political choice. Given that much of the early research was conducted largely, although not exclusively, by sociologists whose interests focussed on group influences on the individual, the emphasis on social groups and community contexts does not surprise. For example, groups and contexts figured prominently in the studies of the 1940 and 1948 presidential elections in Erie County, Ohio (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948) and Elmira, New York (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954), and the 1950–1 and 1955 general elections in the constituency of Bristol North-East (Milne and Mackenzie 1954, 1958; Milne 1959/1977). However, methodological and theoretical changes accompanied the shift of the locus of electoral research projects from the Office of Radio Research at Columbia to the Survey Research Center at Michigan. National sample surveys became the primary tool of data collection, and social–psychological or 'motivational' explanations of vote choice replaced the earlier emphasis on demographic characteristics and community contexts (Rossi 1959). Major early examples of research employing social–psychological approaches were the nationwide studies of the 1952, 1956, and 1960 American presidential elections by Angus Campbell and his colleagues (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954; Campbell et al. 1960). The Michigan style of electoral research was soon exported to other countries including Britain. In the early 1960s, David Butler and Donald Stokes brought Michigan's election-study tool kit from Ann Arbor to Nuffield to conduct their pioneering studies of the 1964, 1966, and 1970 general elections (Butler and Stokes 1969; see also Butler and Stokes 1971, 1976).

In the sociological framework, *social characteristics*, such as class, ethnicity, gender, or race, anchor political preferences and, since the former change slowly, if at all, the dynamics of the latter must be constrained as well. But, analytical approaches involving social characteristics and *social contexts* overlap since both rely on social interaction and social identification to explain the communication and mobilization successes or failures of parties and other political organizations. The fundamental story of the social characteristics-contexts model is that communities provide a setting for group influences on political preference. That is, communities constitute spaces for interpersonal interaction, and these interactions are the medium by which social environments and social groups condition individual activity and group behaviour. This conditioning occurs in at least two ways. In one way, dominant social divisions contain varying parcels of historical experiences, socializing influences, and material interests. These experiences, environments, and interests among members of the same social group become matched to the policies and programmes expressed by a particular political party. As long as the party continues to advocate for the group, most of its members will continue to support it. For example, the standard Marxian view is that the social division of labour determines individuals' material interests, and the collectivization of work creates a shared awareness that fellow class members are deprived of both material goods and the symbolic value of these goods in society. This collective awareness makes

class members receptive to mobilization for political activity by organizations, such as political parties and trade unions, that are capable of constructing bases of electoral support (e.g. Przeworski and Sprague 1986).

The second way in which conditioning occurs expands on the first. In this case, discussions within groups, group mobilization by parties, and group exposure to media have three related effects (Rossi 1959). These forms of communication transmit the prevailing political preference of the group to its members. They mediate the influence of socioeconomic status on political preference. And, they work to reinforce 'like-minded' views in the group while converting views that deviate from prevailing opinion about issues, candidates, and leaders. Contextual analysts also place considerable weight on 'conversations in contexts'. These conversations occur in workplaces and other settings such as those provided by families, churches, and neighbourhoods (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Mutz 1998). Such discussions express affective orientations and social norms, and they provide guidelines for decision making. This is especially the case when a decision must be made with information that is unavailable or imperfect and in an environment of risk and uncertainty. In turn, the frequent use of these guidelines and their demonstrated reliability in decision making tend to strengthen ties among individuals, to engender policy agreement, and to mobilize political participation.

An explanation that supplements the social characteristics-contexts approach grounds voting behaviour 'more in social psychology than in sociology'. This *social psychology* explanation is 'guided by the philosophy that the immediate determinants of an individual's behaviour lie more clearly in his attitudes and his perceptual organization of his environment than in either his social position or other "objective" situational factors' (Rossi 1959: 37). Its proponents claim that this approach is superior to the social characteristics-contexts model because it can account for the impact of changing political events on people's attitudes about politics.

