

# The Dynamic Properties of Party Identification: a Four-Nation Comparison

LAWRENCE LeDUC

*University of Windsor, Canada*

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## ABSTRACT

Among the most important elements in assessing the cross-national utility of the concept of party identification is its stability over time, in particular its stability relative to that of voting choice. This article utilizes three-wave panel studies in Great Britain, Canada, the Netherlands and the United States to measure the nature and extent of changes in individual partisanship over a period of three to six years. It is argued that there is substantial instability in party identification when all types of change are taken into account, and that the United States appears unique among the cases examined in its ability to combine stable partisanship with instability of voting behaviour for reasons relating to the particular nature of the American electoral system. In Britain and Canada, party identification exhibits a greater tendency to travel with vote, while in the Netherlands it is less stable than the vote itself.

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The utility of the concept of party identification in voting research, as well as several controversies surrounding its application and interpretation, is well known. American scholars, having observed the erosion of partisanship in the American electorate in the late 1960s and early 1970s, have drawn differing conclusions regarding the implications which these phenomena may have for the theory of party identification as a relatively enduring social-psychological attachment in that country. In cross-national research, scholars have differed widely regarding the applicability of party identification in multi-party systems or in those undergoing fundamental change. At the very least, non-American scholars have agreed that party identification tends to behave differently in different political environments, even where there is no serious problem of conceptual similarity. Butler and Stokes (1969; 1975) first observed the greater tendency of party identification to travel with the vote in Britain than in the United States, even though the over-all level of stability of partisanship was comparable in the two countries. Scholars in some other countries (Meisel, 1975; Thomassen, 1976) have questioned the utility of the concept of party identification in countries where it exhibits a strong tendency to change with vote or is *less* stable than voting behaviour over time.

As these comments suggest, the concept of party identification as originally formulated depends heavily on its relative stability over time. Clearly, in the American case, party identification is more stable than voting choice, whatever may be the other controversies surrounding its interpretation. In part this is because of the unique features of the American electoral system, which demand a number of voting decisions of the individual, and the wide swings which have occurred routinely in American presidential elections since 1964. The stability of partisanship in other countries however, even in comparison with vote, is less certain. One difficulty in resolving this issue has been the absence of reliable measures of stability, which must normally be derived from panel data collected over more than one national election. Except in Britain, where panel studies have been conducted regularly since 1963, such studies are rare. Slowly, however, a sufficient number of panel studies containing comparable measures is becoming available to permit the investigation of the stability of party identification and vote in a truly cross-national context. These studies can help to answer a number of questions, among them being the extent to which other countries exhibit a degree of stability in party identification relative to vote and the extent to which the United States may in fact be a unique case with regard to the linkage between party identification and voting choice. Only by means of an analysis which includes a range of national cases can such questions be addressed.

### 1. METHODS AND DATA

This analysis utilizes survey data from panel studies in four nations – Britain, Canada, the United States and the Netherlands. The criteria for selection of these studies were that they contain equivalent measures of party identification and that they contain non-recall information on individual voting behaviour or vote intention collected at three separate time points. In the case of the Canadian and U.S.A. panels, data were collected at the time of three national elections (1974, 1979 and 1980 in Canada, and 1972, 1974 and 1976 in the United States).<sup>1</sup> In the British case, respondents were first interviewed in 1969 and then again following the general elections of 1970 and February 1974.<sup>2</sup> The Dutch panel was begun in 1970, and respondents were interviewed following the Second Chamber elections of 1971 and 1972.<sup>3</sup> Three of the panels are of approximately comparable length, while that for the Netherlands is somewhat shorter, a fact that may be kept in mind in interpreting degree and rates of change.

