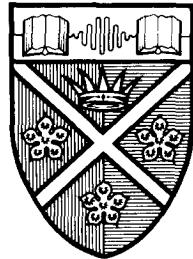


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## THE CONSUMPTION CLEAVAGE HERESY IN BRITISH VOTING STUDIES

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## THE CONSUMPTION CLEAVAGE HERESY IN BRITISH VOTING STUDIES \*

### ABSTRACT

In recent years the theory of consumption cleavages has progressed far towards supplanting traditional explanations of voting behaviour resting on socialization and issue-based electoral choice. What is not often realized is that the new theory cannot readily coexist with traditional explanations. If consumption cleavage theory is right then much of what we thought we understood about political behaviour is wrong, and the implications of this confrontation extend far beyond voting studies or even Political Science, to fields as diverse as Anthropology and Social Psychology. In this paper we argue that traditional explanations of voting choice have not been proved defective by the consumption cleavage theorists, and nor has the proposed replacement been proved superior in this field of study. We question the consumption cleavage heresy because its adoption would involve great sacrifices while offering little in return.

\* The authors would like to thank Michael Goldsmith and Peter Saunders for useful critical comments. The data analysed in sections 4 and 5 were derived from the British Election Study of 1979, directed by Ivor Crewe, David Robertson and Bo Sarlvik and made available by the SSRC Data Archive at the University of Essex.

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## 1. Introduction

In the past few years, the development and application of the concept of the "consumption cleavage" has become a modest growth industry in the social sciences. In general, the approach is attractive for two main reasons. First it claims to explain a wide range of political phenomena, from voting behaviour (Dunleavy 1979) and the process of individual attitude formation (Saunders 1982) to the formulation of national party programmes (Dunleavy 1980a: 78). Second, it appears to be highly innovative. It implies that for years political scientists have been examining political phenomena such as voting behaviour, employing concepts and terminology derived from a conception of the political and social conditions as they existed many years ago but which no longer obtain. Exponents of the consumption approach suggest that social scientists have largely overlooked the fundamental transformations in social structure that have taken place over the past twenty years or so (Dunleavy, 1980a: 57). The invoking of Marxist and Weberian theory in expositions of the consumption cleavage approach establishes a pedigree rather than detracts from the innovative features of the consumption approach.

The approach as applied to the wider field of urban studies shows great promise of asking new and interesting questions. However, when applied at its current level of theoretical

refinement to the study of voting behaviour, it seeks to give a new set of answers to old questions, and in doing so casts doubt upon the validity of orthodox approaches to the explanation of individual voting intentions. This doubt undermines a number of the most important "middle range" theoretical propositions established in the past thirty years of careful empirical research. Our understanding of such important concepts as issue saliency and integration, and such important relationships as that between social stratification and political cleavages (insofar as these affect voting behaviour) are both put into question by the consumption cleavage approach. Above all, our understanding of the nature and function of socialization processes, by which we mean the influence of social milieu in communicating values, attitudes and patterns of behaviour from person to person not only during childhood but throughout adult life as well (see Kavanagh, 1983: 47), cannot survive intact in the face of the alternative view of political processes inherent in the consumption cleavage approach. Despite a lack of coherent exposition within political science (Marsh, 1971), socialization theory is arguably the most important middle range social theory to have gained prominence in recent years; and if it is brought into question, so too are the major findings of recent scholarship which are based upon our understanding of this theory, not only in political science but in sociology, anthropology and social psychology as well.

It is for this reason that we employ the word "heresy", a

challenge to orthodoxy, in the title of this paper. The consumption cleavage approach to electoral behaviour puts into question a wide range of "orthodox" doctrines in political and other social studies. If the approach is a valid one, then many other approaches and findings become open to doubt. One of the purposes of this paper is to make clear how incompatible the approach is with the existing orthodoxy of electoral research, so as to emphasize the need for exponents of other approaches to take it seriously and assess it carefully. Up until now, the consumption cleavage approach has been treated as little more than an interesting alternative view of political processes, possibly yielding insights that were not available on the basis of more conventional approaches, and perhaps providing a replacement for social class as "the basis of British politics". However, the future prospects for the approach appear to be bright since it is beginning to gain a substantial following. It is not altogether fanciful at this stage to suggest that the consumption cleavage heresy stands a running chance of becoming the new orthodoxy.

