information, and (3) transmits that information when it is needed. Finally, Tulving (1973) also claimed that much of information that is registered in semantic memory comes from the external environment.

The third concern follows from the previous notion that information stored in semantic memory has an impact on the interpretation of new information. It deals with the ways in which that impact is made (Anderson, 1980). Information stored in semantic memory is portrayed as directing attention within the perceptual process and influencing how features of things and contexts are interpreted and categorized there.

Finally, the structural organization of semantic memory, and its relationship to information processing, is a

focal concern of cognitive psychology. One of the most common models of semantic memory is the network model that suggests that memory can be represented as a network of associations between concepts and their underlying attributes. Retrieval of information in semantic memory is accomplished by an individual searching through a maze of associations which link attributes and concepts formed as a result of past experiences (Collins and Quillian, 1969). In this type of system the associational links between concepts and attributes and among sets of concepts are hierarchically organized in subordinate and superordinate relationships to one another (Collins and Quillian, 1969). Thus, a class of attributes is assumed to be linked to that node in the hierarchy which corresponds to the label associated with the concept they define. Finally, the organizational structure is assumed to have more abstract information at the top of the hierarchy and more concrete information at its bottom.

A further elaboration of the knowledge structures network proposed by Collins and Quillian suggests that, beyond the nodes connected with attributes and concepts, there is another vast set of nodes which store information in "propositional" form. In this form of information storage, concepts are connected with other concepts or with information about specific things or instances of experience in a fashion akin to a declarative statement. Propositions

This kind of organization allows for what has been called "cognitive economy" in the storage and use of information.

represent a form of storage on a higher order than concepts, and may even express higher level abstractions than concepts involved (Anderson and Bower, 1973). They are viewed as being involved in all manner of information processing, ranging from that involving verbal-linguistic knowledge to that connected with visual-spatial knowledge. Thus, a proposition is a higher-order knowledge structure that organizes the attributes and concepts which form the basic building blocks of the beliefs we have about our environment in a syntactical fashion, asserting some claim we believe to be true about the contents of that environment. ¹⁴

Finally, the highest order of knowledge structures used within human semantic memory are those called "schemas". ¹⁵ Schemas are large, hierarchically organized collections of information about a specific domain of content or experience. They integrate the attributes of relevant instances of such experience, and the concepts and propositions pertinent to it within semantic memory, in a pyramidal structure of information about that domain within semantic memory. ¹⁶ (Anderson, 1980; Bolland, 1985).

¹⁴A belief is the product of interactions between attributes, concepts, propositions and schemas, as well as, affective components not discussed in this thesis.

¹⁵This is somewhat contentious, since it has been observed that there are higher order structures made up of schemas. These are called "schematic systems".

¹⁶The domain of content covered in a schema may be narrow or broad. It may focus on the information related to a specific event, place, set of circumstances, person, thing or relationship, or it may cover broad sets of such referents, such as groups or a specific class of situations. For example, one might form a schema dealing with the group structure of one's society or its party system.

Schemas sometimes cover overlapping areas of experience which share certain attributes in common, which may lead to the formation of a linked system of schemas with each schema representing a set of beliefs that are dimensionally similar (Bolland, 1985). Pamela Conover and Stanley Feldman (1984) have observed that: "Schemas are not necessarily isolated cognitive structures. Rather, they may be linked with one another through a rich network of...relationships". (p. 97). Lastly, the relationship between two schemas establishes the perceptual interpretation of some domain. Thus, depending on the type of schematic relationship, a person can interpret domains by using either abstract or concrete knowledge structures. A further elaboration of this last notion will be explicated in the following section.

The schema theoretic approach

The shortcomings of human information processing have led to the claim by cognitive psychologists that people are "cognitive misers" (Anderson, 1983; Fiske and Taylor, 1984). This view derives from the discussion of cognitive processing presented in the previous section, which pointed out that a person's active memory span is small, causing attention to the various aspects of their environment to be narrowly focused (Tulving, 1972; Norman, 1976). As a result, an individual's processing of information about his or her environment is ordinarily very selective. That selectivity

in processing information guided largely by the structure of previously stored knowledge about the external environment.

Such pre-existing knowledge structures are most commonly called "schemas". Susan T. Fiske and Patricia W. Linville (1980) offer the following definition of the schema concept:

The schema concept refers to cognitive structures of organized prior knowledge with specific instances, schemas guide the processing of new information and the retrieval of stored information. (p.543)

However, people often form images of and propositions about specific persons, places, things or events which can easily be confused with schemas. Yet, as Anderson (1980) explains, schemas do differ from images and propositions in their focus and scope:

A schema is a kind of knowledge different from ... [that contained in] ... propositions and images The difference is partly one of degree. A schema is a much larger piece of knowledge than an image or proposition; it might be thought of as equivalent to a set of propositions and images. The difference is also one of kind: a schema is general rather than specific; that is, a schema does not represent a specific object but rather a large number of specific objects. We have propositions and images for specific people, places, things, and events. In contrast, we have schemas only about general categories. (p. 133)

In essence, a schema reflects a greater degree of abstraction and elaboration of content and has a broader knowledge structure which encompasses attributes, concepts and propositions.

Thus, the basic claim about schemas is that facts, figures, impressions, and beliefs about people, places, things, and events are not simply stored in semantic memory

as discrete items, but are organized there to form coherent, meaningful interpretations of those general categories of experience which are important to a person. It is such broad knowledge structures that form the basis of one's understanding of his or her external environment. A person does not possess just a single schema, but many of them -- each focussed on a salient and important body of knowledge about his or her experience with the world. These are organized as large networks of more specific kinds of information which are linked together in terms of the thematic focus of each schema.

This network form of organization is reflected clearly in the way in which Wayne A. Wickelgren (1979) defines schemas as constituent parts of semantic memory:

A schema can be thought of as an attentional set that includes every node [in the nodal network making up semantic memory] more or less directly associated to what is currently consciously in your mind. Formally, we might partition the nodes of semantic memory into three subsets: *focus*, *halo*, and *quiet*. The *focus* is what you are (or very recently have been) thinking about. Nodes in the focus are fully activated. The *halo* is nodes more or less directly associated to the focus. Nodes in the associative halo are primed (partially activated). The rest of the nodes in semantic memory are quiet (not activated at all). A *schema* is a focus plus its associative halo. (p. 326, italics in the original text)

Defining the schema concept this way places it firmly within the context of contemporary theory about the organization of semantic memory.

When attentional processes activate a schema in the way Wickelgren describes, these knowledge structures become involved in a directive way in the various cognitive

processes connected with perception and other higher-order cognitive operations. Thus, schemas are used to perform various information-processing functions which serve to order one's understanding of a particular experiential domain and his or her thinking about its content. Milton Lodge and Ruth Hamill (1986) note seven ways in which schemas are used in this fashion:

1. provide categories for labeling people, places, events and processes,
2. facilitate the chunking or grouping of information into larger, more meaningful, and more easily retrievable categories,
3. influence what information will be attended to, encoded and retrieved from memory,
4. facilitate the recognition, recall, and ease of retrieval of schema-relevant information,
5. enable the individual to make inferences from incomplete data by filling in missing information with schema consistent best guesses,
6. provide a basis for making more confident decisions and predictions,
7. influence the weighing of evidence brought to bear in making decisions and evaluating probabilities. (Lodge and Hamill, 1986, p506).

These information-processing functions provide the experiential context necessary to understand information which would otherwise be unorganized and incomprehensible. They allow a person to anticipate the consequences of his or her actions and process incomplete information by filling in the gaps based on prior experience, acting as an experiential filter through which new information must pass. (Bolland, 1985, p. 250). The role that the organizational

structure of a schema plays in such matters is indicated by Fiske's comment that: "The structure of a schema must define the domain of relevant information and provide a means of organizing that information in some consistent [and meaningful] fashion." (Fiske, 1981, cited in Conover and Feldman, 1984, p. 97).