For purposes of this analysis, a common definition and measure of party identification is employed across the four studies. All of the studies utilize the American-style question to establish direction of party identification, although there are slight variations in question wording, a factor which could cause differences in the level of identification (Kaase, 1976): 'Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Conservative, Labour, Liberal, or what?' The American studies include the option 'Independent' in the text of the question, while the others do not. The Dutch surveys use the term 'adherent' and do not name the parties in the text of the question: 'Do you usually think of yourself as an adherent of a certain party or not? (IF YES) Which party do you like best?' Nevertheless, the measures exhibit a high degree of similarity. Greater comparability can be obtained by imposing a uniform categorization across the studies. All four sets of surveys contain a probe for those

TABLE I. The structure of party identification in four national samples

(diagonal percentages)

(a) Britain, Feb. 1974 (N = 2394)				(b) Canada, 1974 (N = 2343)			
	Very strong	Fairly strong	Weak/leaning		Very strong	Fairly strong	Weak/leaning
Conservative	12	18	8	Liberal	16	23	11
Labour	17	18	9	Progressive-Conservative	7	11	6
Liberal	2	7	5	NDP	4	5	2
Other <sup>a</sup>	1	1	x	Social Credit	1	1	1
None			4	None			12

  

(c) Netherlands, 1970 (N = 1813)				(d) U.S.A., 1976 (N = 2862)			
	Strong	Not strong	Leaning		Strong	Weak	Ind./leaning
PvdA <sup>b</sup>	5	7	8	Democratic	15	24	12
KVP <sup>b</sup>	6	7	5	Republican	11	15	8
VVD	2	3	6	Independent/ None			15
D'66	1	3	7				
ARP	2	3	2				
CHU	2	2	2				
All other	2	1	3				
None			23				

<sup>a</sup>Includes Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru.<sup>b</sup>Includes scattering of mentions of party groupings.<sup>x</sup>Less than 1%.

respondents who classify themselves as Independents or who refuse a party identification to determine whether they 'lean toward' or 'feel closer to' any of the parties. In this analysis, all respondents indicating a partisan attachment on any of these measures or probes are classified as party identifiers. In the case of the American and Dutch studies, this reduces substantially the number of Independents and provides greater comparability with the British and Canadian surveys. It is also possible to construct a three-point intensity measure in each of the four countries, although the wording of the intensity question varies slightly among the four cases.

Following these uniform methods of classification, the distribution of party identification shown in Table I is obtained for the largest sample cross-section survey in each of the four series. The number of non-identifiers (including both self-described Independents and those indicating no party attachment) varies from a high of 23% in the Netherlands to a low of 4% in Britain. The proportion of respondents reporting the strongest level of attachment possible within the limits of the survey questions varies from 18% in the Netherlands to 30% in Britain.<sup>4</sup> In both instances, Canada and the United States show a similar pattern and fall near the centre of the distribution. However, these national differences, which can easily be affected by question wording, need not greatly concern us, although they do serve to demonstrate the basic similarities across systems in the pattern of party identification when equivalent measures are employed. Of greater interest is the level of change

across time indicated within each of the four national panels, which can be more reliably measured because the question itself is constant across all three waves in each country.

## 2. MEASURING CHANGE

We begin by examining turnover across a pair of elections by the tabular method most often employed for this purpose. Perhaps surprisingly, the over-all level of stability in the four nations is similar (Table II), with Canada, the Netherlands and the United States displaying virtually identical proportions of their respective electorates that are stable with respect to *both* party identification and vote across a pair of national elections. The proportion in Britain exhibiting such stability between the 1970 and February 1974 elections is slightly higher than in the other three cases, but exactly equal to the level found by Butler and Stokes for the 1963–66 period. In spite of the similarity in over-all patterns of stability among the four nations, the differing patterns of linkage between party identification and vote come through clearly in the comparison. Party identification in total (considering the upper left and upper right cells together) is more stable in the United States than in Britain, in spite of the greater over-all level of stability (upper left cell only) in the latter country. *Only* the United States among the four displays the classic pattern of partisan stability coupled with vote switching to any great extent, and this cell (upper right) accounts for most of the variation in the American case.<sup>5</sup> As Butler and Stokes observed in the 1963–66 comparison, there is a greater tendency for party identification to travel with vote in Britain compared with the United States, but there is an even greater such tendency in Canada and the Netherlands, a pattern which has been noted in both countries in single-national studies (Jenson, 1975; Thomassen, 1976).