As indicated above, the evolution of voting behaviour research in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere has been associated closely with the development of social–psychological models of political support. One of the earliest of these models, developed at the University of Michigan, relied heavily on reference- and small-group theory (Belknap and Campbell 1952; see also Campbell, Gurin and Miller 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Butler and Stokes 1969; Miller and Shanks 1996). Its central concept is *party identification* or, in the British case, what Butler and Stokes (1969: 37) called 'partisan self-image'. In its original formulation, party identification was defined as 'an individual's affective orientation to an important group-object in his environment … the political party serves as the group towards which the individual may develop an identification, positive or negative, of some degree of intensity' (Campbell et al. 1960: 121–2). This party identification is typically acquired as the result of childhood and adolescent socialization experiences that occur within families or other primary group settings (Campbell et al. 1960; see also Butler and Stokes 1969; Jennings and Niemi 1974). Once acquired, party

identifications are normally very stable in direction; that is, people who identify with a particular party continue to do so throughout their lives. However, party identifications tend to strengthen over the lifecycle as a result of adult experiences that include repeated exposure to, and participation in, the electoral process (Converse 1969, 1976).

As a core, stable element in public political psychology, Michigan-style party identification constitutes a powerful long-term force on voting behaviour. In addition to influencing electoral choice directly, party identification acts as a 'perceptual screen' that affects the acquisition and interpretation of political information. Party identification thereby exerts indirect effects on voting by shaping attitudes towards parties, their issue stands, and their candidates for public office. In Butler and Stokes' account, the perceptual screening functions of party identification help it to overcome the public's lack of political sophistication, particularly its 'remoteness ... from the affairs of government', 'the limits of its political information', and 'the problem of causal reasoning' as reflected in the difficulties of attributing responsibility to parties for past action or of calculating probable future actions (Butler and Stokes 1969: ch. 2). Moreover, its status as an 'unmoved mover' means that party identification has significant system-level consequences in a democratic polity. When party identification is widespread in an electorate, it constitutes a powerful force working to restore long-term patterns of party competition (Stokes and Iversen 1966). Thus, it provides an important anchor for the existing party system in the minds of citizens and, hence, helps to promote the stability of the larger political order (Campbell et al. 1966).

After the publication of *The American Voter*, the social–psychological conception of party identification enjoyed widespread acceptance and was accorded the status of a key variable in models of electoral choice. However, starting in the 1970s, the popularity of the concept gradually waned as interest grew in individual rationality accounts of voting and other forms of political behaviour. Recently, two lines of theorizing have attempted to refurbish a Michigan-style concept of party identification. One involves schema theory in cognitive psychology. Schemas are cognitive structures that receive, process, and retrieve information for decision-making purposes. Partisan schemas are structures that contain perceptions of partisan differences related to interest in, experience with, and knowledge of political parties (Lodge and Hamill 1986). Voters employ partisan schemas to help them make sense of the political world. These schemas can also serve as heuristic devices—cost-effective shortcuts—that facilitate voters' reasoning about the electoral choices and other political decisions they are asked to make (e.g. Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). As such, partisan schemas accord well with the multidimensional construct of partisan orientations towards candidates, groups, and issues developed in *The American Voter*.

Another recent theoretical account of partisanship has been proposed by Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2002). Green and his colleagues attempt to rescue the

social–psychological conception of party identification from the wholesale revisions proposed by members of the individual rationality school. Green et al.'s intellectual point of departure is clearly Ann Arbor: 'The most detailed explanation of the concept of identification, and the one we find most instructive for our own conceptualization, appears on page 121 of *The American Voter*' (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002: 235, note 1; see also Miller and Shanks 1996). They observe that, although the conceptualization, operationalization, and analysis of partisanship have received much attention, there is relatively little work on party identification as a form of self-identification. Moreover, its relationship with other aspects of personal identity has not been thoroughly explored. Green, Palmquist, and Schickler's principal claim is that most people 'know' who they are, where they are located socially, which groups they like and which ones they dislike, and what political parties these groups support. Party identification flows from this mix of cognition and affect—it is a socially informed self-identification with cognitive and affective components.