As the previous discussion indicates, schemas include attributes, concepts, and propositions¹⁷ in a hierarchically organized, pyramidal, structure with more abstract information at the top and more specific information at the base. (Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977; Cantor and Mischel, 1979; Taylor and Crocker, 1981). Thus, information is stored and processed at different levels of abstraction within the organizational structure of a schema. Different schemas are also linked with one another via "a rich network of hierarchical relationships in which individual schemas are 'embedded' in one another so that higher order, more abstract schemas are characterized in terms of their more concrete, lower order constituents." (Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977; Hastie, 1981; in Conover and Feldman, 1984, p. 97).

The organization and processing of information within a schema and the linkages between different schemas can be described in terms of two important structural characteristics: the degree of differentiation that exists between two or more schemas and the extent to which different schemas are interrelated to form higher-order

¹⁷From this point on we will refer to all of these as attributes for the sake of brevity.

schemas or schematic systems. For the sake of brevity, the former characteristic is referred to as "differentiation" and the latter one as "integration". As Bolland (1985) notes, the extent to which two schemas can be seen as structurally related is "[a] function of the intersection among the attributes that define each and, thus, they are seen as closely related if they are defined by a large number of relevant attributes, ..., [and, conversely,] they are unrelated if they are each defined by mutually exclusive sets of relevant attributes." (p. 251). A person's schematic system is said to be "integrated" if his or her schemas regarding a given political domain are interrelated and "fragmented" if they are unrelated to one another within that domain.

Bolland treats differentiation in terms of a person's ability to distinguish between which attributes are relevant to the content of one schema and which ones are relevant to another schema. Of course, some attributes may be relevant to two or more schemas. Thus, the key matter here is the number of attributes for a particular schema which are shared with another. Bolland remarks that:

A person has a differentiated schematic system if he or she is able to distinguish among the relevance of the various attributes [available for defining the content of schemas in that domain], ... and an undifferentiated schematic system if he or she is unable to distinguish among their relevance. (Bolland, 1985, p. 251)

These two structural characteristics establish a two-dimensional functional bipolarity between schematic similarity and relevance as a person compares and contrasts

old and new information from experiences and events (Harvey et al., 1961; Schroder, et al., 1967; Scott et al., 1979; Carr, 1980). Consequently, a person who has an integrated and differentiated schematic system is said to have an *abstract* perspective, whereas those persons whose schematic system is both fragmented and undifferentiated are said to be *concrete* thinkers.

These structural characteristics and their implications with respect to the role that schemas play in the cognitive processing of information about one's world will be discussed in more specific terms in the next chapter, where I set out a schematic model to deal with political cognition among split party identifiers. It is important to note, however, that they serve to produce individual differences in the form that schemas take, how they are used, and the general cognitive style a person adopts. It has been widely noted that schemas vary in their scope and complexity, and that individuals differ with respect to what schemas they have available for use in processing information, how they use them, and their ability to use them properly (that is, without producing "biased" processing). Such differences have been documented in recent applications of schema theory to the study of political cognition and would need to be taken into account in any application of that approach here (Fiske and Kinder, 1981; Graber, 1984; Kinder, 1983; Lau, 1985; Thorson and McKeever, 1983; and, Lau and Sears, 1986).

Current applications of schema theory

An application of schema theory to the study of political cognition should first attempt to identify the schemas people use to understand politics. In doing so, one would need to investigate what kinds of information about politics a person has already acquired, what aspects of politics it focuses on, and how that person has organized this information in his or her semantic memory. Moreover, such an application would need to show how the availability of such schematically organized information about politics and the ways in which it is structured within semantic memory affects a person's understanding of past political events and situations and interpretation of current features of the conduct of politics. In essence, it should indicate how the availability of such schemas enables an individual to see patterns of relationships among the salient aspects of his or her political environment. As well as helping that person to select the relevant information about the relationships needed to understand their significance within the context of his or her existing understanding of political affairs, while ignoring information irrelevant to that task. As well, it should show how such schemas affect the retrieval and use of previously stored information in thinking about various political concerns. Finally, it should provide a means of explaining individual differences in political orientation, such as those between partisans

and independents and among the various kinds of party identifiers that have been noted in the Canadian voting studies.

Recent applications of schema theory have been focused on the development and activation of partisan attachments. These works have in common an active awareness of cognitive variables in information processing and they all provide a new perspective on issues that have long been studied in terms of party identification theory. Indeed, research on political cognition that uses a schema theory approach has already expanded our understanding of party identification and partisan reasoning (Lodge and Hamill, 1986). The schema theory approach can be used, and already has been used, to discuss various other matters concerning political cognition. In the remaining pages of this chapter, I will review some of these efforts as a way of pointing out how schema theory is currently being used by political scientists to study political cognition. In particular, I will discuss how this new research literature addresses some of the most important and problematic concerns in dealing with party identification and the theory regarding it.

One of these approaches has been to identify individual differences in schematic organization and use of ideological and partisan political perceptions. With respect to the former, Hamill and Lodge (1986) have suggested that there are either ideological sophisticates, who have schema about how conventional liberal or conservative ideologies relate

to leaders, groups, and issues, or unsophisticated individuals who lack such ideological schema. They suggest that ideological schema, as they relate to leaders, groups and issues, are determined by a combination of more general cognitive ability and extensive political experience with the consequences of that kind of schematic thinking affecting recognition, memory, attention, comprehension and so on. Research done by Conover and Feldman (1986) suggests that some people have "policy-oriented self-schemata" and/or partisan schema about parties' issue positions, while other persons do not. Their contention is that people with these types of schema are more likely to use them to make inferences about complicated or ambiguous political issues, as would be expected from the "gap-filling" function of schema.

A similar individual-differences approach is taken by Lau (1986), who divides respondents into schematics and aschematics. He compares people who have different foci of attention. His observations suggest that some people process information about politics in terms of candidates, some in terms of issues, and some in terms of groups or parties. It follows then that some people will have a candidate schema, some an issue schema, others a group or party schema, and still others will have two or more or a mixture of all of these, while some will have none of them. Consequently, those persons with a candidate schema are likely seek for and process information in terms of candidates, others in

terms of issues and so forth.

Sears, Huddy, and Schaffer (1986) are concerned with which attitude objects attract widespread schematic thinking in the general public rather than in individuals. Their analysis involves an inquiry about the circumstances under which people cognitively associate the symbols of a particular policy issue, such as affirmative action and general predispositions towards equal rights. They assert that affective consistency will result when the symbols to which both predispositions and issues refer are similar. They make the claim that high levels of information will enhance consistency, particularly when people are able to invoke an underlying schema to process information about two attitude objects that display little manifest similarity or connection. Hence, they conclude that higher levels of information will produce more consistent attitudes toward dissimilar objects when people have an underlying schema which links the two.

A final study to consider deals with the relatively new phenomenon in the United States of unstable partisan attachments. Arthur H. Miller (1986) asks the question, "Why is partisanship declining in the United States?" He suggests that there may be several alternative explanations: that information about partisan matters has been declining, that the connection between party and candidate is no longer seen as clearly as it once was, and that more inferences are being made as to whether or not parties differ in any

significant way in partisan terms. He suggests that persons, particularly young persons, no longer acquire a partisan schema to organize any information which parties might use to invoke partisan attachments. Hence, party cues are being interpreted within the context of some other underlying schema, perhaps an issue schema.

All these works have dealt with some aspect of political attitudes and all have had something to say about some subject or concern which deals with partisan attachments, leadership perception, or issue concerns. Previously, these areas of interest have been analyzed in terms of party identification theory and, until recently, some of the problems inherent in that approach have not been effectively dealt with or resolved. The schema-theoretic approach used in more recent research efforts has attempted to apply some very powerful theory from cognitive psychology to the problems encountered by partisanship studies in the past, and thereby deal with them in a more adequate and thorough manner. Unfortunately, to date, there has not been any application of schema theory to explicate how the political cognition of Canadian party identifiers is affected by their partisan attachments, either in theoretical or empirical terms.