The failure of any of the other three countries to exhibit the American pattern of stable partisanship and variable vote, coupled with the tendency there of partisanship to travel with vote to a greater extent than in the United States does much to illuminate the unique characteristics of the American electoral environment and the special role that party identification tends to play in that setting. Nevertheless, the comparisons of  $2 \times 2$  patterns of party identification and vote shown in Table II are unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. Firstly, independents or non-identifiers are excluded from these comparisons, a fact which may be particularly significant in the Netherlands and the United States, both of these being party systems which contain many independents and/or 'leaning' party identifiers. The movement over time of non-identifiers or marginal identifiers may be an important source of change in these systems and should be examined. Converse (1966), for example, found that in the United States the proportion of respondents in the 1956–60 panel study moving between a party identification and independence was far greater than the percentage changing parties, and other analysts of American data such as Dobson and St. Angelo (1975) have routinely treated the movement of individuals between independence and identification as equivalent to partisan change. Further, the inclusion of all types of movement in the analysis helps to produce greater measurement equivalence for purposes of cross-national comparison. Cain and Ferejohn (1981) have shown that it is the inclusion of Liberal party identifiers in Britain in the analysis, combined with the exclusion of American

TABLE II. Turnover of party identification and vote in four two-wave election panels  
(diagonal percentages)

		(a) Britain (1970-74) Vote		(b) Canada (1974-79) Vote	
		stable	variable	stable	variable
Party Identification	stable	75	10	70	10
	variable	5	10	5	15
	N <sup>b</sup> =	795		841	
		(c) Netherlands (1971-72) Vote		(d) U.S.A. (1972-76) Vote <sup>a</sup>	
		stable	variable	stable	variable
Party Identification	stable	71	4	71	22
	variable	7	18	4	3
	N <sup>b</sup> =	449		539	

<sup>a</sup>For House of Representatives.

<sup>b</sup>Party identifiers and voters in both elections only.

independents, which accounts for the observed tendency of party identification to travel with vote in Britain to a greater extent than in the United States. Inclusion in the analysis of partisans and non-partisans alike in all countries will minimize the danger of conclusions which do not truly reflect national differences.

The same point may be made with regard to non-voting. In excluding non-voters from the analysis across pairs of elections as shown in Table II, we arbitrarily eliminate a potentially important source of electoral change. In Canada, for example, Clarke *et al.* (1979) show that movement into and out of the electorate is as important a source of variation in both individual voting behaviour and in electoral outcomes as is direct switching of votes. In the United States, which exhibits substantially higher levels of non-voting than the other three countries, the exclusion of non-voters may mask an important source of change, just as is the case with partisan independents. In any case, given that differences in voting turnout exist among the four countries, the inclusion of both voters and non-voters represents the most clearly defensible comparative analytic strategy.

Finally, it may be noted that the simple two-election comparisons shown in Table II, although useful for purposes of replication, do not take full advantage of available panel data. All of the studies employed in the analysis are three-wave panels, and two of these (Canada and the United States) contain data on voting behaviour collected in three separate national elections. The British and Dutch panels, while containing only two election study waves, each contain a third initial wave of interviews with data on party identification and vote intention. The full use of the three-wave panels has a number of advantages, the most important of which is that it permits the investigation of multiple patterns of movement. A respondent who

changes party identification, for example, may do so by means of first becoming an independent, e.g. old party → non-identification → new party, a pattern which is suggestive of either a two-stage process of realignment or of general partisan disintegration. In contrast, the pattern old party → non-identification → old party, although it likewise involves a reported change in each wave, clearly suggests only a short-term disaffection from partisanship and is inconsistent with any hypothesized process of realignment or de-alignment over time. In both cases, the two-wave panel will show simply a 'change' while the three-wave panel will provide additional clues to the particular nature of that change. The same will hold true with regard to the linkage between non-voting and vote switching across a series of elections. A process in which certain individuals continually move into and out of the electorate but never switch votes is clearly different to one in which individuals switch frequently or in which non-voting and switching combine in various ways.