Green, Palmquist, and Schickler also maintain that, since people typically lack a rich store of politically relevant information and are biased information processors, partisan attachments are relatively immune to changes in the political environment. Indeed, party identifications tend to persist even when people are dissatisfied with their party. Also, as in the Michigan account, party identification affects voting behaviour indirectly. It does so by influencing reactions to candidates and their policy proposals, and by affecting evaluations of important domestic and international events and prevailing economic and social conditions. The stability and filtering function of party identification make it a powerful force anchoring individual voting behaviour and limiting the extent of variation in election outcomes.

THE INDIVIDUAL RATIONALITY FRAMEWORK

The Individual Rationality Framework

The individual rationality framework encompasses a set of decision-making models. In addition to the standard, baseline model of expected utility maximization, the set consists of a variety of spatial and valence models that have been advanced to explain political choice. The standard model of rational decision-making incorporates an expected utility-maximizing strategy (e.g. von Neumann and Morgenstern 1947). In this strategy, a key role is played by preference which is 'a comparative evaluation of a set of objects stored in memory and drawn on when people make decisions' (Druckman and Lupia 2000: 2).[1] A rational person acts on his or her preference in such a way that he or she '(1) can always make a decision when confronted with a range of alternatives .... (2) ranks all the alternatives ... in such a way that each is either preferred to, indifferent to, or inferior to each other .... (3) preference ranking is transitive .... (4) always chooses from among the possible

alternatives that which ranks highest .... (5) always makes the same decision each time ... confronted with the same alternatives' (Downs 1957: 6).

One of the earliest applications of the standard model to the study of voting and elections was the *spatial model* developed by Anthony Downs (1957). This model has its origins in economic theories designed to explain the location decisions made by firms, particularly why businesses and stores tend to select locations in close proximity, such as across the street or next door, to their competitors (Hotelling 1929). Just as business competitors try to attract customers on High Street or Main Street, in Downs' model—sometimes referred to as the Downsian proximity model—political parties lure voters on an ideological ('left-right') continuum (Downs 1957; see also Key 1968; Shepsle and Boncheck 1997). Although the particulars of party strategy reflect contextual considerations, such as the distribution of voter preferences and the number of parties, the general idea motivating the model is simple. Positions on the ideological continuum are determined by preferences for different amounts of government-provided goods and services. Parties compete by moving their policy positions across the continuum to the point that attracts the maximum number of voters. In the classic situation of two-party competition, the expectation is that parties converge on the policy position of the 'median voter' (Black 1958); that is, the person whose policy preference is at the mid-point of the distribution of policy preferences in the electorate. By converging on the position of the median voter, a party maximizes the number of votes it receives.

According to the Downsian spatial model, a rational voter chooses the party that provides the most benefits or 'streams of utility derived from government activity' (Downs 1957: 36). More specifically, the voter chooses by calculating which candidate's or party's issue position is closest to his or her ideal point or preference for utility income on the ideological continuum. This calculation of distances or 'spaces' involves an assessment of 'current party differentials'; that is, comparisons of utility received under an incumbent with what would be obtained under other parties. Although the calculation is simple in principle, Downs and other spatial theorists recognize that, in practice, it can be difficult to compare the expected or future performance of alternative parties should they form a government. A voter may avoid this difficulty by using parties' over-time 'performance ratings'. In doing so, he or she extrapolates by estimating what the incumbent party would do in the future based on what it has done in the past. Another possibility is that the voter employs an 'objective' standard for increasing utility income. Or, he or she may try to determine the difference between utility income received in the present and what would have been received if the opposition had been in power. The result of the latter comparison is straightforward: 'If their present utility incomes are very low in their own eyes, they may believe that almost any change likely to be made will raise their incomes. In this case, it is rational for them to vote against the incumbents ... On the other hand, men who are benefiting from the incumbents' policies may feel that change is likely to harm rather than help

them … Hence, they rationally vote for the incumbents' (Downs 1957: 42). These various types of calculations are more easily made in two-party, 'winner-take-all' systems that clarify the locus of policy responsibility than in multi-party, coalitional ones which blur it (Powell and Whitten 1993; Anderson 1995).