IV. A Schema Theory Model of Split Party Identification

Political perceptions encompass an array of information about candidates, parties, issues, institutional relationships, and the like. While there is already considerable evidence that people use schematic maps to aid them in understanding the social environment, applications of schema theory to the study of political cognition are just beginning to be done. These studies indicate that people do encode and cognitively organize political information in the fashion indicated by schema theory. This should not be surprising, since the political environment in most societies is complex and the plethora of information available about it would be difficult for most people to internalize without some organizing mechanism of the kind schemas provide.

Acknowledging that people do form and use schemas in attempting to impose some meaningful structure on their knowledge about politics does not tell us what kinds of schemas they are most likely to form and use. As Lodge and Hamill (1986) have observed, "in all likelihood there are many distinct ways to think about government and politics and oneself as a citizen" (p. 507). For example, a person

might more readily notice aspects of his or her political environment which are concerned with political parties and partisan conflict, gradually building up a relatively large amount of information about these matters which is schematically organized. The result would be the creation of a "parties and partisan conflict" schema. Other people might notice, encode, and organize information about their political environment in terms of themes connected with other content domains: social class aspects of politics, ethno-linguistic matters, economic philosophy, ideological perspective, regional differences, leadership qualities and performance, and so on (Converse, 1964; Conover and Feldman, 1984; Lau and Sears (Eds.), 1985; Hamill, Lodge, and Blake, 1985; Sharp and Lodge, 1985). Each of these content areas or domains would provide a potential basis for the encoding, storage, and organization of information about one's political environment. In fact, there are as many possible bases for forming political schemas as there are different ways of construing or thinking about politics at whatever level it is carried on in one's society.

While it is difficult to predict which content domains a person will attend to and store information about in schematic form, one thing can be reasonably assumed: people do not simply form one great "schema of politics"; that is, a person does not have a single, sweeping political schema that is used to interpret and store all the information he or she encounters about politics (Lodge and Hamill, 1986, p.

507). Instead, people generally have many different schemas available which can be used to process and store information about their political environment. Using schema theory to explain how people think about the political environment requires identifying those salient features of the political environment which serve as the bases for their political schemas. However, these schemas usually are not equally salient for an individual, which leads to variability in their accessibility for use in processing information. It also requires us to determine the relative accessibility of the different political schemas a person has available for use. In the next several pages, I will address these matters as they pertain to the formation of political schemas in the Canadian political environment, especially as they relate to setting out a schema model of political cognition among split party identifiers.

Potential bases of political schemas in Canada

Based on our understanding of the literature about the role of politics within Canadian society we can identify five broad categories of socio-political relationships that can be viewed as sources of specific content domains that Canadians might use as thematic foci in forming schemas relevant to Canadian politics. These focus on: (1) political and governmental institutions and processes, (2) economic affairs, (3) ethno-cultural relations, including linguistic

and religious concerns connected with them, (4) regional differences and concerns, and (5) social structural arrangements, especially as they deal with matters such as social class. One's knowledge about any one of these broad areas can be viewed as composed of several more specific content domains that could be used as the bases for political schemas. For example, the first one could be seen as including more specific content domains that could serve as the bases for political schemas dealing with political parties and partisan competition, national politics, provincial politics, federal-provincial relations, representation, leadership, and so on. Similarly, persons might also form political schemas centering on salient issue concerns arising in any of the five broad areas listed.

Which specific content domains become the bases for a person's political schemas will depend on the salience and importance of the specific content area to that person (or within his or her immediate political environment). Consequently, the extent to which an individual forms schemas regarding them, and the accessibility of such schemas, will vary across the domains and across individuals. Similarly, the degree to which these schemas are linked together, forming a schematic system for any given individual, will also vary across schema domains and individuals.

Political parties and party competition are a major feature of the way politics is conducted in all modern

industrial societies. In most countries, parties are the main political agencies that organize both political activity and the conduct of government. As a result, we can assume that they are a very important part of any individual's political environment. Thus, we can also expect that features of parties and party competition will be very salient to most persons, making up a conspicuous part of the information about politics that is available to most people. The fact that most people identify with a political party at one or both levels of government in Canada indicates the salience of parties and party competition. Thus, we can expect that most people will have formed a political schema dealing with parties and party competition.

To the extent that a person tends to use this schema to organize information about a wide range of political matters, it will become more central within his schematic system. Similarly, if it becomes linked to his or her self-schema via the kind of partisan attachment associated with the notion of party identification, it will be highly accessible for use in processing information about the person's political environment and exert a strong influence on that processing. Thus, we should not only expect that most Canadians will form a political schema focused on parties and party competition, but that for a large number of those people it will be a central schema within their schematic system.

If the salience of political parties implies that Canadians should form political schemas focused on them, then surely the same prediction made about the federal organization of government and politics in Canada. The evolution and development of the Canadian federal system over the past 120 years has meant that the responsibilities for government services and programs have been divided between two levels of government. The original intention of the British North America act was to delineate the basic responsibility of the legislatures of the provinces and the parliament of Canada according to the principle that "that which is local" would be deferred to the authority of the province, and "that which is national" to the federal government. However, since the 1920's, the authority of the provincial governments within this arrangement has greatly increased. In fact, some scholars consider Canada to be one of the most decentralized federal systems in the world.

The result of this extreme decentralization has been to produce what is perceived by many Canadians as a "separate but equal" status for the two levels of politics in Canada (Clarke, et al., 1979). Given the salience of federalism in Canada, this situation should lead Canadians to construct separate schemas to organize their knowledge about national and provincial politics, respectively. It also indicates the relative importance of such schemas vis-a-vis any other political schemas a person might develop.

Under these circumstances, it would not be unreasonable to expect that people might have some difficulty understanding the nature of the federal system. It would also not be unreasonable to assume that people might experience some difficulty differentiating which level of government has jurisdiction over which political or administrative venues. Apparently, this is not so. Clarke, et al. (1979) report data indicating that "the majority of respondents does have a basic understanding of the division of responsibilities within the Canadian federation" (Clarke, et al., 1979, p. 60). Thus, it seems that most Canadians do possess a basic knowledge of the structure and workings of Canadian federalism, and that it is recognized by them as a salient part of their political environment.

Such basic knowledge would vary across individuals, of course, and the extent to which it is organized in schematic terms would depend on a number of factors, the quantity of knowledge a person has about the federal system being the most obvious one. An equally important factor, one that is centrally germane to our model, is the quality of the knowledge one has about the federal system. The quality of knowledge a Canadian has about politics in Canada should presumably reflect the effects that federalism has on the structuring of Canadian politics. These effects should influence the kinds of information Canadians pick up about politics in their country and how they organize that information. Thus, one would expect that the federal

organization of government in Canada and its impact on Canadian politics would become a thematic focus for the schematic organization of information for many, if not most, Canadians.

The impact of federalism permeates the Canadian political system, shaping the structure of other institutional arrangements and the performance of other political institutions. This is especially illustrated with respect to the party system. There is not one party system, but thirteen: the national one, ten provincial ones and two territorial ones. These several party systems differ considerably in a variety of ways. Patterns of interparty competition differ sharply across subnational party systems and between the two levels of politics, parties having the same name at both levels often differ markedly in terms of policy stances, and parties exist at the provincial level which have no national-level counterpart (Engelmann and Schwartz, 1975; Clarke, et al., 1979). Consequently, as Blake (1982) has noted, the different choices offered by the national and provincial party systems may not only encourage citizens to identify with different parties across levels, but also make that a rational kind of behavior to adopt.

There are many other salient features of politics in Canada which could also be considered as potential bases for the schematic processing and organization of a person's information about Canadian politics. Several of these have been mentioned in passing in the above comments. Leaders and

leadership qualities, for example, might provide an important thematic focus for schema formation, especially as that topic continually emerges as a central concern in Canadian politics. However, it seems that the two most important bases are the ones just discussed: parties and party competition and federalism. It is the relationships that exist between these two broad content domains which lead to and structure split party identification in Canada. On this matter, Clarke and Stewart (1987) observe that:

...[The] federal system, by establishing multiple levels of government increases the number of arenas in which interparty conflict may occur and, thereby, permits and perhaps encourages voters to develop multiple partisan allegiances. (Clarke and Stewart, 1987, p. 532)

A schema theory of split party identification in Canada should focus on the structural relations of these two schematic systems as the primary topic of interest.