As is seen in Table III, the inclusion of both non-voters and non-identifiers in the analysis and the use of all three panel waves provide considerable additional information on the movement of partisanship and vote across time in the four nations as well as a more reliable basis for cross-national comparison. Perhaps the most important single observation that can be made is that in all cases the proportion of national samples reporting a stable partisanship *and* vote over time (Table IIIc) is sharply reduced. In the United States and the Netherlands, for example, it is only

**TABLE III. Summary of turnover in party identification and vote in four three-wave panel studies**

	Britain 1969-70-74 (N = 421)	Canada 1974-79-80 (N = 791)	Netherlands 1970-71-72 (N = 711)	U.S.A. 1972-74-76 (N = 772)
<b>(a) Party identification</b>				
- maintaining the same party identification in three panel waves	64% <sup>a</sup>	59%	36%	68%
- changing party identification at least once	27	23	30	11
- moving to or from non-identification <sup>b</sup>	12	22	42	24
<b>(b) Voting behaviour<sup>c</sup></b>				
- voting for the same party in three elections	51%	49%	49%	39%
- switching at least once	33	33	34	30
- abstaining at <sup>d</sup> least once	23	24	22	39
<b>(c) Percent reporting the same party identification AND vote in three panel waves</b>				
	47%	41%	33%	33%

<sup>a</sup>Multiple response. Percentages total to more than 100% because categories are not mutually exclusive.

<sup>b</sup>Including respondents who report non-identification in all three waves (Netherlands: 6%, U.S.A.: 4%, Canada: 3%, Britain: less than 1%).

<sup>c</sup>Congressional vote for the United States and Second Chamber vote for the Netherlands. The 1969 British wave and the 1970 Dutch wave are vote intention reports.

<sup>d</sup>But excluding those respondents who report not voting in all three elections. This makes a significant difference only in the case of the United States, in which 18% of the total sample are three time non-voters.

33%, less than half the level suggested in Table II. Even in Britain, which is the country showing the highest combined stability of partisanship and vote, the percentage reporting perfect stability falls to 47%. Clearly, partisan and electoral stability, measured and analysed in this manner, is considerably less in all four nations than would otherwise be supposed. However, the specific reasons differ quite dramatically in each case. In the United States, the greater instability is due primarily to the high incidence of non-voting in that country. The percentage of American voters who report an actual switch in votes over three elections is slightly lower than in the other three countries, and the percentage reporting an outright change in party identification is markedly lower. But the very high rate of abstentions, coupled with the substantial degree of movement to non-identification across the panel, produces an electorate with a very high degree of discontinuity over time. In contrast the Netherlands, which shows equally high discontinuity, does not display unusually high rates either of vote switching or of abstention. Rather, the explanation in the Dutch case lies in the high level of movement to and from non-identification with parties. In part this reflects the tendency toward non-identification found in Dutch samples generally, although it should be noted that it is a dynamic rather than a static phenomenon. While 23% of the 1970 Dutch sample did not identify with any party (Table Ic), only 6% of the panel maintained a continuous position of non-identification across the three interviews, even though the period covered by the panel was little more than two years. This suggests that a party tie is more easily accepted and/or abandoned in the Netherlands than in the other three nations, perhaps, as the  $2 \times 2$  comparison originally suggested, tending to travel with vote. Were it not for this high incidence of non-identification, the patterns of change in the Netherlands would be little different from those found in Canada or Britain.

The British case is distinguished by a slightly higher over-all level of stability which is in turn brought about by the much lower tendency in Britain for respondents to move between partisanship and non-identification. The British sample contains the lowest proportion of independents at any single time point (Table Ia), and the number of respondents who maintain a position of non-identification continuously is negligible. Most British respondents report a party identification, even if not always the same one, throughout all three waves of the panel. The levels of partisan change, vote switching, and abstention in Britain are all comparable to those found in Canada and the Netherlands.

Canada, in some respects, represents the centre of the distribution. Its over-all level of partisan/vote stability is lower than in Britain, but higher than in the Netherlands or the United States. Levels of vote switching and abstention in Canada are comparable to those found in the other countries, and there is also substantial change in party identification and movement to and from non-identification across the three waves of the Canadian panel. Canada, like the other three nations, displays relatively high rates of change over this six-year period when all possible types of change are considered. Given that the Canadian federal party system is a relatively stable and enduring one, it is evident that its aggregate stability does not derive from any absence of change at the individual level. The same might generally be said of each of the four countries included in the analysis.

