

Exit, Voice, and Loyalty:
behaviour of dissatisfied Labour Party members

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction to problem

This thesis examines the behaviour of dissatisfied Labour Party members who disagree with the recent changes made by the leadership in party policy, direction, and management. In particular, it examines their response to this situation, and why, given their dissatisfaction, they are not leaving the party (contrary to what might be expected). I look at their behaviour, in terms of exiting the party and of reducing their activity within it; the factors influencing this behaviour; and the potential consequences. Previously, this behaviour has been observed, but not analysed in this way.

I deal with the period since 1994, when Tony Blair became party leader and Clause 4 of the Labour Party Manifesto (regarded as a central plank of party policy by many members) was abolished. The alteration was at Blair's instigation, and these events were part of the change which signified the beginning of what is commonly known as "New Labour". Clause 4 stated that the party was committed to securing

“for the workers, by hand or by brain, the full fruits of their labour and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service”¹.

The thesis is based around the fact that there are a number of Labour Party members who disagree with the New Labour project, and with the party’s shift towards the middle of the political spectrum. Considering these individuals as Downsian rational actors, we might expect them to leave the party: since they disagree with the direction of the party, being involved with it will not help them to achieve their political goals. They might take a more long-term view, intending to resist the actions of the modernisers, on the grounds that if they do not do so, the party will move even further, and even more rapidly, towards the centre. However, since the major shift in the Labour Party was in 1994, there is still a problem here. The complaints of the dissatisfied members have had no discernible effect since 1994; surely this indicates that they are being ignored, and thus that it is no longer rational for them to expend time and energy on fighting the modernisers. However, there is instead still evidence of members who disagree with New Labour’s actions staying within the party. I focus my investigation on this group of dissatisfied members.

Key questions which I examine are: what actions do dissatisfied Labour Party members take? Is it correct that they fail to leave? Do they instead reduce their activity? What factors affect this behaviour, and can these be explained in a rational choice context? These factors are also linked with Hirschman’s “exit, voice, and loyalty” theory, discussed below — I consider them in part in this light. I use data

¹The replacement clause is: “The Labour Party is a democratic socialist party. It believes that by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone, so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth, and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few. Where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe. And where we live together, freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect.”.

from the recent (1997 and 1999) Seyd and Whiteley study of Labour Party members (discussed in chapter 2) and investigate what factors influence members in leaving, or in becoming less active. I also consider these factors in terms of rational choice theory.

In the remainder of this first chapter I discuss the intellectual context of the problem, and its importance. I also construct and discuss hypotheses which will be tested in the remainder of the thesis. In chapter 2 I discuss the data, in chapters 3 and 4 I test my hypotheses and look at the implications of the results, and in chapter 5 I draw my conclusions.

1.2 Intellectual context

Exit, Voice, and Loyalty

The theory of “exit, voice, and loyalty” was proposed by Hirschman (1970). His book *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* explicitly considers the reactions of consumers to a change in a product; but he does mention the possibility of applying his theory to members of political parties. Consumers who are dissatisfied with a product, Hirschman argues, have two options: exit (i.e. stopping buying the product) or voice (i.e. complaining to the company). He examines factors which influence the choice between these two options. Despite the book’s title, loyalty is dealt with by Hirschman only as a post hoc equation filler. I examine the role of loyalty more formally than Hirschman, and include it explicitly in my analysis.

In the context of this theory, then, the question I examine is why dissatisfied members are *not* choosing the exit option. Hirschman’s theory states that dissatisfied consumers may initially choose voice over exit, but that if voice fails to produce results they will exit. It seems clear that in the Labour Party case voice has been ineffective — why then are these members remaining in the party?

I will not directly discuss the use of voice, due to the lack of the data which would be required. The Seyd and Whiteley surveys (discussed in the following chapter) did not include any questions on whether members had registered their discontent with the party leadership, and so no real statistical analysis can be carried out with the data I have available. However, there is some evidence of the use of voice by dissatisfied party members. Examples are publications such as *The May Day Manifesto* (Barratt Brown 1998), and the strong tendency of *Tribune* to publish articles critical of the government. It is also possible to see participation in the Seyd and Whiteley survey as a form of voice in itself, since it is made clear on the front of the survey form that (summarised) results will be sent to the party leadership, and thus members might see this as a means of conveying their opinions to the leadership.

One issue to note here is that the opportunities for voice for party members seem to be very limited. Motions at Conference, comments to National Policy Forums, and so forth are the obvious methods through which voice can be exercised by members. The problem, however, is the extent to which these options are really useful to members. Restrictions on what can be discussed in Conference have been brought in after the introduction of the Policy Forums, but those who have experienced the forums claim that the well-resourced ministerial team has a massive advantage over any members' representatives. Initial drafts of policy documents come from ministers, and it is unclear whether later submissions can challenge the basic assumptions of these documents. Workshop discussions are also guided by, and reported on by, senior party personnel facilitators, giving them significant levels of control. In addition to this, it has been pointed out by *Tribune* (27 Nov 1998) that even if all 54 constituency representatives voted at the NPF for a policy position to be put to Conference, it would not get on the agenda without the support of other groups represented on the NPF (for example, the trade unions). Finally, the leadership chooses which parts of NPF advice it accepts and which it rejects. This combination of factors gives members very little real impact on policy decisions through this forum.

The election of members of the Grassroots Alliance onto the NEC in 1998–2001, standing against leadership-sponsored candidates, is also a form of voice. It certainly indicates a desire for the leadership to listen more to the membership. Unfortunately, judging by accounts from the Grassroots Alliance NEC members, little attention has been paid to their views and they have invariably been voted down (Davies 2001).

Votes in elections other than General Elections can be seen as a form of signal to the government. However, the extent to which this is a signal by members, rather than a signal by voters in general, is of course highly contestable (and, more importantly, hard to establish in practice). This means that a drop in vote in an election is very susceptible to interpretation; it is certainly not a clear signal from dissatisfied members to the leadership. Possible interpretations are also affected by what those who are not voting Labour do instead. They may not wish to vote for another party; but abstaining altogether may be seen as tacit agreement with Labour, or simply as apathy, rather than as discontent. Activity level reduction could, as is discussed later (chapter 2), be seen as a form of exit, but it could also be seen as a form of voice — an indication to the leadership that something is wrong, prior to full exit occurring.