A heresy is not necessarily wrong. Existing knowledge might be wrong, and consumption cleavage theory could be right. But if we are to embrace it as the new orthodoxy in explaining electoral behaviour, it is important for us to know three things. (a) Does it have theoretical advantages in terms of elegance and parsimony over the theories it replaces? (b) Does it provide an adequate replacement for the knowledge it supersedes, in terms

of explaining those phenomena which were adequately explained by previously existing theories? (c) Does it explain phenomena that cannot be explained by existing theories? Affirmative answers to the first and last of these questions could still leave the theory inadequate in important respects; and we might ultimately eschew consumption cleavage theory simply because more (or more important) phenomena are explained by existing theories.

In the remainder of this article we set out our understanding of the term consumption cleavage and introduce some general problems in the conceptualisation of this term (section 2). In section 3 we focus specifically on the question of electoral behaviour and suggest that the consumption approach does not adequately set out how "objective" differences in life chances associated with these cleavages are translated into party preferences. In section 4 we examine whether the approach explains additional aspects of voting behaviour that existing theories do not, and in section 5 we offer a critical test of the value of consumption cleavages in electoral studies. In offering criticisms of the consumption cleavage approach to voting behaviour we are not seeking to undermine the whole endeavour of exploring the social and political consequences of different modes of consumption and dependence upon state services. Neither are we suggesting that the electoral implications of consumption differences are to be doubted on a priori grounds. Rather we are suggesting that the way in which consumption cleavage theory is now being applied in the field of

electoral studies forces us to accept with little justification a particular view of the relationship between objective interests and voter preferences which is incompatible with orthodox theories of party choice.

## 2. The consumption cleavage approach

Contemporary theory of consumption cleavages emerged within Marxist urban theory which expressed dissatisfaction with the notion that the distinction between capital and labour was the sole determining cleavage for social and political conflict (see Castells, 1978; and also Saunders, 1981 for a discussion of the origins of the consumption cleavage approach in urban studies). While traditional Marxist theory postulated that it was the relationship to the means of production that was crucial in determining social and political conflicts, authors such as Castells argued that collective consumption processes also create cleavages. Transport, education, health and especially housing are the most important of the processes of collective consumption. The theory goes on to suggest that the location of an individual within this process helps to determine the manner in which he or she will be affected by state policies concerning

these goods and services.

The key distinction within a consumption process is whether one is dependent upon the state for the provision of this good or service, through public housing, education, transport and the National Health Service, or whether one makes provision for consumption within the private sector through owning ones own house and car, or by paying for a private health insurance scheme and one's children's education. So location in a consumption process mainly refers to the distinction between those who depend primarily upon state services and those who do not. As Dunleavy states:

The most important implication of the growth of the public services for the social structure has been the emergence of sectoral cleavages in consumption processes, by which we may understand social cleavages created by the existence of public and private ... modes of consumption (1980a: 70-71).

A policy, for example, of maintaining the tax relief that an individual may have gained for his mortgage is in the interests of owner occupiers, and attempts to remove it are against these interests. In short, policy decisions in each of the major consumption areas frequently pose questions involving conflicting interests, benefiting those in one consumption location, as it were, against those in another.

However, there is no great consistency in defining what "collective consumption" actually is, among different authors. For example, Dunleavy defines a "collective consumption process" as one in which an individual receives a service which is collectively organized and managed, allocated according to non-market criteria, or paid for partly out of taxes (1980a: 52-3), while Saunders (1981: 261) attempts to be rather more specific by broadly accepting Dunleavy's definition but excluding "resources that cost the state nothing to provide" such as (in his view) the National Trust, and "resources that function more in the interests of capital than directly as a support to the working population", such as transport. Even within the writings of individuals there is a certain lack of consistency. Saunders' initial reservations about including public transport as a source of cleavage appears subsequently to have been overcome (Saunders 1982: 21). In Dunleavy's definition, which probably offers the most amenable guide to empirical electoral research, it is difficult to see precisely how his checklist was derived other than out of intuition. More importantly, Dunleavy's definition would appear to exclude the consumption process that he and others regard as crucial, housing. Since it is not a "service" it therefore belongs to the realm of "commodity consumption" (1980a: 53). Nevertheless, there is some consistency about which specific services appear to constitute a collective consumption process, and we have already listed transport, education, health and especially housing as the most important of these, so it is perhaps

possible to overlook definitional inconsistencies in practice.

This is, in short, our understanding of what a consumption cleavage is. It differentiates between people dependent upon the state for certain services and people who make private provision for the same or similar services. These can be treated as coherent groups since individuals in the same consumption location will be affected in similar ways by state policies and, at least objectively, they will share the same interests in regard to these policies.