As noted earlier, it is possible to identify with three-wave panel data not only the levels of change as shown in Table III but also particular patterns of change. It is probably not possible over relatively short periods of time positively to isolate

patterns of realignment or de-alignment, but it is not difficult to identify certain patterns which are inconsistent with either of these phenomena. Respondents, for example, who abandon a party tie only to return to it a short time later are following a classic pattern of deviation, while those who do not return represent one of several possible patterns of positive change (realignment, de-alignment, volatility, etc.). Where the change occurs in the second wave of the panel, it is possible to use the third wave to attempt to confirm the nature of that change. Where the change is observed in the third wave, no information exists which would permit more specific classification of the nature of the change. The same sort of scrutiny can be applied to changes in partisanship and in voting behaviour, except that in the latter case it is necessary to provide a specific rule for the classification of non-voters. An individual who follows the voting pattern 'party A' → abstention → 'party B' has a positive change pattern which might be associated with volatility or realignment, while one who follows the pattern 'party A' → abstention → 'party A' seems more likely to represent a classic mobilization/demobilization pattern than one of positive change. It is possible then to distinguish with some degree of reliability in the three-wave panels two distinctive types of movement in party identification (*deviation* and *positive change*) and three distinctive types of movement in voting behaviour (*deviation*, *positive change*, and *mobilization/demobilization*). A regrouping of the data to identify these types of patterns for the four nations is shown in Table IV.

**TABLE IV. Specific stability/change patterns in partisanship and vote in four three-wave panels**

(column percentages)

	Britain 1969-70-74 (N = 422)	Canada 1974-79-80 (N = 854)	Netherlands 1970-71-72 (N = 810)	U.S.A. 1972-74-76 (N = 784)
<b>(a) Party identification</b>				
- no change	64%	59%	36%	68%
- deviation (change followed by return to former party)	7	8	10	8
- all positive change patterns <sup>a</sup>	16	25	38	15
- indeterminate changes (third wave only)	12	8	16	9
<b>(b) Voting behaviour<sup>b</sup></b>				
- no change <sup>c</sup>	51%	49%	49%	39%
- deviation (change followed by return to former party)	4	5	5	6
- mobilization/demob. (one or more abstentions but no other positive change) <sup>d</sup>	15	16	15	31
- all positive change patterns	20	24	21	15
- indeterminate changes (third wave only)	10	6	10	9

<sup>a</sup>Includes continuous non-identifiers (Netherlands: 6%, U.S.A.: 4%, Canada: 3%, Britain: less than 1%).

<sup>b</sup>Congressional vote for the United States and Second Chamber vote for the Netherlands. The initial British and Dutch waves are vote intention reports.

<sup>c</sup>Respondents who report abstention in all three waves are excluded from the analysis.

<sup>d</sup>Including third-wave non-voters who report no other change.



In each of the four countries, a modest amount of the change in both party identification and voting behaviour over time is accounted for by deviation, i.e. a change followed by a return to the former party. In spite of this, a segment of the electorate in all four countries (Table IVb) falls into a pattern termed 'positive change' with respect to electoral behaviour, i.e. a change that might conceivably represent a pattern of realignment or de-alignment of the electorate or that is at least a pattern of sustained volatility. The United States, however, stands out in two ways. It is, as noted earlier, the most stable country in terms of party identification and also shows the lowest incidence of 'positive change' in voting behaviour as well as in party identification. Secondly, the high level of non-voting in the United States is manifested largely in a 'mobilization/demobilization' pattern of electoral behaviour, i.e. movement into and out of the active electorate of persons whose behaviour is otherwise stable. At 31% (Table IVb), the United States is substantially higher than any of the other countries in the number of respondents displaying this pattern. In part, this is because of the tendency of voting participation in the United States to decline sharply in the 'off year' Congressional election.