Although voice cannot be examined directly, it is possible to look at it indirectly. One of the available variables in the Seyd and Whiteley data (discussed in detail in the next chapter) measures members' belief in their own ability to have an influence in politics. Clearly, for members to be prepared to utilise the voice option, they must believe that it could have an effect. Thus, if their belief in their own ability to have an influence is low, they are much more likely not to utilise voice (and, by Hirschman's argument, are also more likely to leave). I therefore look at this variable in terms of voice. Although it is clearly an imperfect measure, it should shed some light on the issue by indicating whether members see voice as an available option.

Seyd and Whiteley

Seyd and Whiteley have gathered a large amount of data and written a great deal about the attitudes of Labour Party activists over the last decade (e.g. Seyd & Whiteley (a)1992). Of particular interest to myself are their comments in their 2001 paper, when discussing the 1997 data, that the individual member's perception of her/his influence on politics did not change significantly between 1989 and 1997. However, their perception that activists have the most say in party policy has declined (Seyd & Whiteley 2001). This indicates that the reforms are seen to have limited the influence of the activists, but that individuals still feel that their activity counts, i.e. that it is worth their while to remain in active politics. Examination of the 1999 data will help to establish whether this has continued to be the case, and to what extent this belief affects their actions. Seyd and Whiteley also point out that the results of the NEC elections 1998-2001, when the Grassroots Alliance gained four of the six constituency seats in 1998 and 1999, two in 2000, and three in 2001, demonstrate that there is still an independence of attitude amongst party members: not all of them agree with the Blair Project. This indicates that there is room for an investigation of this independence of attitude, the behaviour which is connected with it, and the consequent interactions between membership and leadership.

Seyd and Whiteley's studies have concentrated on describing member attitudes to and opinions on various subjects, and members' behaviour in terms of activity on behalf of the party, involvement in local constituencies, and other similar areas. They have also looked at some of the connections between different variables, such as class and activity level. However, as yet they have not looked at the effect of opinions on changes in activity level, or on the choice of members to leave the party, nor at the influence of changing attitudes and opinions on behaviour choices. Thus my analysis covers new ground.

Theories of activism and rational choice

One of the most influential rational choice books written on the theory of activism is Mancur Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965), in which he argues that insofar as individuals behave as rational actors, they should not participate in politics. Olson's theory was influential in part because it predicted that extremely small numbers of people become political activists, even in parties which receive large numbers of votes. This is true, but was not predicted or explained by conventional theories of political participation of the time. He also avoids the problems of a simple rational actor theory, which would predict that actors should choose to free-ride on the political actions of others, and thus that no one at all should join a political party. Olson solves the paradox of why individuals do join political parties by invoking (limited) selective incentives (such as free legal advice for members of trade unions).

However, the Olson model does not allow for those who claim to have joined for reasons other than these selective incentives (e.g. to promote policy goals). Since such people do exist, the theory is clearly flawed. Seyd & Whiteley ((a)1992) argue that Olson's model is too narrow in that it fails to allow for individuals thinking in solidaristic terms, and acting to promote the interests of the group as a whole. Individuals, they claim, *can* make decisions on the basis of probable group actions and outcomes. This ties in with Muller and his associates' discussion of the "unity principle", which is a group norm of calculating Kantianism. Seyd and Whiteley also invoke "social norms" motivation. Thus, they suggest a General Incentives model which combines these three motivations — rationality, altruism, and social norms — and which outperforms Olson's model when tested.

Seyd & Whiteley (1996) extend this further to a Reduced Form model. They first discuss the Resources model proposed by Verba and Nie, which claims that:

"the social status of an individual — his job, education, and income

— determines to a large extent how much he participates. It does this through the intervening effects of a variety of “civic attitudes” conducive to participation: attitudes such as a sense of efficacy, of psychological involvement in politics and a feeling of obligation to participate.” (Verba & Nie 1972)

This, although poor overall as a predictor of activism, does reveal the significance of social status as a predictor. Seyd and Whiteley then discuss the Expectations-Values-Norms model of Muller et al, which explains behaviour in terms of expected benefits and social norms. Although the latter is better than the Resources model, it is still not a good fit; again, however, it is useful in revealing the significance of its two factors in predicting activism.

Seyd and Whiteley include in their Reduced Form model the income variable from the Resources model, the weighted expected benefits and social norms variables from the Expectations-Values-Norms model, and the costs, selective incentives, ideological incentives, and expressive motives variables from their own General Incentives model. They demonstrate that this Reduced Form model encompasses the models discussed above, and has the best fit of any of those considered (including their General Incentives model). They argue that this demonstrates that there are three significant factors which have an effect on activism but are inconsistent with a rational-actor theory:

1. activists are more expressively attached to the party than non-active members, despite the fact that the incentives to free-ride are the same for both;
2. they are motivated by “collective rationality” — calculations are based on the effect of participation at a collective level, rather than at an individual level (which violates the rational choice methodological assumption of individuality);
3. they are motivated by social norms.

These discoveries have an obvious impact on my area of interest. However, whilst the models described above do discuss the motivations of actors in becoming involved in active politics, they do not consider what happens when the context of their activism changes — such as with the recent changes in the Labour Party. There is no analysis of what effect such changes have on the motivational structure of activists, nor under what circumstances the motivational structure might come under sufficient tension to cause its collapse. I consider the effect of changes in the party on this motivational structure, and the effect of factors in the motivational structure on the actions of dissatisfied members.

The importance of activists

It is necessary to consider to what extent activists are needed by the party, and thus whether the leadership is likely to be concerned by their actions, in being less active or in leaving altogether.

The development of significant mass-membership grassroots party organisations was driven by the need for volunteer activists for election campaigns, after the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act of 1883 imposed tough electoral spending limits. This strongly implies that campaigning was at that stage seen as a valuable practice, and activists as important to it. However, there is a significant body of literature (notably from Butler in the Nuffield election studies) which contends that activists are no longer important — in particular, that they are no longer necessary for political campaigning in today’s media-driven era. Butler has quoted a party agent in 1951 saying that “no candidate is worth 500 votes”, and used this as evidence that local variations and campaigns are irrelevant, and continue to be so — he seems to have no more evidence for his view than this (Butler 2001).