Research findings on split identifiers and political cognition

Very little research has been done on split party identifiers and almost none at all that focuses on their cognitive understanding of politics. What little we know about these matters fortunately stems from research carried out in Canada. Clarke, et al. (1979) reported that split identifiers tend to have more and richer images of parties, both of their own and of other parties than to consistent partisans. This finding held true for both positive and

negative images of other parties than their and also for the number of negative images they had of their own parties (pp. 187-88 and Table 6.8). This led these authors to suggest that "...[the] 'screening' function of partisanship is partially or wholly obviated by the co-existence in Canada of separate federal and provincial party attachments" and to hypothesize that "Such individuals would make finer distinctions between parties at different levels of government and, hence, might manifest tendencies toward the development of variable federal and provincial partisan allegiances" (p. 188).

This latter suggestion about variability in partisan allegiances among split identifiers was later examined by LeDuc, et al. (1984). The prediction of greater variability follows from the standard theory of party identification and the cognitive consistency theory connected with it. LeDuc, et al., considered this argument, but added an alternative one:

One might hypothesize that inconsistency of identification is an inherently unstable condition, creating a dissonance which must eventually be resolved in favor of one level or another. Alternatively, the salience of both levels of government and the federalized nature of the Canadian party system suggest that this may not be the case. If the adoption of two separate identification is consonant with the broader realities of Canadian politics, and if these identifications are to some degree compartmentalized within their respective sphere of relevance (i.e., federal and provincial politics), then no dissonance will be created and the inconsistency will prove to be relatively enduring, both at the individual level and the aggregate. (p. 480)

In testing the former explanation, they claim that their

data on changes in party identification (either its direction or its intensity) over time, and on vote-switching over successive elections, do not indicate tendencies toward the resolution of such dissonant national-provincial identifications. This leads them to assert that:

The alternative conclusion, that inconsistent partisanship is commonplace in the Canadian political environment and not in itself a source of great dissonance, appears much more convincing. (LeDuc et al., 1984).

Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that split identifiers have political schemas which allow such persons to maintain their dual identification comfortably and stably over time. Such features must in some way reflect and be consonant with important aspects of the external political environment.

Martinez (1984) and Clarke and Stewart (1987) suggest to us that split identifiers can be expected to have more "malleable" attitudes, and to tolerate more ambiguity in their political environment. Studies in social cognition have shown that these traits are more common among experts in an area than among novices, and that such persons are also more likely to make effective use of seemingly inconsistent information in reasoning about matters (Chase and Simon, 1973; Larkin, et al., 1980; Fiske, et al., 1983). This suggests that split party identifiers may be better informed and more able to make effective use of the frequently confusing information arising in politics. It also suggests that they would be more open to new ideas and

to change in their established ways of thinking about politics. A schema model of political cognition among split identifiers should allow one to test for such features of the ways in which such people reason about politics: (1) a wider range of schema for use in thinking about politics, (2) a greater degree of functional differentiation and integration among their schemas, (3) a greater degree of analytical sophistication, (4) greater flexibility in dealing with inconsistency and a higher tolerance for ambiguity, and (5) greater discretion in making decisions.

The various empirical findings reviewed in this section reflect documented aspects of political cognition among split party identifiers. Any adequate schema theory model of political cognition among split identifiers would have to be able to accommodate and explain such findings.

Schema attributes, organization and structure

A schema, political or otherwise, is a knowledge structure that includes all of the information a person has acquired about some specific content domain. In the previous chapter, it was indicated that people form schemas from their experiences with events that have to do with a specific content domain as a means of organizing the information from those experiences in a meaningful way. Bolland describes how the formation of schemas occurs:

As people experience events, they constantly compare them with other [previous] events, noting how they are

both similar to and different from those previous events. This bipolar process of abstracting and contrasting is called construing, and it leads to the formation of personal [mental] constructs, which are themselves bipolar in nature: at one pole lie those attributes that serve to define the construct, while at the other pole lie those attributes that serve to differentiate it from other constructs. (Bolland, 1985, p. 251)

While this description is probably more appropriate as an account of how concepts are formed, it can be broadened (as Bolland has done) to describe the formation of schemas.

The key matter here concerns the attributes of the items associated with a given content domain and the role they play in defining the schema connected with that domain. These attributes take the form of characteristic features of the items which distinguish them as specific instances of that particular content domain and, hence, serve as both the source and the content of the information about that domain which is stored a person's schema regarding that domain. Some are attributes that all experiences with the contents of that domain share in common, while others serve to distinguish those experiences from others pertinent to some other domain. According to Bolland, the content of a schema is defined by the "unique configuration" of attributes that characterize and distinguish those specific items (things, persons, groups, events, etc.) connected with the content domain to which it relates. This configuration of attributes can be expected to vary across different persons and the contexts in which they experience such items. Similarly, the schematic organization of information about a particular

content domain will also vary across persons, producing individual differences in their understanding of that domain of experience.

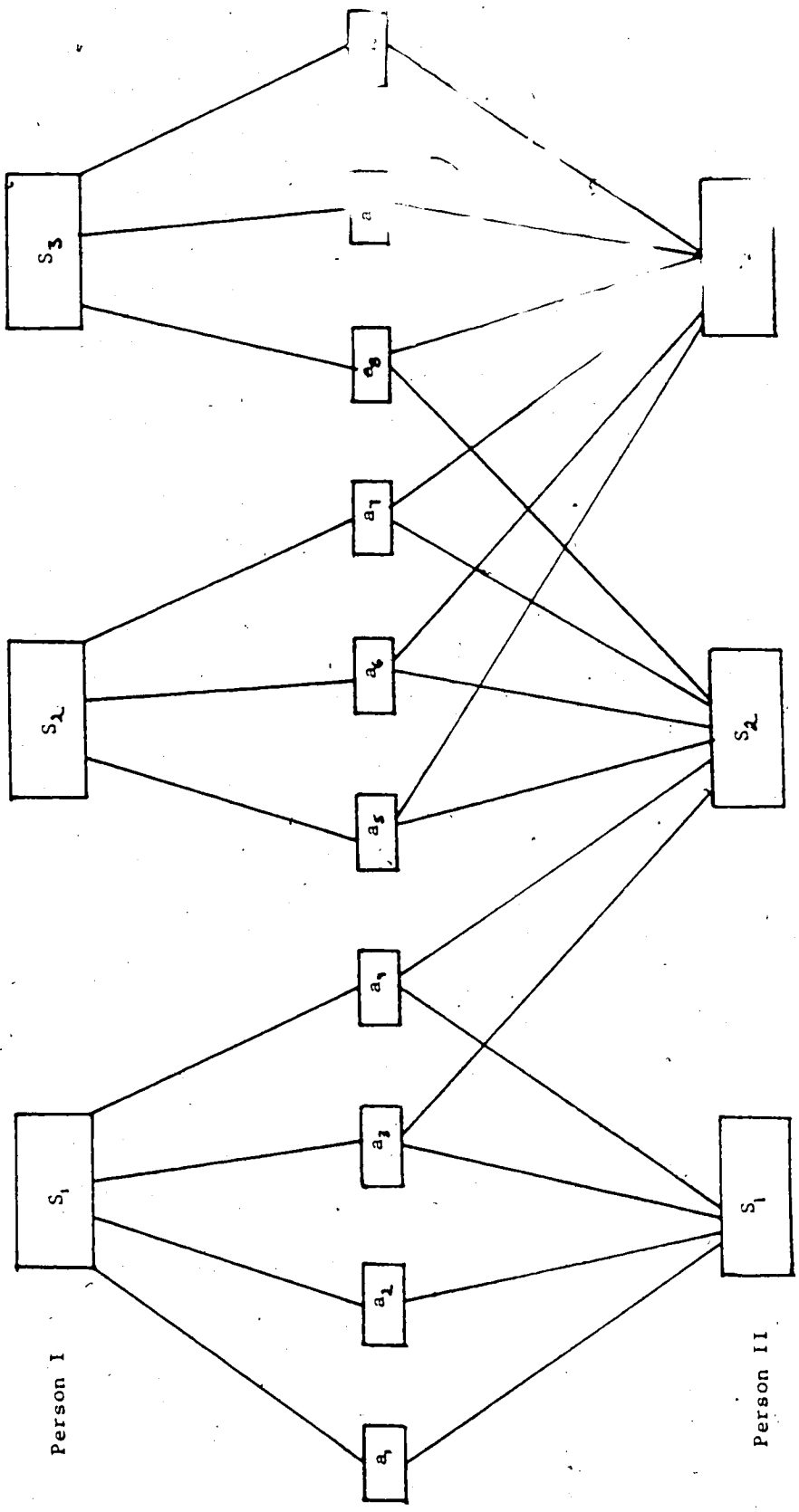
These individual differences call attention to a second aspect of such a theoretical model: the organizational structure of information within and between schemas. Bolland (1985) has presented a theoretical framework which deals with these matters. He uses the notions of schema differentiation and integration to do this. Figure 1 (see next page) provides a means of explaining his argument.