Since first introduced, the spatial model has attracted both friends and foes. In one of the early critiques of the model, Stokes emphasized that much inter-party competition involves what he called 'valence issues'. He complained that '[i]t will not do simply to exclude valence-issues from the discussion of party competition' before concluding that such issues 'plainly do not fit the spatial scheme' (Stokes 1963: 373–4). For Stokes, the spatial model relied on four questionable assumptions of unidimensionality, fixed structure, ordered dimensions, and common reference. Contrary to these assumptions, politics often has multiple dimensions, variable issue content, positive or negative values, and spaces of competition that are perceived differently by politicians and voters (Stokes 1963, 1992). Stokes' *valence model* especially relies on the idea of positive and negative values. These values are attached to conditions or goals that nearly everyone shares. For example, nearly universal emphasis on the instrumental value of prosperity and individual economic well-being forges a broad consensus on the desirability of high rates of economic growth coupled with low rates of inflation and unemployment. Similarly, the high value placed on collective and individual security stimulates widespread agreement on the desirability of policy outcomes such as 'adequate' national defence, low crime rates, effective healthcare, disease prevention, and transport safety. Public opinion on all of these goals is very heavily skewed.

Stokes argues that the shared emphasis on the desirability of such goals, and their linkages with parties in people's minds, powerfully affect political issue agendas and the nature of inter-party competition. Parties and voters often do not disagree about goals. Rather, they debate which party, which party leader, and which policies are most likely to achieve the outcomes that virtually everyone wants. Voters are encouraged to differentiate leaders and parties on the basis of such qualities as ability or trustworthiness, and symbols of success and failure. The differentiation occurs 'from experiences with parties and leaders, and *the results that they achieve, over time* (emphasis added)' (Stokes 1992: 150). If these results occur in the past or present, then the electorate 'rewards a governing party for its success in bringing prosperity or holds a governing party responsible for its failure to avoid hard times' (Stokes 1992: 147). 'But if the condition is a future or potential one, the argument turns on which party, given possession of the government, is the more likely to bring it about' (Stokes 1963: 373). In sum, valence issues involve comparative judgements about party performance in areas on which public opinion is skewed heavily towards 'good' outcomes, notably peace, probity, and prosperity. 'The issue acquires its power from the fact that the parties may be very unequally linked in the public's mind with the universally approved condition of good times and the universally disapproved condition of bad times, and the difference between

model predicts that these conditions will become salient election issues, but that voters will not necessarily punish a governing left-of-centre party. The reason is that such parties have records and reputations for caring about these problems and, thus, are perceived as more willing and able to address them. Similarly, when crime worsens or inflation increases, the issue–priority model predicts that people who are concerned about these problems will not abandon an incumbent right-of-centre party because they view it as more willing and able to act on these issues than a left-of-centre party. These predictions of the issue–priority model are consistent with the empirical observation that social welfare and public service issues, such as health, education and welfare provision, traditionally benefit left-of-centre parties, whereas issues involving crime prevention and national defence work to the advantage of right-of-centre parties (e.g. Hibbs 1977, 1987).