On the other hand, Seyd & Whiteley (1996) argue that the electoral-professional model of campaigning is much exaggerated — at the very least, legal restraints mean that local activists are needed to run local campaigns. There is also evidence

indicating that local campaigning *can* make a difference, especially in close-run seats: Seyd & Whiteley ((c)1992), looking at the 1992 election, found a statistically significant link between membership levels and vote levels. A better measurement than this might be the relationship between membership levels and swing, since it is possible that the direction of causation between membership levels and vote levels is the opposite of what Seyd and Whiteley suggest, i.e. that high membership is due to high vote, since a strongly Labour area is obviously likely to contain more individuals who feel strongly enough to join the party. Unfortunately, the article does not include the necessary information. However, it does demonstrate that the membership effect is there even when control variables (turnout, percentage of manual workers, percentage of council tenants, percentage of agricultural workers, incumbency, and percentage of unemployed) are included; and that it is there when the 1987 Labour vote share is included as a control variable. This last indicates that constituency activity does influence swing, since it had an effect beyond the 1987 vote share. In addition, when Seyd & Whiteley ((a)1992) did look at the swing to Labour, between 1983 and 1987, they found that the more active a constituency party, the greater the swing.

Denver and Hands (1992, 1997), also examining the 1992 election, found a significant positive relationship between the intensity of constituency campaigns and the change in vote share (up to 7% of the vote — clearly significant in marginals). Pattie, Whiteley, Johnston & Seyd (1993) state: “Particularly in close-fought contests, an effective and energetic local campaign can make the difference between winning and losing. Political parties ignore the work of their local members at their electoral peril”. Since quite a number of Labour’s seats are held by a relatively small majority, this should be, at the least, a matter of concern to the leadership. Pattie et al also demonstrate that campaign spending in local constituencies is a useful indication of activism, and that higher campaign spending in a constituency (as a percentage of the limit), even controlling for other variables, tends to result in higher than average vote flows to Labour, and lower than average vote flows from it.

The increasing focus of electoral campaigning on target seats has also increased the importance of the local campaign, whilst simultaneously increasing the control of the centre over such campaigns. Denver, Hands & Henig (1998) quote a Labour party official, on the subject of the 1997 election, stating that “the key seat strategy was basically the centre of the campaign”: this demonstrates the perceived importance of the local campaign effort. Certainly, party members are still expected to do a large amount of campaigning and the party claims to see them as useful. This claim may of course not be entirely true — telling the party faithful that their efforts are unimportant would hardly be very motivational. Given, however, that the targeting of seats in 1997 did have a noticeable effect, it seems that members’ efforts are valuable.

There are also other benefits to having members, not least the financial aspect. A comparison of political party finance with that of big membership charities is instructive here. *Charity Trends*, published annually until 1993, tracked the financing of the top 500 charities. The last available edition (1993) states that 25% of the total income of the top 200 charities comes from personal donations (35% of the income of the next 200 charities). This was an increase on the previous year, and further increases seemed likely. It does not state how much of this is from members of the charity, and how much from the non-member public, but it seems reasonable to expect that the majority of it is from members. Clearly, other sources of funding are also needed in order to meet the charity’s financial needs. It is impossible to rely on members as a sole source of funding, since seeking more money in the form of further donations from members is time-consuming and expensive (many letters need to be sent out, with a likely small return rate). However, members are clearly necessary to the charity’s overall funding. It seems reasonable to assume that political parties operate under much the same conditions. As such, although funding from members alone is insufficient to run the party, members are financially necessary.

As of 2001, the Labour Party said that 40% of its funding came from members or small donations, 30% from the trade unions, 20% from large single donations, and

10% from commercial activities.² 40% is certainly a significant figure; and as the trade unions have since cut their payments to the party, membership finance will be even more needed.

This is likely to become even more true as a result of the reforms recommended by the Fifth Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, chaired by Lord Neill, which was published in November 1998. These reforms will severely limit party fundraising activity. Parties will have to disclose donations of more than £5000, blind trusts will be forbidden, and there will be a bar on foreign donors. The government agreed to implement these reforms in the 1999 White Paper on the subject, although the bill had not passed Parliament before the 2001 election.

The political background to the establishment of the Committee on Standards in Public Life would have made it very difficult for the Government to do other than agree to the reforms suggested. The Committee was set up by Major in 1994, in an attempt to demonstrate that the Conservatives were acting to reduce sleaze. The current Labour government was then elected in May 1997 with manifesto commitments to introduce legislation to oblige political parties to declare the source of all donations above a minimum figure, and to ban foreign funding of political parties. This was at least partly in order to cash in on the public perception of Tory sleaze. Labour also undertook to ask the Committee to “consider how the funding of political parties should be regulated and reformed”: the terms of reference for this were announced by Blair in November 1997. At the suggestion of the Committee, the Government deferred introducing legislation to require disclosure of large donations and to ban foreign funding so that the Committee could make detailed proposals on these aspects as part of its general review. Thus, when the Committee did make such proposals, and indeed went rather beyond its initial brief in also discussing campaigning for referenda, it would have been extremely politically unwise for the government to do other than agree to the recommendations.

²Source: the Guardian website, URL <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Labour/Story/0,2763,419526,00.html>

The Neill reforms also include a cap on electoral spending of £20 million per party (compare with the £56 million spent between the Conservative and Labour parties at the last general election). This is likely further to increase the importance of members in campaigning, since the national campaign will be financially restricted, and thus national advertising will have to become reduced in prominence (although £20 million is still a reasonable sum of money). The national campaign as reported by the media (which is after all free to the parties) need not be restricted, but there will have to be some changes in electoral campaigning. The restrictions should not directly affect local campaigns, as their spending is already highly restricted; but it should affect their importance or perceived importance.

Seyd & Whiteley ((a)1992) also discuss other advantages to having members, such as recruiting and socialising future political leaders and acting as a means of communication between leaders and voters. They point out that it is generally accepted within social science that democratic politics in advanced industrial societies cannot function without political parties, which provide a means of aggregating the interests within society.