In both of the comparisons, it is evident that the American pattern of stable partisanship coupled with fluctuation in vote, while not unique to the United States, occurs much more frequently in that country than in any other. It is also evident that all countries, including the United States, exhibit significant changes over time in both voting behaviour and party identification when all possible types of change are taken into account. For the most part, such changes are 'real' rather than mere lapses or temporary deviations in an otherwise stable pattern. Nevertheless, party identification is more stable than voting behaviour in all of the countries studied except the Netherlands, although it is only in the United States that it is a great deal more stable.

### 3. PARTY IDENTIFICATION AS A CROSS-TIME PREDICTOR

A useful way of summarizing these data and testing the efficacy of party identification in each of the four national cases is to measure its ability to predict behaviour over time. In theory, party identification as measured in the first wave of a panel study should be a good predictor of identification in subsequent waves. It should be a less efficient predictor of voting behaviour, although such correlations will be influenced by the extent to which party identification travels with vote as well as by the incidence of non-voting. It should not deteriorate over time with respect to either party identification or vote, to the extent that wavering voters or non-voters exhibit a 'homing' tendency. A test of these suppositions may be found in Table V, indicating the ability of party identification as measured in the first wave of the panels to predict party identification in the two subsequent waves and voting behaviour in all three waves. The statistic employed for this purpose is *lambda*, which indicates the proportionate reduction of error in prediction when the independent variable (in this case first-wave party identification) is known.<sup>6</sup>

As a predictor of party identification in subsequent waves, first-wave party identification functions significantly better in the United States than in the other three nations, with and without the inclusion of non-identifiers. Predictions are poorest for the Netherlands, and deteriorate significantly between the second and third waves when non-identifiers are included in the analysis, reflecting the high

**TABLE V. Predictive ability of first-wave party identification across three wave panels in four nations**

(Asymmetric lambda coefficients for all panel cases in each wave. Lambda coefficients for analysis which excludes non-identifiers and non-voters shown in parentheses.)

	Vote			Party Identification	
	first wave <sup>a</sup>	second wave	third wave	2nd wave	third wave
(a) Britain 1969-70-74	.66 (.72)	.47 (.67)	.45 (.56)	.61 (.70)	.53 (.59)
(b) Canada 1974-79-80	.54 (.77)	.38 (.52)	.35 (.50)	.43 (.58)	.44 (.60)
(c) Netherlands 1970-71-72	.72 (.90)	.47 (.65)	.40 (.55)	.42 (.67)	.40 (.51)
(d) U.S.A. (Congress) 1972-74-76	.29 (.58)	.14 (.51)	.24 (.45)	.56 (.80)	.58 (.79)
- presidential vote 1972-76	.16 (.27)	—	.33 (.54)	—	—

<sup>a</sup>Vote intention for Britain and Netherlands.

degree of movement in the Netherlands to and from non-identification. The correlations between first-wave party identification and vote, however, present an entirely different picture. The first-wave predictions are high in all cases *except* the United States, and exhibit significant deterioration across the three waves. The American predictions are much lower, even when non-voters and non-identifiers are excluded from the analysis. The correlation between party identification and vote in the 1972 U.S.A. presidential election is particularly low, suggesting the deviant nature of that election. In 1976, however, the correlation *rises* to .54 for identifiers and voters, a level about equal to that of the other three countries. Even for Congressional voting, the deterioration across the three panel waves is less for the United States than for the other countries.

The general pattern of high correlations between party identification in subsequent panel waves and low correlation between party identification and vote is that which is most easily associated with the American electoral and party system, and it is noteworthy that it is only the United States which persistently exhibits this pattern. In the other cases, the tendency of party identification to travel with vote produces high initial correlations but rapid deterioration as the various types of movement documented earlier begin to disrupt the predictive power of first-wave identification.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

It would be an overstatement to conclude from these analyses that party identification in the sense of an enduring psychological tie to a party is inapplicable outside the United States. Certainly, the electorates of all of the countries examined here contain a mix of partisan types, some of whom will conform very well to a classic reference group model of partisanship.<sup>7</sup> But there are two broad conclusions that are inescapable when the classic concept of party identification is re-examined in a cross-time, cross-national context. First is the fact that all electorates, including that

of the United States, display a substantial amount of change over relatively short periods of time when all possible types of change are taken into account. While a considerable amount of this change is to non-identification and/or non-voting, a not insignificant amount in all cases, and a quite substantial amount in the case of Canada and the Netherlands, is of a 'positive' quality, suggesting a continuing dynamic rather than a kind of 'steady state'. While the level of instability of party identification exceeds that of vote only in the case of the Netherlands, the level of instability in both is substantial in all of the cases examined.