### 3. Consumption Cleavages and Electoral Behaviour

Undoubtedly there is strong evidence to suggest that consumption cleavages affect individuals' life chances. However, how do these objective inequalities in life chances affect voting behaviour? Dunleavy's analysis suggests that they serve to fragment the class divisions based upon production, and produce voter alignments based upon consumption cleavages. So much does he hold this to be the case that "the independent effect of consumption locations on voting appears to be comparable to, indeed slightly greater than, the effects of social grade" (Dunleavy 1980: 79). While Dunleavy does not fully reject the validity of explaining voting behaviour in terms of production-

based voter alignments, he argues that "voters can be seen as aligned instrumentally towards the party most clearly identified with the interests of their consumption location" (1980: 78). But there are empirical problems in operationalizing this insight which consumption cleavage theorists have not addressed.

The more specific proposition that there is "now strong evidence to suggest that home ownership now plays a very significant role both as a basis for political action and in shaping political responses to broader issues beyond simply housing policy" (Saunders 1982: 8) is fine as long as consumption locations do not produce cross-cutting cleavages; but as soon as one looks beyond home ownership to the other consumption processes that bifurcate into state and private provision, it is hard to see how consumption theorists can reconcile the different political responses to broader issues that might be found, for example, in the large number of people who own a car and rent from a local authority. Thirteen percent of the Essex 1979 election sample of 1893 individuals fell into this category, while a further seventeen percent were home owners without private transport.

When more than one consumption location has been employed in the same analysis, some researchers (eg. Edgeell and Duke, 1983) have simply created an additive index of the number of private (or state) consumption processes each person engages in. Others (eg. Dunleavy) have created an implicit typology of contingent locations. Either procedure amounts to measuring the extent to

which individuals approximate to the "ideal type" at one or other extreme of these processes. This might seem reasonable, especially since it is the same procedure as has been adopted by analysts of conventional class effects (eg Rose, 1974: 510) for many years; but it is not reasonable where the perception of consumption locations and their implications is supposed to be automatic. Class effects can be added, because they operate in the context of a socialization theory that relates attitudes to the number of face-to-face contacts of different types that regularly occur for different individuals. Someone with several working class characteristics mixes with more working class individuals than another person with fewer such characteristics. Indeed the fact that these effects are additive serves to confirm that socialization mechanisms do apply in the realm of voting studies. But the socialization mechanism is explicitly eschewed by the consumption theorists, as we shall see below, so it is not clear why different consumption locations should operate on individual attitudes in an additive fashion. If each of the conflicting locations is supposed to have policy implications obvious enough as to require no intervention by other individuals to make them clear, then it would seem more reasonable to suppose that conflicting consumption locations would lead to severe cross pressures and even to psychological distress in the form of cognitive dissonance, which should in turn (if the psychologists are to be believed) lead to withdrawal from the source of distress: in this case withdrawal from the political arena. So only "ideal type" state or private

consumers would participate in politics, which is contrary to casual observation and to the data presented by the consumption theorists (see for example Edgell and Duke, 1983). It has even been suggested (Le Grand 1982: 109) that we might expect cross-pressures to operate among those classified in the same location on a single consumption cleavage. Those more affluent people who gain most from subsidies to public transport (i.e. by making heavy use of rail services) are also likely to be motorists.

Moreover there is a profound theoretical problem involved in asserting that even objectively valid social cleavages lead inevitably to political cleavages; and this is where the conflict between the consumption cleavage approach and existing theories of electoral behaviour becomes apparent. Existing research provides no evidence to support the presence of a mechanism which would ensure that people became aware of their "objective" interests, Dunleavy's interesting but ultimately impressionistic construction of "dominant perceptions" of interests notwithstanding (see Dunleavy 1980a: 74-75). Indeed, even Marxists recognize this problem in the form of "false consciousness" and admit the need to mobilize the masses into an understanding of the nature of their true interests. So while there can be little doubt that consumption locations create different social groupings in this country, and so can be seen as a factor contributing towards social stratification, there is no necessary link between stratification of this kind and

political cleavages.