So, there is a need for members within political parties. However, it must be remembered that activists and members can also cause problems for a party. John May's *Special Law of Curvilinear Disparity* (1973) states that the leadership of a party is likely to be more centrist than its activist members, but (very slightly) more extremist than the rank-and-file voters. It is thus the activist membership which is likely to be most radical (in the case of the Labour Party, this extremism is obviously in the direction of the left). Specifically, the two propositions which constitute May's law are:

1. "Sub-leaders, relative to top leaders and non-leaders, are substantive extremists. In a generally Left-of-Centre party they are the most Leftist cohort; in a generally Right-of-Centre party they are the most Rightist cohort (from this it follows, at least in two-party systems, that the sub-leaders, relative to the

top leaders and the non-leaders, are most estranged from public opinion at large).” (p. 139)

2. “Accordingly, the top leaders occupy an intermediate position (but not an exact mid-way one) between the median opinions of their sub-leaders and their non-leaders.” (p. 139)

“Sub-leaders”, in May’s terminology, correspond approximately to activists (as opposed to non-active members); “non-leaders” are non-active members, non-member voters, etc.

It is notable that May’s article makes no mention of Downs’ Median Voter Theorem, which states that parties will tend to move towards the position of the median voter. Connecting May and Downs, it would seem clear that the leadership have an impetus to move towards the centre, whereas the activists do not have such a strong impetus to do so. Whilst they are of course concerned with getting their party into power, they are also motivated by more ideological concerns. May notes that whereas the rewards for leaders are clear-cut and material, the rewards for sub-leaders are more ideological. Activity tends to be voluntary, and often hard and dull work. May argues that this is likely to attract extremists, since only those who are devoted to the cause are likely to undertake these chores. However, Kitschelt (1989) argues that May’s law applies only to certain sections of sub-leaders: specifically, those who take part in national party conferences or have regional party executive posts. He claims that grass-roots local activists are if anything likely to be more in touch with general public opinion than are the leaders, and as such are not extremist. In fact, the issue here seems to be where one chooses to draw the line between “sub-leaders” and “non-leaders”. May uses a continuum of authority, and it is not fully clear where he intends to locate these “sub-leaders”. Kitschelt’s criticism can therefore be seen as merely a refinement of the theory.

The membership is also likely to be less pragmatic than the leadership, being less clearly focused on gaining power and more concerned with maintaining the principles

of the party. Bale (2000) discusses the tension between the freedom for manoeuvre that the leadership require in order to gain election, and the more ideological stance of the activists. He argues that this is a particularly difficult balancing act for Labour, since its constitutional development has not kept pace with the gradual transfer of practical power to the leadership, and also since Labour has never established an explicit statement of its core principles (thus allowing many different interpretations of those principles). Seyd & Whiteley (2001) argue that there is a need for the leadership to balance incentives (for they do, as discussed above, need activists) with discipline. The tension between leadership and activists is an important strand of internal party politics in all parties, and an examination of the results of such tension, its impact on member behaviour, and what factors influence that impact, is interesting from a political theoretical point of view.

Party members as unrepresentative

There is a body of literature which claims that party members are unrepresentative of ordinary voters for the party (corresponding to the first part of May's theorem). McLean (1982) gives this as an a priori argument. He argues that since, by Downs, parties will move towards the median voter, the median voter has no incentive to become an activist. The parties will move towards their preferred policies without any need for action, so the median voter has an overwhelming incentive to be a free-rider. In comparison, a voter to the left of the median does have an incentive to join the party of the left, as without any input from left-wing activists, that party will move towards the median. A similar argument clearly holds for right-wing voters, giving them an incentive to join the party of the right. Thus there is an incentive for the off-median voter to participate, as without their input there is less hope of them getting their preferred policy outcome. This incentive to activism will also increase as the voter moves further from the median. Thus, activists can be expected to be more extreme than voters.

In order to establish how representative the members surveyed by Seyd and Whiteley are, I compared their responses on certain questions in the 1997 survey with the responses of Labour party sympathisers and voters to the same questions in the 1997 British Election Survey.³ The results are shown in table 1.1.

As can be seen from the table, on the subjects of nationalisation and tax and spend policies, the membership are slightly more radical. However, the differences, whilst significant, are not enormous — the majority of all three sets would prefer higher taxes and higher spending, and very few of any of the three sets would like more privatisation (although fewer of the identifiers or voters want more nationalisation). On the subjects of wealth redistribution and whether the party should compromise in order to win votes, the identifiers and voters are more extreme than the members. In the case of the compromise issue, this is probably due to the fact that party members are likely to have a better grasp of the importance of winning votes, since they are more involved in political campaigning, and thus place more weight on compromise. It is interesting, however, that identifiers and voters are more in favour of redistribution than members. This may reflect a stronger working-class bias amongst Labour party voters compared to Labour party members. In fact, examining the data, this seems to be true: the modal social class (Goldthorpe-Heath 11-pt scale)⁴ for Labour party identifiers and voters is 10, which corresponds to semi- and unskilled manual workers, whereas for Labour party members it is 2, which corresponds to low service class.

These data seem to indicate that May's theorem is only partly right: differences in extremism between voters and members vary on different issues. It would be interesting to amalgamate various scores to establish whether voters and members are overall more or less extreme than each other, and thus to submit May's theorem

³Labour identifiers were chosen by using the “partyid” variable in the BES survey; Labour voters by using the “vote” variable.

⁴The Goldthorpe-Heath scale is a social classification measure. It is related to the occupation-based Goldthorpe class scheme, but is derived from a survey of the social standing of occupations, so that jobs are ranked in terms of their social desirability.