Bolland discusses the relationship between the schemas that form in terms of the relevance of particular attributes to a given schema and the extent of overlap in the attributes which define the content of the different schemas

Two schemas are quite closely related if they are defined by a large number of common relevant attributes, and they are unrelated if they are each defined by mutually exclusive sets of relevant attributes. Based on this, a person has an *integrated* schematic system if his or her schemata within a given cognitive domain are interrelated, and a fragmented schematic system if the schemas are unrelated. Beyond integration, however, a second structural property of a person's conceptual system is important. A person has a *differentiated* schematic system if he or she is able to distinguish among the relevance of the various attributes to each schema within a given cognitive domain, and an undifferentiated schematic system if he or she is unable to distinguish among their relevance. (Bolland, 1985, p. 251)

Thus, a person's schematic system can be described in terms of the extent of differentiation among the schemas comprising it and the degree to which the schematic system, as a whole, is either integrated or fragmented.

Figure 1
"Bolland's Schema Framework"



A third structural feature of the schematic organization of such in semantic memory is derived from the relationship between differentiation and integration within a system of related schemas. Bolland notes that; "most theories hypothesize that these two components of cognitive structure are related." (p. 251). He describes that relationship as producing differences in the degree to which a person thinks about such matters in either abstract or concrete terms.

A person with an integrated and differentiated schematic system has an abstract cognitive structure, whereas a person with a fragmented and undifferentiated schematic system has a concrete cognitive structure. (Bolland, 1985, p. 251).

Hence, we can view schematic systems as varying in terms of the degree to which they reflect abstract or concrete cognitive structures.

This aspect of the schematic system also relates to the degree of hierarchical organization of information within such semantic memory structures. An individual with an abstract cognitive structure will probably be able to encompass a wider array of domain specific information within his or her schematic organization of information about that domain, and use it more efficiently in thinking about such matters. For example, a person who has a Ph.D. in political science will probably have a rich array of information about federal-provincial relations and the nuances of party competition and will have acquired the ability to deal with such matters in highly abstract terms.

Thus, such a person can be expected to be able to incorporate that information more efficiently in whatever schemas he or she forms about such matters through the more effective use of abstract concepts and forms of reasoning.

Finally whether or not a person organizes available information about politics in specific schematic terms will depend upon which attributes of his or her political experience are most salient and important. In this sense, the distinctive attributes which characterize a given domain of political experience provide a thematic focus for the interpretation, storage and organization of information about political affairs. Schemas dealing with aspects of politics which are highly salient and important to an individual will be more accessible within his or her schematic system. Hence, they will be more readily used to guide that person's perception of political affairs and thinking about such matters.

I have delineated four aspects of the schematic organization of information in semantic memory which form the bases of a model of political cognition, its content domains, the organizational hierarchy of its system schemas, the relations among schema and sub schema in that system, and the relevance and salience of information processed in terms of those schemas. From the cognitive perspective, these make up the basic units of analysis: the person's knowledge structures regarding politics. In the next section, I will explain how such a model can be applied

to understand political cognition among split identifiers in Canada.

A schema theory model of split identification

I have asserted that a schema about a particular domain in the external world becomes activated if the information being attended to by the perceiver is relevant and important to such schema. Furthermore, in terms of level of abstractness, higher order schema or schema systems are characterized by their lower level attributes, or sub-schema. Finally, I indicate that a schema's usage is determined by its salience to a particular domain and thus becomes accessible to the perceiver over other schema in organizing information about the external world.

In the Canadian political environment people should invoke a schema for understanding and interpreting the two levels of government. The likelihood that individuals will invoke a partisan versus a federal domain specific schema will depend on the relevance of the information being attended to and the salience of the schemas which a person has about a particular domain. Consistent partisans would probably access a partisan schema as their overriding organizing mechanism. Inconsistent partisans, or split-party identifiers, should probably access a federal domain schema. So as to better explicate the theoretical operationalization of a schema model for the split identifier, a description of

a schema model for consistent partisans is in order.

Figure 2 (see next page) depicts a partisan schema. The lower case "a" signifies a particular attribute of some content domain. For example, a1 could signify an interest group concern, a2 could be leadership concerns, and so on. A partisan schema enables an individual to differentiate between parties, in this case the NDP, Liberals, and Progressive Conservatives. It emphasizes the differences and, hence, as Figure 2 indicates, there will be few attributes that are commonly relevant to any two parties.

Given that for the partisan a higher priority is given to party/partisan characteristics in coding information about the political environment, their "party/partisan competition" schema is highly accessible and becomes activated to control cognitive processing at a relatively early stage in processing information. These party/partisan competition schema will tend to integrate the information forming the context of other schemas into or under the party schema. It is "under the party schema", then, that sub-schemas are used to code other information¹ which will tend to be embedded within the "party/partisan competition" schema. Figure 2 depicts these relationships such that attributes are embedded in the federal domain schemas, a national domain and a provincial domain, and these are in turn embedded in the "party/partisan competition" schema.

¹(i.e., information that does not directly distinguish among things on a partisan basis)

"The Structural Arrangement
of Partisan Schematic"

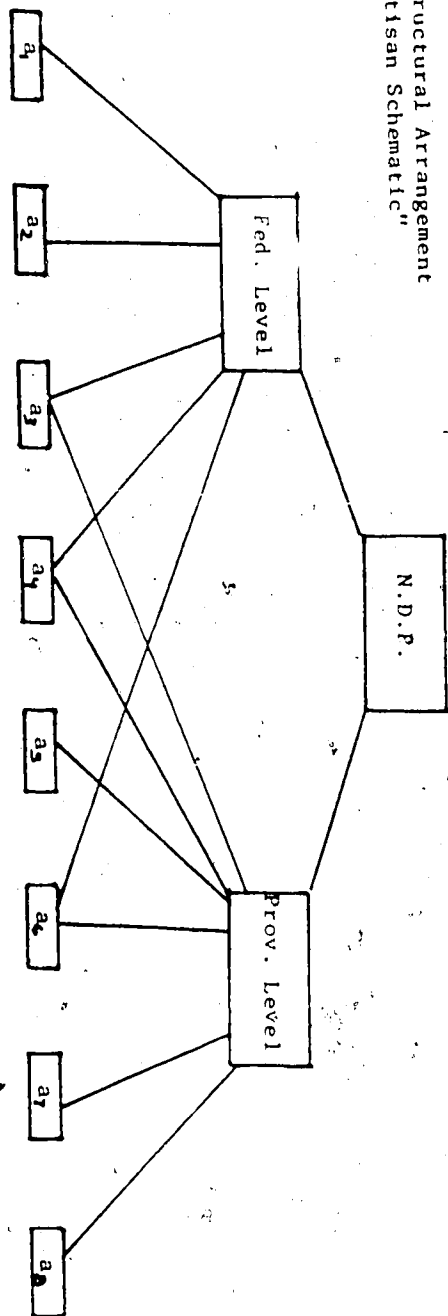


Figure 2.