The term "cleavage" implies, at least in the context of political science, a social or cultural attribute which defines the protagonists in a political conflict. Thus one might speak of a class cleavage or a religious cleavage shaping the ideologies of parties in a political system, as well as defining their potential supporters (Duverger, 1954). That not all potential bases for political cleavage are actually found within empirically observable political conflicts underlies Schattschneider's discussion (1960) of the "mobilization of bias", as a means of determining which conflicts are actually given political expression. Indeed, one of the distinctive contributions that political science has made to the social sciences has been in its treatment of the relationship between social stratification and political cleavages, especially electoral alignments, as problematic. Scholars such as Sartori (1969), Rokkan (1970) and Kirchheimer (1966) stress a variety of factors which mediate the expression of social cleavages in political conflicts, ranging from the conditions prevailing at certain periods in a nation's history when the social cleavage emerged, to the behaviour of political elites who seek to build support by either exploiting or playing down the objective cleavages within an existing social structure. We must, therefore, be cautious when identifying a "new" basis for social stratification about ascribing to it the ability to determine the nature of political conflicts.

This caution required in equating social differences with political conflicts does not appear in the consumption approach to electoral behaviour. We have already pointed out that Dunleavy regards voters as being "instrumentally aligned" to parties as a consequence of their consumption location. This problem also appears to apply to the consumption approach, at least at its current level of theoretical and empirical refinement, even outside the field of electoral studies. Saunders makes his assumption that social divisions must have political consequences quite explicit:

Because (consumption sector) cleavages are in principle no less important than class divisions in understanding contemporary social stratification, and because housing plays such a key role in affecting life chances, in expressing identity (by virtue of the capital gains accruing to owner occupiers) in modifying patterns of resource distribution and economic inequality, it follows that the question of home ownership must remain as central to the analysis of social divisions and political conflicts (1982: 13. Our emphasis).

The assumption made is that because these consumption locations appear to be important for the well-being of individuals, they must of necessity be politically important also. We agree with Sartori (1969) that such crude sociological determinism is

problematic in the study of political cleavages.

There are in fact two ways in which orthodox political science would seek to link a potential basis for political cleavage with an actually observable political conflict. The first of these is through the cleavage manifesting itself in terms of an issue of high salience, which is integrated into the party system in such a way as to make it possible for party choice to be based upon it (Campbell et al., 1960; Butler and Stokes, 1974). The second is through a socialization process whereby the individuals comprising each group separated by the cleavage in question are led to identify with each other in opposition to those in the other group, so that the cleavage becomes a means of reinforcing other differences (especially political differences) between the two groups (cf. Lijphart 1975).

In the case of issue saliency, the mechanism requires that the issue be more salient than alternative issues competing for the attention of the electorate, and also that political parties be perceived as taking different stances on the issue in question. These two preconditions may indeed have existed at times for issues related to consumption cleavages, but they are not consistently present. In fact, in 1979 (the first occasion on which respondents to one of the Essex post-election surveys were asked to rank housing as an issue in relation to other issues of importance to them in deciding how to vote) only 8.6 per cent of respondents ranked it as "the most important question". This

compares with 9.1 per cent placing the European community in first place, 12.3 per cent placing nationalisation in first place and 15.1 per cent placing wages in first place as issues that would help to determine their vote.

In the case of socialization, the mechanism involved concerns the tendency of individuals to mimic the behaviour of those who surround them. So a child growing up in working class surroundings is likely to absorb the values and mimic the preferences prevalent in those surroundings. And in adulthood these values and preferences will either be reinforced by surroundings consonant with those of childhood, or diluted by influences that contrast with those of early socialization. This mechanism is explicitly rejected by Dunleavy who finds it unreasonable to suppose "that political alignment brushes off by rubbing shoulders in the street" (Dunleavy, 1979: 413).

Indeed, in the case of housing it is logically necessary for Dunleavy to deny its importance in socializing individuals into particular party preferences. For if this is the mechanism by which the housing cleavage becomes politicized, then there is no need to suppose that perceptions of objective interests have any part to play in the process. The fact that the dominant class ethos differs between different types of housing, as demonstrated by Butler and Stokes (1974: 110), would be sufficient to explain the importance of housing in structuring voting choice. Of course, perception of interests might play

a part in this, but only to the extent that the issue was salient, as already discussed.