Table 1.1: Comparison of responses of respondents to the Seyd and Whiteley survey (“Members”), and those identified by the British Election Survey as Labour identifiers and voters

		Members	Identifiers	Voters
Nationalisation	more nationalisation	48.9	36.8	37.0
	more privatisation	4.1	5.8	5.9
	no change	47.0	51.6	51.4
Tax and spend	cut taxes, spend less	0.5	2.4	2.1
	more taxes and spending	86.6	78.3	78.6
	no change	12.9	15.9	15.7
Redistribution	should redistribute wealth	66.4	76.7	75.9
	should not redistribute	13.9	8.1	8.9
	neither	19.7	15.1	15.2
Compromise	should compromise to avoid losing votes	21.5	15.6	14.9
	should not compromise	61.8	80.2	77.3
	neither	16.7	0.3	0.3
n (number of respondents)		5,761	1,615	1,313

Labour identifiers were chosen by using the “partyid” variable in the BES survey; Labour voters by using the “vote” variable.

to more rigorous testing, but this is outside the scope of this thesis. The data also indicate that while membership views may be slightly more extreme than the views of ordinary voters on some issues, they do tend in the same direction. Thus there is some support for considering whether the results in this thesis can be extended to voters as well. If they can be so extended, Labour should be even more concerned with the behaviour of its members, since this may foreshadow the behaviour of its sympathisers and, vitally, its voters.

1.3 Importance of problem

The study of this problem throws light on broader questions of party structure and of the continuing evolution of parties in an political environment where the mass media and focus group studies are increasingly vital. Do such changes mean that the grassroots of the party are becoming less important? The party system is clearly vital in modern politics: the nature of a party's composition and of the relationships between members and leaders is crucial to the way in which Western democratic politics is conducted. The literature review above demonstrates that there is to date little investigation into the impact of changes in the structure and direction of a party on the motivation of activists, the way in which their behaviour in response to such changes varies according to motivations, and thus on the way in which that party functions. A further question is whether these results will be applicable to parties in general, or only to the Labour party. While obviously one needs to be careful in extrapolating results, it seems likely that there will be behavioural and motivational similarities between party members in the various parties. Thus at the least, these results should provide a potential springboard for further investigation along these lines.

The issue is also interesting in terms of the ongoing history of the Labour Party. Is it moving away from its roots as a mass-membership party? Are the roles of leadership and members being altered? Is the behaviour pattern of the membership

being affected? These questions have implications for the future of both the Labour Party and the wider labour movement, and thus also for the future of British politics. The concept that Labour's roots are as a mass-membership party is of course contested. Labour was after all originally set up largely as a trade union party, in order to fight the Taff Vale decision and other similar rulings. Until 1918 individual members would join the ILP, rather than Labour, and even after 1918, their influence on party matters was extremely limited. Ben Pimlott (1977) discusses the constituency parties movement in the 1930s, which aimed to get more influence for local constituency parties (and thus for individual members). The movement was successful; but it demonstrates how little practical influence members had until that point. Some of those currently connected with the Labour Party leadership (such as Philip Gould) seem also not to believe that members have an important role in the party — Gould's (1998) book has a basic assumption throughout that Labour should take its cue directly from the voters and ignore membership opinion. However, Labour has recently increased its emphasis on the membership (one member one vote, direct voting for the leader, membership policy forums, etc⁵, and it is thus still interesting to establish whether members' behaviour patterns are being affected.

Finally, since I use a rational choice style analysis, the analysis of how and why members are acting as they are may throw light both on the ongoing debate about the motivations of political party members and, more generally, on the use of rational choice methodology in analysing the actions of individuals, and particularly of individuals functioning within a group.

⁵It is, of course, unclear as to what extent this is merely window-dressing. Certainly, membership power via referenda is seriously limited by the fact that the leadership set the agenda and the membership options are limited to "yes" or "no". There is also evidence that membership representatives are sidelined at policy forums, as discussed above (page 6). However, the fact remains that ostensibly at least, members are currently seen as important by the party.

1.4 Construction of hypotheses

In the remainder of this thesis, I examine the effects of various independent variables on two different (although similar) dependent variables. The first dependent variable is whether members stay or leave; the second is whether they become less active. Both of these questions feature directly in the Seyd and Whiteley 1997/1999 Labour membership survey data. They can both be seen as forms of “exit” in the context of Hirschman’s theory, and my interest is in what factors influence members’ decisions to leave the party or to stay.

Loyalty, the availability of alternatives, and the belief in one’s own potential influence are the major factors which I test. Hirschman’s theory prompts examination of the effect of loyalty, and enables his post hoc inclusion of it to be explicitly tested. The relevance of the availability of alternatives is also discussed by Hirschman, and intuitively would be expected to be an important factor in a member’s decision to exit. Hirschman argues that the availability of voice affects the choice to exit; belief in influence, as discussed above, can be seen as a stand-in for a member’s perception of the availability of effective voice. The hypotheses therefore rest on Hirschman’s theory, and will be discussed in rational choice terms, in order to examine motivation. I also look at members’ opinion on whether Labour should move to the middle ground, and their left/right position within the party — these hypotheses act as a measure of the level of dissatisfaction. All the hypotheses are discussed in more detail below.

My initial hypothesis is:

- Dissatisfied members are in general not leaving the party, but are becoming less active.

I then test further hypotheses as follows:

- The stronger a dissatisfied member’s loyalty to the party, the less likely they

are to leave.

- Dissatisfied members who see alternatives available are more likely to leave.
- Members who joined the party pre-1994 are more likely to be dissatisfied but less likely to leave.
- Dissatisfied members are less convinced that they can have an influence on politics.
- Dissatisfied members who still believe that they can influence politics are less likely to become less active or to leave.
- Dissatisfied members are less likely to believe that Labour should move to the middle ground.
- Dissatisfied members who believe that Labour should move to the middle ground are less likely to leave or to reduce their activity.
- Dissatisfied members are more likely to be left-wing, and left-wing members are more likely to be dissatisfied.

Discussion of hypotheses

The first hypothesis is clearly related to Hirschman's theory. Hirschman certainly claims that loyalty decreases the chance of an individual exiting; but as mentioned above, this is something of a post hoc equation-filler. I intend to investigate the relevance of loyalty empirically, which should, as well as throwing light on the actions of Labour Party members, this should provide new information about Hirschman's theory. There is an issue of the direction of causality in this hypothesis (and in the other hypotheses). Are individuals less likely to leave due to their loyalty, or is their loyalty a result of their choosing to stay or leave? In this case, it seems quite clear that the causal relationship is in the first direction: that loyalty has an impact on

the choice to leave. By its very nature, the level of loyalty must be the cause, not the effect.