To summarize, the basic Downsian spatial model portrays electoral politics as taking place on a unidimensional, left-right continuum.[3] Voters choose the party whose position is closest to them on this continuum. In contrast, the valence model argues that the issues that matter most are ones where public opinion is heavily skewed. For these issues, there is an overwhelming consensus concerning what constitutes a 'good' outcome, and parties are judged in terms of their ability to produce them. The valence model predicts that voters tend to reward an incumbent for good performance and certainly punish it for a bad one. The issue–priority model is a hybrid that incorporates shared goals and parties' reputations for policy competence. More specifically, the model distinguishes parties by the extent to which they care about particular issues and are seen as competent to address them. The issue–priority model suggests that voters are not necessarily wrathful—an incumbent party can survive bad times because 'there is no alternative' for dealing with an issue that is highly valued by a large segment of the electorate. Most fundamentally, all of the models concur that public perceptions of party performance matter when people make their voting decisions.

Economic Evaluations, Party Identification, and Party Leaders

Performance-based models have focussed heavily on the economy, partisanship, and party leader images. As noted, the earliest efforts to develop valence models of voting incorporated national 'economic outlook' (e.g. Campbell et al. 1960: ch.14) and 'the economy as an issue' (Butler and Stokes 1969: 390–4; Goodhart and Bhansali 1970). In the wake of these early efforts, *economic evaluation models* have received a great deal of attention. A key element of these models is voters' evaluations of economic conditions. A great deal of research has focussed on whether voters think primarily in terms of *egocentric* considerations (personal self-interest) or *sociotropic* ones (national economic conditions) (e.g. Kinder and Kiewiet 1979, 1981; Lewis-Beck 1988; Norpoth, Lewis-Beck, and Lafay 1991; Clarke et al. 1992).

model predicts that these conditions will become salient election issues, but that voters will not necessarily punish a governing left-of-centre party. The reason is that such parties have records and reputations for caring about these problems and, thus, are perceived as more willing and able to address them. Similarly, when crime worsens or inflation increases, the issue–priority model predicts that people who are concerned about these problems will not abandon an incumbent right-of-centre party because they view it as more willing and able to act on these issues than a left-of-centre party. These predictions of the issue–priority model are consistent with the empirical observation that social welfare and public service issues, such as health, education and welfare provision, traditionally benefit left-of-centre parties, whereas issues involving crime prevention and national defence work to the advantage of right-of-centre parties (e.g. Hibbs 1977, 1987).

To summarize, the basic Downsian spatial model portrays electoral politics as taking place on a unidimensional, left-right continuum.[3] Voters choose the party whose position is closest to them on this continuum. In contrast, the valence model argues that the issues that matter most are ones where public opinion is heavily skewed. For these issues, there is an overwhelming consensus concerning what constitutes a 'good' outcome, and parties are judged in terms of their ability to produce them. The valence model predicts that voters tend to reward an incumbent for good performance and certainly punish it for a bad one. The issue–priority model is a hybrid that incorporates shared goals and parties' reputations for policy competence. More specifically, the model distinguishes parties by the extent to which they care about particular issues and are seen as competent to address them. The issue–priority model suggests that voters are not necessarily wrathful—an incumbent party can survive bad times because 'there is no alternative' for dealing with an issue that is highly valued by a large segment of the electorate. Most fundamentally, all of the models concur that public perceptions of party performance matter when people make their voting decisions.

Economic Evaluations, Party Identification, and Party Leaders

Performance-based models have focussed heavily on the economy, partisanship, and party leader images. As noted, the earliest efforts to develop valence models of voting incorporated national 'economic outlook' (e.g. Campbell et al. 1960: ch.14) and 'the economy as an issue' (Butler and Stokes 1969: 390–4; Goodhart and Bhansali 1970). In the wake of these early efforts, *economic evaluation models* have received a great deal of attention. A key element of these models is voters' evaluations of economic conditions. A great deal of research has focussed on whether voters think primarily in terms of *egocentric* considerations (personal self-interest) or *sociotropic* ones (national economic conditions) (e.g. Kinder and Kiewiet 1979, 1981; Lewis-Beck 1988; Norpoth, Lewis-Beck, and Lafay 1991; Clarke et al. 1992).