Dunleavy's characterisation of the socialization process is not, of course, the same as the way in which researchers in the orthodox tradition describe the mechanism they think is at work. Writers such as Rose (1980), or Butler and Stokes (1974), would stress the role of face-to-face contacts in socialization processes, with individuals copying the attitudes of those with whom they live and work in much the same way as they might copy patterns of dress and speech, as a consequence of the deep-seated human desire for conformity. This is the same mechanism first detailed in William Graham Sumner's Folkways (1916) which underpins most of learning theory in Social Psychology, the study of mores in Anthropology and small group theory in Sociology; before we even start to list the ways in which contemporary Political Science is beholden to it for our understanding of participation, legislative norms, the bureaucratic phenomenon and presidential decision-making, to mention only a few high points. Nevertheless, this has to be the target that Dunleavy has in mind. The more general phenomenon of "contagion" to which the quoted passage explicitly refers is no more than the combined impact of many socializing forces at work to reinforce each other in socially homogeneous communities (Butler and Stokes, 1974: 133).

Indeed, Dunleavy states elsewhere (1980c) that the purpose of

his structural model was "to break out of dominant social psychological models of voting in which alignment is seen as produced by an individual-level process of value formation". We will show in Section 4 that socialization theory provides an alternative explanation of much of what consumption theorists claim for their own approach. Unless socialization theory is rejected, one cannot show that different consumption locations represent any more than an as yet unrealized potential basis for electoral choice.

So issue analysis and socialization theory are both incompatible with the consumption cleavage approach to voting behaviour: the first because it brings with it a test which is not in general passed by the cleavage in question, and the second because it provides an alternative explanation of the social processes that consumption cleavage theory sets out to explain. The consumption cleavage approach is a heresy because it requires that we reject orthodox approaches to understanding how social cleavages become political cleavages. Furthermore the orthodox explanations are based upon approaches and assumptions widely shared throughout a variety of disciplines within social science. To cast doubt upon the pre-existing orthodoxy in British voting studies is to throw into question our understanding of how children learn to speak (Howe, 1981), how social culture is transmitted (Pateman, 1980) and why American Forest Rangers follow certain norms of behaviour that are neither established in law nor overtly enforced (Kaufman, 1967).

But to point out a heresy is not to dispose of it. If we leave the question of issue analysis aside for the moment, the fact that socialization theory cannot coexist with consumption cleavages as an explanation of current voting behaviour does not tell us which one is wrong.

#### 4. How well do consumption cleavages explain voting behaviour?

One test for a new theory is that it explains the world at least as well as the theory it seeks to supplant. When applied as an explanation of electoral behaviour, consumption cleavage theory fails this test. The failure is not evident in Dunleavy's presentation, since he focusses on the effects of particular conjunctions of characteristics rather than on the extent to which voting behaviour as a whole is explained by those characteristics. Thus he points out that home-owning households with two cars are 4.39 times more likely to vote Conservative than respondents renting from a local authority with no car (Dunleavy, 1979, Table 10). This is slightly larger than the largest differences in the chances of voting conservative between middle class and working class social grades (4.12 in the same table). What he fails to point out is that there are

relatively few households with two or more cars, compared to the number of middle class individuals, so the powerful effect only helps us understand a small part of what is to be explained.

If a socialization theorist were to choose the same approach as that employed by Dunleavy, he could demonstrate far more apparently impressive effects. The chances of voting Conservative among individuals all of whose face-to-face contacts appear to have occurred in working class contexts was a mere ten percent in 1979, while their chances of voting Labour was fully ninety per cent. This represents a difference in chances at least twice as great as that between two-car owning homeowners and carless council tenants (our analysis is presented in more detail in Section 5). But the comparison is clearly meaningless because of the very small number of individuals all of whose social circumstances have reinforced each other in this way.

We have no reason to suppose that Dunleavy intended to mislead us with his empirical findings. However, his analysis does mislead because the multivariate technique he employs (known as log-linear modelling) focusses on the effects of particular combinations of characteristics, rather than on the extent to which these effects succeed in explaining voting behaviour. The implications of different analysis techniques for research findings in voting studies are detailed in Franklin and Mughan (1978) and in Franklin (forthcoming). When the alternative

technique of multiple regression is employed, the ability of housing and car ownership to explain voting choice in 1979 does not exceed 12 per cent of variance, whereas the extent of variance explained in voting choice by the six most powerful socialization variables exceeds 25 per cent (see below).