Hirschman also discusses the effect of alternatives, which I consider in my second hypothesis. He points out that the possibilities for exit will reduce with the presence or absence of alternatives: in the extreme case of a monopoly, there is no opportunity for exit at all. Obviously, the extreme case does not apply in the case of political parties, since there is always the option to exit political involvement altogether (although it should be borne in mind that exit from political involvement does not permit full exit from politics itself, which affects all citizens). The broader point about the value of alternatives, however, still stands. It certainly seems intuitively probable that those who see an alternative available are more likely to leave. Those who are involved in party politics are likely to be sufficiently concerned with politics in general, and with their influence on politics, that they will not wish simply to abandon active politics altogether. Thus, if there is another option which enables them to leave the Labour party with which they are dissatisfied but still to be active in politics, this is likely to influence their decision to leave. Those who do not see such an option available have a more difficult decision. When I talk about “seeing an alternative available”, this refers to the idea of liking for other parties. The Conservatives, for example, would be unlikely to be seen as an available alternative (despite their undoubted existence, and the fact that they are the main political alternative), since it can safely be assumed that very few dissatisfied Labour party members will agree with the Conservatives on sufficient issues for them to want to move to the Conservative party. The issue is whether their attitudes to the smaller parties (the Liberal Democrats, the nationalist parties, the Greens, the small socialist parties) are such so as to make switching their allegiance to such parties a viable option.

Considering causality for this hypothesis, it is possible that members who leave become more likely to see other parties as acceptable, once they are outside the Labour environment. One potential solution to this problem would be to use the

1997 survey answers instead of the 1999 ones, since the members who had left by 1999 were still members in 1997, thus their opinions would not by that stage have been altered by the fact of their leaving. However, the problem with this is that it is entirely reasonable that individuals' opinions of other parties might have changed over two years. So it would be unfair to assume that a change in opinion was due to leaving, rather than being the cause of the leaving. With the data that I have available, it seems that it will not be possible to check the direction of causality of this connection. Indeed, this will be true of all the hypotheses; and in fact, it is not clear what data would enable this to be tested. Whilst I shall be aware of the possibility that the causal links might be in the opposite direction from that which I assume, I think it is reasonable, and justifiable, to presume that the causal direction is the intuitive one from my point of view. More specifically: I will assume that loyalty is a causal factor in the choice to stay or leave; that a member's perception of the availability of alternatives is similarly a causal factor; as is the belief that one can make a difference (discussed below).

The third hypothesis is that members who joined before 1994 are more likely to be dissatisfied, but less likely to leave. Obviously, the mere fact of their joining in itself is not strictly relevant; the point is that the date of their joining can be used to indicate whether they are "old Labour" or "new Labour" members. We can, in general (obviously there are exceptions) expect an individual who joined the party after 1994 to be more accepting of the New Labour project and its aims than a pre-1994 member. So, the issue is, firstly, whether this is in fact true — whether pre-1994 members are in fact more dissatisfied with the current direction of the party — and secondly, whether the length of time that they have been in the party will decrease the likelihood of their leaving.

The hypotheses concerning belief that one can make a difference to the party (that one's actions can have a real influence in politics) are slightly more involved. There is certainly an issue of causality, as discussed above. Untangling the causal connections between dissatisfaction and belief in influence is a complex issue, and is

beyond the scope of this thesis: as discussed above there is no quantitative evidence available to examine these connections. However, there is theoretical support for the idea that the lack of belief causes a greater preparedness to leave or to become less active. It seems clear that a prerequisite for action must be a belief that those actions will have some form of effect — otherwise the cost of the actions would outweigh their potential benefit.⁶ Thus, a lower belief that one's actions make a difference will, assuming the individual to be a rational actor, entail a lower propensity to act, and a higher propensity to leave and thus cease acting altogether. This relates to the “voice” part of Hirschman's theory, as discussed above.

The hypotheses concerning the middle ground are also problematic in terms of causation. In this case, it seems that it is likely to be the belief that Labour should not move to the middle ground that is one of the causes of dissatisfaction (given that Labour is explicitly moving towards the middle ground). Similarly, the belief that Labour should move towards the middle ground can stand for an agreement with Labour's current behaviour and political approach, and thus decrease the likelihood of members leaving or reducing their activity (since it seems clear that less agreement with the party direction will increase the likelihood of leaving). A similar argument also applies to the connection between dissatisfaction and being left-wing: Labour's recent direction is away from an overly left-wing stance, and thus left-wing members are more likely to be dissatisfied with recent party activity.

Other points

There are likely to be other factors which influence whether members leave the party or become less active in it. One alternative hypothesis which is probably valid is that most people leave or become less active not due to feelings of disappointment

⁶Note that this could merely entail a belief that actions, as part of the actions of a number of others, will have an effect; it need not be that individual action on its own which will be effective. The possibility of rational actors using group norms and actions as a basis for calculation is discussed above, on page 9.

with the party, but because of other factors. Whilst this may be statistically true, it is not intellectually interesting for my purposes. I need to be aware of this type of leaver, but I will not investigate them — I am interested in those who are leaving for political reasons. Note that I am *not* examining why members leave; I am examining what affects the behaviour choices (leaving, becoming less active, or no change) of dissatisfied members.

There is an issue as to how dissatisfaction should be measured, i.e. how dissatisfied members are to be identified. The factor I use is the individual's view of the government's record (a question asked in 1999) — this is discussed further in Chapter 2.

I also control for other factors which are not theoretically germane to my investigation, such as age, class, and gender — factors which have previously been shown to affect activism. Using multivariate statistical analysis, this is straightforward. Causality is an issue here, too. Obviously, gender affects attitude, not vice versa, and similarly with age. However, a variable such as class is more complex (although I use objective, rather than subjective class, which is the less complex of the two). Certainly, class can have an impact on opinions and attitudes, due to different life-experiences, different surroundings, and so forth. It is also possible that attitudes and opinions might have an effect on objective class — for example, by affecting whether an individual desires upward mobility. These are very complex issues, and are not dealt with further here. However, it is both possible and necessary to control for the variables themselves.