Thus, information being attended to will be filtered in terms of the partisan concerns of a New Democrat, Liberal, or Progressive Conservative. To the extent that the person differentiates the definitional content subsumed by these other schemas from one another and from the "party/party competition" schema, while still connecting them (either at the same level in the hierarchy of storage or across levels,) then he or she is likely to think about such matters in relatively abstract terms. Thus, we may predict that consistent partisans will emphasize the similarities of within party concerns across both levels of government, and thus, point out the differences which arise between party concerns across levels of government.

The inconsistent, or split-party, identifier is a somewhat different and more difficult animal. He or she is different from the consistent identifier because he or she comfortably holds different party affiliations across levels of government. And split-party identifiers are more difficult because some often hold these split identifications across levels of government at differing degrees of intensity. Hence, a schema model for split identification needs to account for (1) strong across-level split identification, those individuals who hold strong partisan attachments with different parties across the levels, (2) strong/weak split identification, those people who have a strong attachment with one party at one level and a weak attachment with another party at the second level,

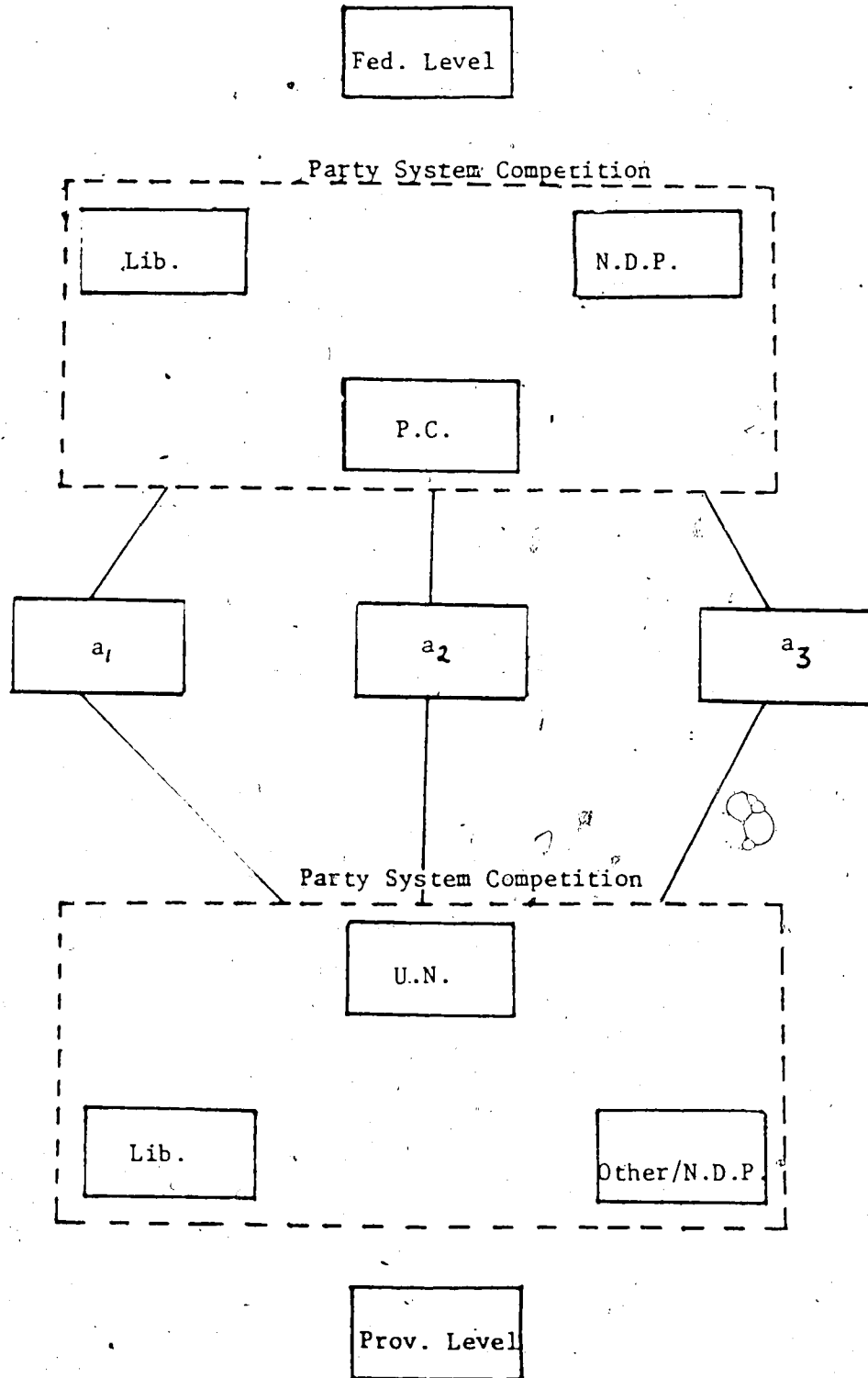
and, (3) weak split identification those people who have weak attachments to different parties across levels of government. In fact, what is involved is three, rather than one model, one for each kind of split identification.

Figure 3 (see next page) depicts the schematic system of a strong split identifier. The lower case letter "a" signifies specific content domain attributes as indicated previously. This individual's organizing schema is the federal system. Hence, he or she has two schema, one for each level. A strong, across level split identifier differentiates between levels, emphasizing the differences rather than similarities between the two levels of government. Hence, there will be very few political attributes that are commonly relevant to the two specific levels of government. To this type of split identifier this schema is highly accessible and is likely to control cognitive processing at a relatively early stage in processing information.

This type of individual is probably, but not necessarily, found in provincial party systems which differ from the federal party system. Thus, as Figure 3 indicates, the sub-schema party domain may include provincial parties which are represented only at that level (e.g., the Union Nationale in Quebec, or the Social Credit in B.C.) They tend to fragment information, forming the context of sub-schemas into, or under, the federal schema system, and it is under them that sub-schemas are used to code other information.

Figure 3

"Schema System of Strong Split Party Identifier"