There are of course problems involved in comparisons of this kind. One derives from the fact that the socialization variables normally employed in explaining voting choice include measures of childhood home environment (parents' party and parents' class) which may well overstate the connection between background characteristics and present party preference because of the possibility that respondents 'remember' a class and party background consistent with their present preferences. Error in recall of childhood characteristics has never been systematically measured to our knowledge, but even if it does not exceed the error in recall of past voting preferences (Katz, Niemi and Newman, 1980), it might still overstate the influence of childhood home environment. A second problem derives from the fact that there are more socializing variables available for analysis than consumption cleavage variables. One way to overcome this problem is to introduce additional consumption cleavage variables into the analysis, beyond those employed by Dunleavy. For example, we might add telephone ownership and private medical insurance to home ownership and car ownership, giving us four consumption cleavage variables to match the four socializing variables that are left if early home environment is

omitted. When the variance explained by these four consumption cleavage variables is compared with that explained by education and adult socializing variables, the socializing variables still come out ahead, explaining seventeen percent of variance in voting choice compared with thirteen percent by the consumption cleavage variables.

But there is a more fundamental problem inherent in these comparisons. So far we have not mentioned the identity of the adult socialization variables. They are in fact occupation, union membership and housing. Yes, the housing variable plays a major part in our understanding of adult socialization as well as being critical to consumption cleavage theory. In both cases it is the best predictor of partisanship when recalled party preference of parents is omitted. Whether it is interpreted as a socializing variable or as a measure of consumption location is a matter of theory, not data analysis; and so the extent of variance it can explain is not helpful in assessing the relative merits of the two approaches. Consumption cleavage theorists assert that the power of housing to determine partisanship derives from its central position in defining the major political cleavage of the day. Socialization theorists assert that its power derives from the increasing importance of the adult home environment in comparison to childhood or workplace environments. They point out that increasing leisure time and above all increasing stratification of neighbourhoods into homogeneous groups of housing, either privately owned or rented

from a Local Authority, have served to make social contacts around the location of the home a more influential factor than in the past (Rose, 1974). Because of the ambiguous nature of the home ownership variable, any critical test of consumption cleavage theory must depend on evaluating the ability of other cleavage variables to explain what socialization variables cannot explain.

##### 5. A Critical Test of Consumption Cleavage Theory

Even though consumption cleavages explain less variance in voting behaviour than do socialization variables, there are two reasons why proponents might nevertheless prefer the new theory. The first is aesthetic. The new theory might appear more pleasing or more elegant than existing theories and be preferred by some for this reason. We cannot address this question other than by pointing out (as we have tried to do above) theoretical deficiencies in the approach, and the costs of preferring it, in terms of throwing existing knowledge into question. But a second reason for preferring the new theory would arise from the ability of consumption cleavages to explain anything at all that could not be explained on the basis of existing theory.

A critical test to determine whether cleavages explain anything

left unexplained by existing theory is to perform a multiple regression analysis in which cleavage variables are included along with other variables deriving from existing theory. Even though the two sets of variables may not be able to coexist from a theoretical point of view, there is no reason why such a test cannot be employed to determine whether there is anything at all left unexplained in conventional analyses that can be explained under the new approach. And when we start by adding the four cleavage variables employed earlier in this paper to a full set of socialization variables, the results appear promising for the new theory.

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TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE  
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Table 1 shows that when consumption cleavage variables are included in a stepwise multiple regression analysis along with socialization variables, one of them does enter into the equation, explaining variance over and above what the socializing variables alone can explain. Indeed, car ownership enters twice into the equation, once in the guise of the general concept, and again in terms of owning more than a single car (the variable that performed so well in Dunleavy's analyses). The two together add 1.6 per cent to the variance that could be explained without them in 1979, yielding strong support for the supposition that there is some mechanism by which car owners do

TABLE 1 Increments to variance explained in voting choice by means of stepwise regression predictions from socialization and consumption cleavage variables, 1979.

Independent variable	R	R2	Change in R2
Parents' party	.366	.134	.134
R's home	.438	.193	.058
R in union	.466	.217	.025
Any cars in r's family	.485	.235	.017
Parents' class	.495	.245	.010
R's occupation	.501	.251	.006
Two cars in r's family	.505	.256	.005

TABLE 2 Increments to variance explained in voting choice by means of stepwise regression predictions from socialization, issue and cleavage variables, 1979.

Independent variable	R	R2	Change in R2
R pro-Conservative	.737	.543	.543
R pro-Labour	.796	.633	.090
Parents' party	.806	.650	.016
R's home	.811	.658	.008
R in union	.813	.661	.003
Any cars in r's family	.814	.663	.001

become aware of their interests beyond what can be explained by socializing mechanisms.

However, we have not yet exhausted the ability of traditional science to explain voting choice, for we have not entered issue-based preferences for the political parties into our analysis. Other evidence has shown the importance of issues to have increased in determining voting choice (Franklin, 1983), and it is quite likely that car ownership is associated with distinctive issue preferences in areas quite unrelated to transport policy: indeed this is what consumption theorists claim.