Chapter 2

Discussion of data

2.1 Information on data used

The Seyd and Whiteley data which I am using is unpublished at present — their book based on it is due to be published in September (Seyd & Whiteley 2002). Whilst I was able to obtain an advance copy of the data,¹ the full documentation is not yet available, and I had only copies of the 1997 and 1999 survey questionnaires.

The 1997 survey used a two-stage stratified random sample of Labour Party members, which was undertaken immediately after the 1997 general election. In the first stage, a random sample of 200 constituencies in Great Britain was taken. The second stage aimed to obtain an average constituency sample of approximately 30 party members, thus giving an overall target sample size of 6,000 party members. Seyd and Whiteley contacted 9,197 members, and got 5,761 responses — a return rate of 62.6% (Seyd 1999). The survey asked the respondents questions about themselves and their attitudes to various aspects of politics and of the Labour Party.

¹In fact the data was originally promised for September 2001, but was not actually made available to me until February 2002. It has now been deposited with the UK Data Archive in Essex: however, as it is still undergoing processing there, it is not yet generally available.

Two years later, in 1999, Seyd and Whiteley sent a follow-up survey, asking nearly identical questions, to the 5,761 original individuals. 1,325 people returned their survey on this occasion — a return rate of 23%. This drop in return rate is large, but not entirely surprising. There will inevitably have been some loss from moving house, death, etc, as well as individuals simply failing to return their surveys on the second occasion.

The bulk of my investigation is conducted on the 1,325 people who returned surveys in 1999, since I am interested in data that is as up-to-date as possible. This is especially important since by 1999 the government had been in power for two years, and thus members would have had a chance to evaluate the situation. In 1997, there was a huge amount of optimism after the General Election which might have had some distorting effect on the answers given.

The main concern to which the low return rate for the second survey gives rise is whether the data are still really random, and thus whether they can be taken as representative. There is always some risk that those returning a survey may be self-selecting, but the much lower return rate for the second survey increases this risk. In order to assess whether the data were still representative, I compared the basic descriptive statistics of all respondents in 1997 with those of the 1997 respondents who also returned the 1999 survey.

In fact, as seen in table 2.1, the 1997 statistics for age, gender, income, educational status, and Goldthorpe-Heath scale (11 point version)² for the group who also returned the second survey are very close to those for the whole group surveyed in 1997. There is no statistically significant difference in the means for sex, ethnicity, income, or Goldthorpe-Heath scale. The difference in age is, however, statistically significant. I also compared the means of the responses of the two groups on the questions which I will be using as independent variables (discussed later in this chapter), as shown in table 2.2. Again, there is little difference, and what difference there

²See footnote on page 18 for a brief explanation of this scale.

Table 2.1: Comparison of personal data in 1997 survey: all 1997 respondents against those who also responded in 1999

	All respondents	1999 respondents
Age in years (mean)	52	54
Sex (% male)	61	60
Ethnicity (% white)	95	96
Income (median)	3	3
Goldthorpe-Heath 11-pt (median)	2	2
n (number of respondents)	5,771	1,325
Income:	group 3 \equiv £10,000–£20,000	
Goldthorpe-Heath:	group 2 \equiv “Service class — lower”	

is is not statistically significant. Given that age is the only significant difference, and that this difference is small (2 years), it seems reasonable to conclude that at the least, the group of 1999 respondents are no less representative of the party as a whole than was the 1997 full group of respondents.

It may be that members who were either more or less active in 1999 were more likely to return surveys, but this data is obviously not available since there is no 1999 activity data for those who did not return surveys. Since the 1997 data in tables 2.1 and 2.2 indicates that the sample is still a fair one, it is justifiable to assume that this is the case. Using the Central Limit Theorem, since the sample size is sufficiently large (greater than 30), the results are likely to be a reasonable representation of the membership population as a whole.

Having established that the group of respondents in 1999 seem not to have significant differences from the group of respondents in 1997, from this point I shall look only at those who responded in 1999. Thus figures given for answers in 1997 of “all” respondents refer only to those who returned the second questionnaire. Note that when discussing the statistics relating to particular questions, the total will not always be 1,325 since some individuals did not answer all questions. However, in

Table 2.2: Comparison of means of responses in 1997 survey: all 1997 respondents against those who also responded in 1999

	All respondents	1999 respondents
Loyalty	3.4	3.5
Middle ground	2.9	2.8
Influence in politics	2.3	2.3
Left/right within party	4.3	4.3
n (number of respondents):	5,771	1,325
Loyalty:	strength of identification with party, 1(not)-4(very)	
Middle ground:	should the party move towards the middle ground? 1(strongly agree)-5(strongly disagree)	
Influence in politics:	can an individual have an influence on politics? 1(strongly agree)-5(strongly disagree)	
Left/right within party:	scale of 1(left)-9(right)	

general I give statistics as a percentage of valid responses, so this will not be an issue. In most cases, percentage values are given to one decimal place (exceptions are indicated). Missing values are ignored in calculations and tables throughout.

A wide variety of questions designed to elicit opinions on politics as a whole, and the individual's attitude to particular aspects of it, were asked in the surveys. The questions asked in 1999 were very nearly identical to those asked in 1997, with some minor exceptions. The information on joining the Labour Party and the personal data (on income, social status, occupation etc) was omitted from the 1999 survey, since that information had already been collected for individuals in 1997.³ The questions in the 1997 survey relating specifically to the 1997 General Election were also obviously omitted (similar questions about activism in general were asked in both surveys), and in the 1999 survey additional questions regarding the newly created party Policy Forums were asked. In addition, there were some minor changes in the range of opinion questions which were asked. Notably, the 1999 survey did not include the questions about opinions on animal rights issues, environmental issues, trade union affiliation, whether Labour should establish a prices and incomes policy in order to control inflation, and local authority independence. Neither did it include the two questions in the 1997 survey about long-term policy for Northern Ireland, and whether Britain should remain in the EU. The 1997 survey included a question about whether the NEC should have the final say in selected parliamentary candidates; the 1999 survey did not include this question, but did instead have a question on whether the selection and ranking of candidates for the list-based electoral systems in Scotland, Wales and Europe should be done by the NEC or by members. Due to the lack of documentation, I was unable to establish why these changes were made; however, none of them are particularly relevant to my area of investigation.