An emphasis on egocentric evaluations fits well with the individual rationality framework in microeconomic theory that posits a world of self-interested, utility-maximizing, economic agents. However, an emphasis on sociotropic judgement does not have this close articulation with economic theory because voters are said to be people concerned about the provision of economic goods that flow to society as a whole. It has been hypothesized that part of the explanation of whether voters think socially or selfishly lies in their responsibility attributions for national economic conditions and personal economic circumstances (e.g. Lewis-Beck 1988; see also Sniderman and Brody 1977).

The relative importance of *past*-versus *future*-oriented economic evaluations is another important question in research on the political economy of party support. Downs argues that, if the retrospective–prospective distinction is interpreted to mean past performance versus future promises, then rational individuals will rely on the former when judging the economy. The reason is that the voter 'must either compare (*a*) two hypothetical future utility incomes or (*b*) one actual present utility income and one hypothetical present one. Without question, the latter comparison allows him to make more direct use of concrete facts than the former. Not only is one of its terms a real entity, but the other can be calculated in full view of the situation from which it springs' (Downs 1957: 40). If voters think that the only reliable information is that concerning actual party performance and they want to reduce information-processing costs, then they will rely on information about economic conditions while the present incumbent has been in office. Moreover, if voters suspect that parties will 'say anything', such as making insincere promises to win votes, then they use the credible information they have—which is about parties' past performance.

In contrast, some analysts stress that elections require voters to forecast what parties or leaders will do based on current information (Clarke et al. 1992). Rational voters have no interest in rewarding or punishing anybody. Rather, they wish to maximize their utilities and, to do so, they must make forecasts about what the future holds if an alternative party or leader is elected. These forecasts can be made in various ways. People can use an extrapolative expectations model whereby the future is forecast as a linear trend based on present and past information. Alternatively, they may implement an adaptive expectations model that updates expectations using information about economic performance with current performance being weighted more heavily than past performance. Or, they may use (or at least behave as if they used) a more demanding rational expectations model of how they think the economy works and use this model to make unbiased forecasts. Regardless of which model is employed, the assumption is that economic expectations matter for party support (e.g. MacKuen et al. 1992*b*, 1996; Clarke and Stewart 1994; Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2000, 2002).

Efforts to explain how voters acquire and use economic information when making political support decisions have led to increasing interest in cognitive

psychology. If the information required to make a decision is poor, and getting it is expensive, then a cognitively thrifty public can selectively consult trusted media for guidelines about what to think. People also may rely on leaders, party identification, or groups as heuristic devices, or they may employ their emotions for strategic decision-making purposes. With respect to the latter, several scholars have argued that economic (and other) evaluations have affective or emotional content (e.g. Conover and Feldman 1986; Frank 1988; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000). That is, voters' thoughts about the economy and their personal economic situations generate emotional reactions that have important effects on how they process politically relevant information. In this regard, people can be confident, happy, hopeful, angry, anxious, or disgusted about economic circumstances even when these do not affect them personally (e. g. Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000: 169–70). These emotional reactions, in turn, may activate dispositional, surveillance, or other psychological systems by which individuals use either habit or reaction to threat to scan their environments for information that helps to make a decision (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000).

The impact of evaluations of economic conditions and the performance of political parties and party leaders extends beyond the voting decision. These evaluations also have important roles in a *valence model of the dynamics of party identification*. As discussed above, Downs argues that the rational citizen compares utility received under an incumbent with what would have been obtained under another party. Current 'party differentials' are then calculated as the basis for choosing a party among competing alternatives (Downs 1957). Key (1968) thought somewhat similarly and anticipated a later, cognitive psychological view of partisanship. According to Key, the connection between policy preference and party identification develops in two ways. Either an identification develops first and the policy preference of the party is adopted next, or an initial preference leads to a subsequent identification. With respect to the latter, he hypothesized that: '[l]ike or dislike of a political personality or a party policy and many other factors bring shifts in party identification' (Key 1968: 298–9).