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TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE  
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Table 2 shows that when the cleavage variables are entered into a regression analysis along with issue-based preferences for political parties in addition to socializing influences, they add nothing to the variance that can be explained without them. When attempts are made to "force" the consumption cleavage variables into an equation containing socializing and issue variables, the best of them adds only one tenth of one percent to variance explained.

The issue-based preferences measured in the two variables

"Respondent pro-Labour" and "Respondent pro-Conservative" in Table 2 are derived from examination of the characteristics of twenty five issue areas included in the 1979 Essex post-election study. A score was generated from the number of times each respondent preferred the Labour party because of its stance on an issue they considered salient (Respondent pro-Labour) as opposed to the number of times they preferred the Conservative party in this fashion (Respondent pro-Conservative). The variables were then normalized to take account of differing numbers of issues considered salient by each respondent as described in Franklin (1983). These measures are, of course, highly contaminated by pre-existing party identification, so the high extent of variance explained should be taken with a pinch of salt. Extensive analysis is required in order to gauge the actual extent of issue voting in 1979, as reported in Franklin (1983). Nevertheless, these variables are shown in Table 2 to displace the cleavage variables from the regression equation. So the issue variables have to be viewed as intervening in any model that seeks to evaluate the impact of consumption cleavages.

This observation does not rule out a view that would give primacy to consumption cleavages in structuring attitudes relating to political parties, but merely makes it clear that consumption cleavage theory can only add to the quality of an explanation, not to the extent of the phenomena that we can explain. It is by way of their impact on issue preferences that

the consumption cleavage variables must be operating, if they are having any effect at all. However, the cleavage variables do not go very far towards explaining the extent of pro-Labour and pro-Conservative policy evaluations. Table 3 shows the degree of inter-correlation of these two policy variables with a variety of individual policy preferences as well as with our four cleavage variables. It shows clearly that although housing, in its usual ambiguous way, does correlate with pro-Labour and pro-Conservative issue stances, no other consumption cleavage variable correlates even as well as 0.2 with either stance. This is in contrast to considerably more powerful correlations with more conventional issues. The finding is hardly surprising given the low salience in electoral terms of all the consumption cleavage variables. We expect salience to be one of the pre-conditions of issue-based party choice, and our scoring variables were constructed on this basis.

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TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE  
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So consumption cleavage theory does not explain anything that cannot be explained with existing theoretical constructs, and particularly socialization together with issue voting. Moreover, even as a structuring concept which attempts to explain policy preferences on a wide range of issues, it appears to have little to offer.

TABLE 3 Intercorrelations (Pearson's  $r$ ) between issue-based party preferences and cleavage and issue variables, 1979. \*

Cleavage/issue	RPC	RPL	Cleavage/issue	RPC	RPL
R's home	.233	.178	Any cars	.190	.108
Two cars	.194	.108	Med insurance	.162	.100
Telephone	.133	.086			
Abortion	.048	.003	Armament cuts	.254	.208
Countryside	.032	.056	Communist threat	.136	.136
Comprehensives	.412	.383	Wealth	.409	.349
EEC policies	.228	.186	Social welfare	.341	.300
Foreign aid	.112	.115	Health	.136	.109
Immigration	.149	.188	Job creation	.396	.364
Land ownership	.330	.316	Nationalization	.449	.418
Workers	.260	.245	Poor	.178	.181
Pornography	.002	.018	Race equality	.132	.131
Race relations	.087	.111	Sex equality	.114	.097
Social services	.347	.301	Tax vs service	.235	.173
Teachers	.241	.194	Trade union law	.423	.408
Wages	.014	.029			

\* RPC = Respondent pro Conservative on issues

RPL = Respondent pro Labour on issues

None of this is to deny the manifest potential of consumption cleavages to structure partisanship should they become politicized, either through one of the well-understood mechanisms of orthodox political science or through some new mechanism as yet undemonstrated. All we are saying is that there is no evidence that the bias (in Schattschneider's terms) inherent in this cleavage has yet been mobilized. In claiming too much of consumption cleavage theory in the electoral sphere, Dunleavy in particular has been led to discount the validity of the very indicators we need to watch in monitoring the progress of these important developments.