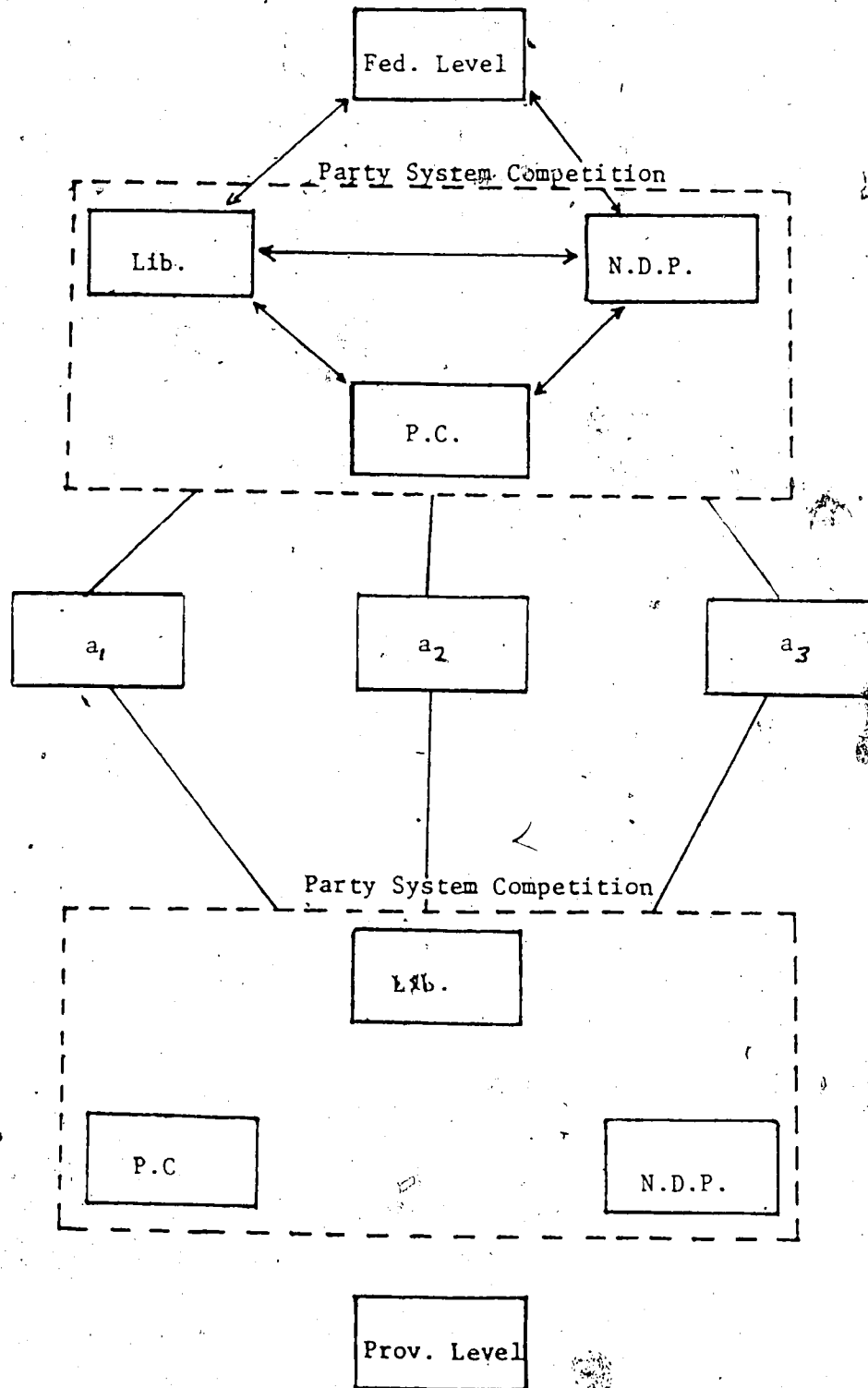
This type of split identifier will tend to embed sub-schemas within the federal schemas. Thus, to the extent that the person differentiates the definitional context subsumed by one or the other party schemas, (either at the same level in the hierarchy of storage or across levels), then this type of split identifier is likely to think about such matters in relatively abstract terms.

Comparatively, the split identifier who is weak at one level and strong at the other can be said to emphasize difference across levels, but less so at one level with respect to the subordinate partisan schema. This type of person is like the Ontarian who supports the Progressive Conservative party at the provincial level and the Liberals from time to time at the federal level.''' Once again this individual emphasizes differences rather than similarities across levels, hence there will be few attributes that are commonly relevant to the specific levels. And like all split identifiers, he or she gives the federal system priority in coding information about the political environment. But at one of the two party schemas levels he or she indentify less strongly, thus, as in the case of the Ontarian, they will less strongly identify with federal parties. Figure 4 (see next page) portrays the schematic system of this type of person.

''I refer to the Davis-Trudeau years

Figure 4

"Schematic System of Strong-weak Split Party Identifier"



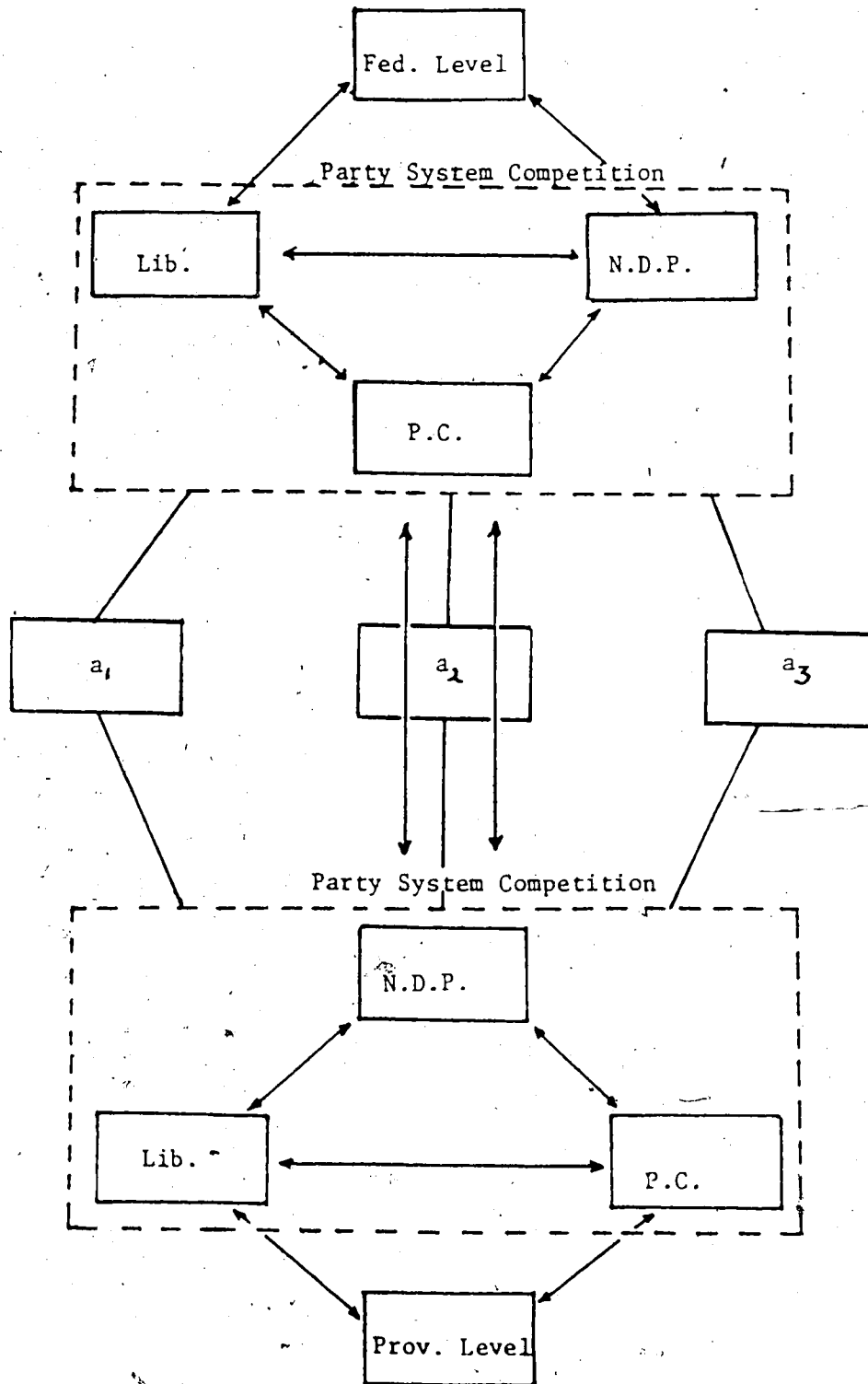
Split identifiers who identify weakly at both levels can be expected to differentiate sharply across levels, as their strong split counterparts do, but less sharply within each level. Manitobans who identify with the Liberals federally and the New Democrats provincially probably serve as an example here. Figure 5 (see next page) depicts this phenomenon, indicating that while the federal schema's characteristics do code information, there are some similarities which are seen as shared by the parties in that domain. This type of person will change his or her vote more often over time since the similarities are significant enough to warrant such cross-time variations. The extent to which this person integrates information from definitional context subsumed by the party schemas at each level, but not from the federal schema system, will probably be reflected in the number of times he or she will change partisanship.²⁰

Based on these three models we can predict that strong split identifiers will differentiate strongly across federal schema, find several attributes that distinguish sharply between parties within each level of government and few or no attributes that the party systems at the two levels of government have in common. Because of this situation such persons will be less likely to change the direction or intensity of their party identification at either level.

²⁰This is a possible explanation for the high degree of cross-level variation in Canada.