The ideas advanced in the early work of Downs, Key, and Stokes are echoed in later individual rationality models of partisanship. Among these models, the best known was developed by Fiorina (1981). In the addendum titled 'Valence Issues and Retrospective Voting' to *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*, Fiorina presented several ideas that were regarded by Stokes as compatible with those expressed in the 'Spatial Competition' article and *Political Change in Britain* (Stokes 1992). For Fiorina, party identification is a storehouse of information about the (largely economic) performance of political parties and their leaders. Over time, voters update their partisanship as they acquire new information on economic conditions and parties' actual or expected performance. Voters make summary 'running tallies' of current and past party performance evaluations, giving more weight to recent, as opposed to earlier, information. Other analysts have

proposed similar models (Franklin and Jackson 1983; Franklin 1984, 1992; Achen 1992, 2002; Stewart and Clarke 1998; see also MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1989; Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2000, 2002). Although differing in detail, these models agree that partisanship at any point in time is the product of voters using a utility-maximizing or satisficing strategy to process information. The core idea is that partisanship is not exclusively a product of early-life socialization but, rather, of information updating that produces changes in both the intensity and direction of partisan attachments. Stokes recognized that the possibility of partisan dynamics posed a major challenge to the Michigan model of party identification. Writing in the early 1990s, he concluded that '[t]he trend towards valence politics is plainly correlated with the weakening of the old-time party loyalties, which were rooted in strong position issues' (Stokes 1992: 158). As we show in Chapter Six, the consequences are not trivial; variations in economic conditions and attendant shifts in party performance evaluations are sufficient to produce consequential individual- and aggregate-level changes in partisanship.

A third area in which performance or valence judgements matter concerns how *party leader images* affect parties' standings with the electorate. It has traditionally been argued that leader images have small to null effects on voting behaviour and election outcomes in Britain (for a review, see King 2002*b*). The argument has two variations. One is that leader images are short-term, ephemeral factors that are easily overcome by the complex of powerful long-term forces summarized by voters' class locations. The other argument is that 'the pull of the leaders remains but one among the factors that determine transient shifts of party strength; it is easily outweighed by other issues and events of concern to the public, including the movements of the economy which do so much to set the climate of the party battle' (Butler and Stokes 1969: 387–8). In recent years, this latter argument has continued to resonate among observers of British politics—'issues of performance and issues of policy loom much larger in most voters' minds than do issues of personality' (King 2002: 220). The claim is that issue concerns, particularly those focussing on economic problems, and public perceptions of parties' abilities to handle these problems, deserve pride of place in models of electoral choice.

We propose that leader images matter as well. It has been claimed that leaders' personalities infrequently affect electoral choice and election outcomes directly, and that they can operate indirectly through leaders' influence on governments and parties (King 2002*b*). However, we contend that leader *images*—people's feelings of like or dislike of leaders and the standards of judgement that they bring to bear on leader performance—exert significant direct effects on party support. They do so for three reasons. The first pertains to the evolving roles of prime ministers in parliamentary systems. Over the past two decades, a variety of system-level and other factors, including constitutional developments, leadership style, party strategy, and public outreach activities, have contributed to the 'presidentialization' of the prime minister's role (e.g. Mughan 1993; Foley 2000). The media have also been

an important factor by constantly shining the publicity spotlight on the prime minister. Consistent with recent empirical evidence, the presidentialization hypothesis states that prime ministers have significant effects on party support, but it does not require these effects to be equally strong regardless of who occupies Number 10 (Clarke, Ho, and Stewart 2000).