Secondly, it should be noted that the American electoral environment appears to be unique in its ability to combine stable party identification with instability of vote, a phenomenon observed in no other case. The concept of party identification, which presumes such a combination as the norm, thus functions much more effectively in the United States than in systems where it displays a marked tendency to travel with the vote rather than to be independent of it. This conclusion is substantiated by the properties of party identification as a cross-time predictor in each of the countries examined here. Although there have been different interpretations regarding the stability of party identification over time in the United States, when statistics measuring cross-time stability of party identification and vote in the United States are examined alongside those for other countries, the unique aspects of the American relationship become more clearly evident.<sup>8</sup>

There is, of course, every reason why this should be expected. Budge and Farlie (1976), for example, found that party identification in the United States behaved in a unique manner in comparison with nine other nations when tested against socio-economic characteristics as a predictor of vote. It is also often noted that the United States exhibits a large number of unique institutional characteristics (frequent elections, long ballots, independent executive and legislature) and behavioural ones (low turnout, ticket splitting, etc.). To date, much of the research on party identification has been time-bound and nation-bound, limited to information collected in a single nation at a single point in time. As panel data have become available, the dynamic properties of party identification have become more evident and have engendered debate regarding its utility in electoral research. So too, the availability of comparable data for a number of nations has permitted new interpretations of the concept and its properties. But such findings do not in themselves challenge the validity and theoretical power of the party identification construct. Rather, they permit greater refinement of the concept and a deeper understanding of the ways in which it may or may not exhibit the same properties in a variety of political environments. It is only through such comparative and longitudinal inquiry that this understanding is possible.

## NOTES

- 1 The Canadian election studies were conducted by Harold Clarke, Jane Jenson, Lawrence LeDuc and Jon Pammett and financed by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The co-investigators are not responsible for the analysis and interpretation of the data presented here. The 1972-74-76 U.S. Panel Study was conducted by the Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, and made available by the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research and the S.S.R.C. Survey Archive, University of Essex. Neither the principal investigators nor the archives are responsible for the analysis or interpretations presented here. The author is grateful to Mr. Eric Roughley of the S.S.R.C. Survey Archive, University of Essex, for his assistance in subsetting these data.

- 2 The 1969 and 1970 waves of the British Election Study were conducted by David Butler and Donald Stokes, and the February 1974 wave was conducted by Ivor Crewe and Bo Särilvik. The data were made available to the author by the S.S.R.C. Survey Archive, University of Essex. Neither the principal investigators nor the archive are responsible for the analysis or interpretations presented here.
- 3 The 1970–73 Dutch Election Study was conducted by Felix Heunks, M. Kent Jennings, Warren Miller, Philip Stouthard, and Jacques Thomassen. The data were made available to the author by the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research and the S.S.R.C. Survey Archive. Neither the principal investigators nor the archives are responsible for the analysis or interpretations presented here.
- 4 These percentages are not identical to those derived by summation of Table I due to rounding.
- 5 If Presidential vote rather than Congressional vote is used the pattern holds, but the percentage reporting the same party identification and vote is slightly lower (68%). The other cells vary from those shown in Table II d by only 1% in each case.
- 6  $\Lambda$  is suitable for use with nominal scale data and its value is not affected by the number of categories (i.e. number of parties). Its upper limit is 1. See Mueller *et al.* (1970, 249–56).
- 7 A detailed attempt to partition the Canadian electorate in these terms may be found in Clarke *et al.* (1979, 301–19).
- 8 A thorough review of this literature, together with an analysis of the American panel data, may be found in Converse (1976).

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