Figure 5

Schematic System of Weak Split Party Identifier



The weak split identifier will also have federal schemas that differentiate between levels of the federal system and are highly accessible. However, such persons will be more likely to note attributes relevant to both their national politics schemas and their provincial politics schemas. Thus, their differentiation between these two levels of government will not be as sharp as that found among split party identifiers who strongly identify with the party they support at each level. These persons will also be less likely to differentiate among parties at each level. This alternate tendency is what accounts for the weakness with which they identify with a party at each level. It also suggests that they will be more prone to change the direction of their party identification over time at one or both levels.

As these various examples show, much can be gained from using a schema theory approach to study split party identification. It not only allows us to make predictions about how such persons process, organize, and use information about politics, but also to study the effects that such cognitive factors have on the intensity and stability of party identification itself. To accomplish both tasks within one theoretical framework is impressive.

Summary and Conclusions

In this thesis I have dealt with the cognitive psychology underlying the adoption of split party identification. This matter has been largely ignored by those who have studied the psychology of partisanship. That situation is surprising for at least two reasons. First, split party identification only occurs in federal systems and the United States, where the party identification concept was originally formulated and where party identification has been most extensively studied, is a federal system. Nevertheless, American researchers have paid little attention to the split party identifier. Secondly, split party identification represents an important deviation from the kind of partisan behavior predicted by the conventional theory regarding the psychological basis of party identification. Thus, one would expect that it would have received more attention from those who have studied the psychology of partisanship in those terms.

As a result of this situation, we know rather little about split party identifiers. What we do know about them is largely based on the work that has been done on party identification in Canada. We know even less about the

cognitive psychology connected with the adoption of split party identification. More importantly, we lack an adequate theoretical basis for dealing with such matters. In this thesis, I have argued that schema theory provides such a basis. I have also proposed a model of political cognition among split party identifiers which applies that approach. In this final chapter, I will draw some conclusions about what has been learned from doing these things and indicate some areas related to these matters where future research is needed.

The theoretical application of schema theory indicates that the role that party identification plays in shaping political cognition is immeasurably more complicated than it is portrayed to be in the traditional version of party identification theory. I would suggest that the traditional approach to the study of party identification, grounded in a mixture of reference group theory and cognitive consistency theory, directed the attention of researchers away from questions concerning the cognitive aspects of partisanship by assuming that a party identifier's views of politics would almost necessarily be consistent with his reference group, the party with which he or she identified. Since the main concerns of a schema theory approach focus on cognitive processes and how they affect the encoding and organization of information in semantic memory, it must deal directly with the complex relationship between partisan identification and its effects on political

cognition as a primary concern.

An equally important conclusion is that the schema theory approach draws attention to the way in which political cognition might affect party identification. The traditional version of party identification theory was apt to view party identification as a factor that affected all manner of political thinking, but is not affected in turn by the cognitive processes used in thinking about politics. This view did not allow for reciprocal relationships between party identification and political perception and beliefs. Thus, it provided no way to respond to recent arguments that treat party identification as something shaped by the same short-term forces it is supposed to influence. As I indicated in the previous chapter, the schema theory approach is not limited in its capacity to deal with such matters. Consequently, party identification is treated as a kind of political self-schema that can be shaped by the content of other political schemas through various cognitive processes.

Finally, another conclusion involves the structural distinction between abstract and concrete schema formation. This distinction suggests that people with concrete schema systems would be more likely to perceive politics in single-issue terms, whereas abstract thinkers are more likely to see political issues, candidates, parties, institutions and events as differentiated from one another but also integrally related. As politics become more

complex, however, people may begin to sharply compartmentalize great quantities of information under a single schema, making themselves prey to single-issue parties or parties which package their "product" without any explanation of the substance of that product.

Split identifiers, especially weak split identifiers, often tend to be well educated. As a result, they are also more likely to be abstract thinkers who are quite well informed about politics, and reason about politics in sophisticated ways. Other research tells us that people who have these traits also tolerate differences and ambiguity well. (Chase and Simon, 1973; Larkin, et al, 1980; Fiske, et al., 1983). I would suggest that, given the necessity for a democratic society to sustain itself, the more tolerant and sensitive its population is, the more viable its democratic institutions will be. Hence, it may be that the number of split identifiers in a society may indicate the degree to which that society is a viable democracy (i.e., Democratic viability is directly proportional to quantities of split identifiers in that society).²¹

²¹If a democracy is to survive then it would seem that a vigilant watch must be maintained, people who do not possess analytical skills that are at least somewhat sophisticated are not as likely to be cognizant of the erosion of the democratic values and institutions which give that particular democracy its viability. Therefore, beyond the interesting theoretical questions about the psychology of partisanship which arise from using a schema approach to study split identifications, that approach may also facilitate the use of the phenomenon of split identification as a barometer of democratic values in a society.

Among those issues not addressed in this thesis is the role of affect within a schema theory treatment of party identification and its impact on political cognition. Much of the research on party identification stemming from the traditional approach has stressed its affective character. Apart from the traditional theory of party identification, it is clear that affect is an important element in partisanship, as indicated, for example, in the sharp conflict that often arises between strongly committed partisans.

Schema theorists are just beginning to deal with the question of the role affect plays in the schematic organization of cognition. Lau and Sears (1986), have asserted that, "The inability of information-processing theories to handle affect with as much sophistication as they offer for memory and perception is... the biggest shortcoming of political and social cognition" (p. 359). However, affect has not gone totally unexamined in the field, for example, Ira Roseman, Robert Abelson and Michael Ewing (1986), sought to explain the relationship between the emotion in the stimulus and the emotion in the respondent. They suggest that the emotion in the stimulus "resonates" with a corresponding emotion in the response. I suggest that much of what is substantial and essential to the application of affect to political cognition will be derived predominantly from research findings in neuropsychology and neurophysiology. However, this cannot occur until such time

as political cognitivists apply their research more directly to this matter. This is likely to be one of the more important areas of future research involving the use of schema theory to study political cognition. And, as such, its significance is nowhere more notable than in the study of party identification and partisanship.

Another unresolved issue in this area has been the study of split identification in other federal systems, including, ironically enough, the American federal system. Among those federal systems where split party identification has been observed, Canada stands out. Why is this so? Is it just a consequence of the degree of decentralization within Canadian federalism, or are there other factors which promote the adoption and maintenance of split identification? For example, might not some split identifiers base their adoption of different party identifications at different levels on matters connected with ethno-linguistic question concerns? Without more extensive research, we cannot effectively deal with this question.

A further consideration not attended to by this thesis deals with the role socialization to politics plays in the adoption and maintenance of split party identification. We know very little about how socialization processes are implicated in the adoption and use of schematic forms of information storage in semantic memory. While Martinez's (1984) research brings something to this line of inquiry, it

does not employ a schema theory approach.

Taking a schema-theoretic approach to explaining the phenomenon of split identification has indicated that individuals must of necessity develop a schema for making sense of the world of government and politics. Given that the world is a complex mixture often sharp contrasts and glaring cues or ambiguous symbols and fuzzy pictures, people have little choice but to impose some order on their perceptual fields. In a particularly disjoint and seemingly very confusing political environment, such as is found in Canada, split identification becomes symptomatic of information overload. To explain this phenomenon, the schema-theoretic approach goes beyond the capability of traditional version of party identification to deal with individual-level political cognition. It is for that I find its adoption to be not only evident in its value but necessary.

The application of the schema-theoretic approach to study the phenomenon of split identifiers in Canada also provides an interesting inquiry into the individual-level psychological dispositions Canadians have about their political culture. From that view, its application suggests that people have an incredible capacity for flexibility in their thinking about politics. People seem able to deal with inconsistent and ambiguous aspects of their political environment by the selective use of available schemas to interpret such aspects in ways that fit the person's

existing knowledge of the political culture. Changing knowledge structures we have acquired over a lifetime is not a common daily activity for most people; hence, the ability to respond to inconsistency and ambiguity in our political environment, in this way helps to maintain the cognitive order that has thus far served one reasonably well. Thus, split identification may not be a deviating phenomenon, as Clarke et al. would have us believe, but rather a common example of an individual's method of making the variation in the Canadian political culture meaningful.

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