A second reason focuses on the conduct of election campaigns in parliamentary and presidential systems alike. In this regard, much has been made about the candidate-centered, versus party-oriented, election campaigns that have evolved in response to the primary election system and televised campaigning in the United States. In parliamentary systems, candidate- or leader-centered campaigning presumably would develop more slowly since leader behaviour is restrained by parliament (Wattenberg 1991; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). However, campaign-related factors are influential in parliamentary systems (see Chapter Five). In the contemporary era, parties begin their 'long campaigns' months or even years before the writs are issued, and once the election is called, media coverage of the parties and their leaders intensifies greatly. The media encourage the 'personalization' of electoral politics by focussing heavily on the leaders' policy pronouncements, by conducting in-depth, sometimes provocative, interviews with them, and by monitoring their 'comings and goings' on the campaign trail. For their part, parties promote this tendency by fighting leader-centered national campaigns (Foley 2000; King 2002).

The third reason involves voter psychology. The contention that leader images have significant effects on electoral choice does not require the assumption that voters are responding irrationally to vacuous aspects of leader images dreamed up by advertising agencies and party spin doctors. It also is important to appreciate that 'issues' and 'parties' are essentially abstractions, not amenable to direct sensory perception. In contrast, party leaders are seen and heard frequently and, on occasion, spoken to and touched—they are highly visible embodiments of their parties (Miller, Wattenberg, and Malachuk 1986). Moreover, if an issue is particularly complicated, then voters may resort to heuristic devices, including leader images, to deal with too little or too much information, the uncertainty of the decision-making environment, and their aversion to risk (e.g. Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). In this regard, party leader images provide helpful cues because they compress information into forms that can be conveniently and effectively used to make electoral choices.

We hypothesize that democratic norms, formal government processes that emphasize accountability, and intense media scrutiny of performance encourage voters to use standards of judgement that invoke two dimensions of leader images. These images are leaders' general effectiveness or *competence*, and their caring about or *responsiveness* to public concerns. Since governing leaders tend to have greater public salience and more established records than do opposition leaders, the two dimensions of the former's image may be more clearly defined and less strongly correlated than those of the latter. This was certainly the case for Margaret Thatcher

whose 'conviction politics', notably her unrelenting advocacy of neoconservative policies, contributed to a sharp distinction in people's minds between her competence to manage the government, and her responsiveness to public needs and concerns (Stewart and Clarke 1992).

To illustrate the structure of party leader images in the British electorate, we conduct a confirmatory factor analysis[3] of the 2001 BES data. In the post-election wave of the survey, respondents were asked about six aspects of the leaders' images. We first test a baseline model that assumes all six aspects comprise a unidimensional leader image. This single-factor model has a poor fit for all three leaders. For example, for Tony Blair, the model's goodness-of-fit statistics are: $\chi^2 = 159.11$, $df = 14$, $p = 0.000$, and the RMSEA test decisively rejects the hypothesis of a close fit (Joreskog and Sorbom 1996). We next consider a model that specifies two separate, but interrelated, competence and responsiveness factors. This model hypothesizes that the 'keeps promises', 'decisive', and 'principled' items load on the competence factor whereas the 'caring', 'listens to reason', and 'not arrogant' items load on the responsiveness factor. This two-factor model is initially tested using data for Tony Blair.[4] As Table 2.1 shows, the model's fit is very good ($\chi^2 = 46.75$, $df = 11$, $p = 0.00$; see Table 2.1), and the RMSEA test indicates a close fit. Applying the two-factor model to the data for Hague and Kennedy also produces satisfactory results. In addition, the two-factor models for the three leaders explain substantial amounts of item variance, and all factor loadings are statistically significant. In all three cases, the strongest loadings on the competence factor are 'keeps promises' and 'principled', whereas 'caring' has the largest loading on the responsiveness factor. The inter-factor correlations are strong for all three leaders, but especially for Kennedy, thereby suggesting that the competence and responsiveness components of his image were less clearly separated in voters' minds than was the case for Blair and Hague. Overall, the results are consistent with the hypothesis that British voters' leader images are structured in terms of two, interrelated, competence and responsiveness dimensions. These results echo those produced by analyses of leader images during the Thatcher era (Stewart and Clarke 1992), thereby indicating that separate competence and responsiveness components are enduring features of party leader images in Britain.