#### 6. Conclusions

A common enough characterisation of the progress of science from one paradigm to another would look something like this. First, an individual or group becomes dissatisfied with an existing dominant paradigm of thought because of its perceived inadequacies -- often its failure to account for particular phenomena. Second, a competing paradigm is elaborated which explains the phenomena in question, in addition to explaining most (preferably all) of the other phenomena accounted for by the old paradigm. Third, although the competing paradigm is

initially opposed by the scientific establishment, it becomes increasingly attractive to a growing number of scientists, and eventually gains enough support to become the new dominant paradigm.

The stimulus for the present paper arose from a feeling that in the space of a brief four years the consumption cleavage heresy has virtually reached stage three in the progression we have outlined, receiving growing support from influential political scientists, without having properly passed through stages one and two on the way. In this paper we have sought to rein back this headlong advance, by enquiring what was wrong with the previous dominant paradigm, and in what way the new one can claim superiority.

In urban studies, where the consumption cleavage approach first made its appearance, it is not clear that there was any clearly definable existing orthodoxy. The approach, in this context, arose from the quest for an adequate definition of "the urban" and remains one among a variety of contending approaches. With no clear orthodoxy to challenge, the approach does not, according to our definition, constitute much of a heresy in this sphere. Hence we have largely ignored the contribution made by consumption cleavages to the field in which they originated, despite the possibility that the approach will eventually be seen as a major theoretical innovation in this field.

By contrast, from the perspective of voting behaviour, the consumption cleavage approach does challenge a pre-existing orthodoxy, probably more fundamentally than is generally appreciated. And yet the cause for dissatisfaction with that orthodoxy is not clear. Superficially it might appear that dissatisfaction arose from the perceived failure of the previous orthodoxy to account for the decline in class voting. However, there are a variety of explanations for this decline within the existing orthodoxy which have yet to be challenged (eg. Franklin, 1982, 1983 and forthcoming). Looking at it more carefully, the dissatisfaction does not arise from any failure of the pre-existing orthodoxy to explain events. Rather one gets the impression at times that the objections stem from a dissatisfaction with the origins of orthodox explanations. These explanations were not derived from general theories of social and political change and conflict, but instead "stress ... narrowly political explanations of alignments which are largely divorced from any broader understanding of social processes" (Dunleavy 1980c: 402).

It seems to be the wish for a more general theory of polity and society rather than any specific dissatisfaction with existing orthodoxy in electoral behaviour that generates the perceived need to reject it. Thus, the consumption cleavage approach to electoral behaviour by-passes the first stage of our characterisation of scientific progress without really specifying what is wrong with the existing orthodoxy, short of

expressing a desire for a degree of perfection which no single social theory, not even consumption cleavage theory, can satisfy.

We have devoted much space to describing shortcomings in the elaboration of consumption cleavage theory as a replacement for the pre-existing orthodoxy (the second stage of our characterisation of scientific progress). It has internal theoretical inconsistencies amounting to a failure to define precisely what a consumption cleavage is, and the theory provides no means to understand how social cleavages are transformed into political cleavages. Indeed, some recourse to the pre-existing orthodoxy appears to be necessary in order to bridge this gap. But a component in the pre-existing orthodoxy, in the specific form of socialization theory, appears to offer better answers to the same questions that consumption cleavage theory seeks to answer, if by "better" we are satisfied with a more complete explanation of observed phenomena.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of any proven need for a new approach, and despite manifest shortcomings in the new approach that has been offered, we appear to have curiously moved on to the third stage of our characterisation of scientific progress, in which the new consumption cleavage approach is gaining more widespread support. Its appearance in an attractive new textbook for school and university students (Drucker et al., 1983) as well as its currency among researchers in the field of

voting behaviour, indicate that it may well increase its support. In view of this, our suggestion that it might become the new orthodoxy is far from fanciful.

In objecting, at this stage, to the establishment of a new orthodoxy, we may easily be cast in the role of the establishment figures in our characterization of scientific progress, who object to a new orthodoxy for no better reason than that it is new. This is not the case. What we are questioning is not primarily the consumption cleavage approach to the study of voting choice, but the fact that a pre-existing approach with a good record of yielding insights into political behaviour in many spheres is being thrown into disrepute. The attack on the pre-existing orthodoxy is not based on demonstrating its defects as a means of explaining political phenomena, and neither has its proposed replacement been shown superior in this respect. Indeed, quite the contrary. We cannot accept the consumption cleavage approach to British voting studies at its current level of sophistication because in adopting it we would sacrifice much of our hard-won understanding of the mainsprings of political action, while gaining little in return.

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