Several of the questions were similar, presumably in order to check that the respondent's answers were coherent. It is important to bear this in mind when

³The questions on age and gender were, however, asked again in 1999.

analysing the data, because it means that some variables are closely related to other variables — this can disguise a relationship with the dependent variable. In order to avoid this, I checked the level of correlation between different independent variables where this seemed necessary. Thus I was able to avoid multicollinearity by using only one of any correlated variables.

2.2 Setting up the analysis

Dependent variables

I chose two dependent variables (to be investigated separately): whether a member had become less active, and whether they had left the party. The “leaving” variable was already binomial in the data.⁴ I recoded the change in activity variable (which had three values: more active, no change, or less active) into two values, “more active or no change“, and “less active“.⁵ I felt this loss of information to be justifiable, as my interest is solely in those members who become less active. Thus I have no interest in the difference between those who became more active and those whose activity level remained the same. This also enabled me to use a logit model, which is the most appropriate model for the data (this model is described at the start of chapter 3).

Having chosen these two dependent variables, it was necessary to consider how best to fit them into the context of Hirschman’s exit, voice, and loyalty theory. Obviously, leaving the party qualifies as exit. However, should a reduction in the level of activity also be thought of as exit? Clearly it is not as much of a loss as if the member were to leave altogether, since the party still has the benefit of their membership fees, and also the PR benefit of an extra body for the membership figures. However, they do lose the electoral campaign benefit of the member. They

⁴0 = remained, 1 = left.

⁵0 = more active/no change, 1 = less active

may also lose (some of) the electoral benefit that ensues simply from someone being an active member of the party and discussing it with their neighbours and friends. As discussed earlier, there is evidence that this alone can increase the party vote in an area. Presumably, a member who leaves will remove this benefit entirely; but it is likely that a dissatisfied member will also reduce it, since they can no longer be expected to be so positive about their experience with Labour. Thus, a reduction in activity can be seen as a type of “mini-exit”. However, it should be borne in mind that a member who reduces their activity but does not leave can still exercise the “voice” option.

Identifying dissatisfied members

Since I examine the behaviour of the dissatisfied members, it is necessary to identify these members. One possible means of doing so would be to use the “thermometer score” for the Labour Party, and use a cutoff point of 50° below which members would be classified as dissatisfied. However, the problem with this is that the basis of the “thermometer score” is rather unclear. An individual could disapprove of the current direction of the party, yet still feel warmly towards it due to emotional attachments, or their feelings about the party’s history. Since the thermometer question was phrased so as only to ask about the warmth of the member’s feelings towards the party, this would clearly be a problem. A similar problem arises with the question which directly asks about the strength of members’ identification with Labour. Emotional attachments can be very strong; for example, someone who sees Labour as the party of the working class might still identify strongly with it despite not approving of current policies. A better method of identifying dissatisfied members is to utilise the question on the member’s opinion of the government’s record to date. It can safely be assumed that a member who is dissatisfied with the government’s behaviour is dissatisfied with the current situation in the party. There is a possible counterargument that members dissatisfied with the government’s record may be satisfied with the policies but dissatisfied with their speed of implemen-

tation. However, I consider this to be unlikely. A member who agreed with the policies would be unlikely to describe themselves in terms of “dissatisfaction” with the government.

Possibly this question could also be correlated with their opinion on Tony Blair, who can be, and frequently is, seen as the embodiment of the New Labour project. However, again, this question was asked in the context of a thermometer of feeling towards him, which, as discussed above, can be misleading. It would be perfectly possible for an individual to approve whole-heartedly of the New Labour project and yet to dislike Tony Blair himself. I therefore opted to use the “opinion of government record” question to identify dissatisfied members. Using this, I obtained a set of 361 dissatisfied members and 895 satisfied members (from the 1999 survey total of 1325 respondents — thus there are 69 respondents who are excluded from these sets due to not answering the question). These sets are still sufficiently large for reliable statistical analysis.

2.3 Useful variables

The Seyd and Whiteley study contains an enormous quantity of potentially useful data: they asked 57 questions, many with a number of sub-clauses. Not all of these, however, would be relevant or helpful to my investigation. I therefore began by looking through the data for potentially useful variables which would test my hypotheses, and obtaining initial descriptive data on them. I then chose an appropriate number of variables to investigate. Further exploration of the data, were this to be undertaken, could utilise more of the available variables.

Table 2.3: Strength of Labour feeling among members (percentage, 1999)

very strong	40.5
fairly strong	42.9
not very strong	11.8
not at all strong	4.9
<hr/>	
n (number of respondents):	1,325

Loyalty

Given that one of my major interests is in the relevance of loyalty as a factor influencing behaviour, the question “Would you call yourself very strong, fairly strong, not very strong, or not at all strong Labour?” was evidently useful. I concluded that this could be interpreted fairly readily as indicating the strength of a member’s loyalty to the party. The data show (see table 2.3) that most members (83%) fall into the “very strong” or “fairly strong” categories. I recoded the answers to the question into a binary variable, in order to be able to use it in regression testing more readily, coding “very strong or fairly strong” as 1 and “not very strong or not at all strong” as 0. I also used the original 4-level variable as a categorical variable, in order to obtain a further level of information for my interpretation of the results.

Views on party and individual principles

Another useful variable is the question which asks whether members agree that the Labour party should move to capture the middle ground?”. In fact, the data indicate that opinion on this is very evenly divided. However, I noted that there is a change between the first time that the question was asked, in 1997, and the second time, in 1999. Measuring on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is “strongly agree” and 5 is “strongly disagree”, the mean moved from 2.86 in 1997 to 3.11 in 1999 — i.e. a move towards more disagreement with this principle among members. This

Table 2.4: Members should be prepared to compromise their political principles if the party is to win elections (percentages 1997 and 1999)

	1997	1999
strongly agree	5.2	5.4
agree	34.1	24.4
neither	17.5	18.1
disagree	34.0	37.2
strongly disagree	9.0	14.8
n (number of respondents):	1,325	1,325

is of course a small move in absolute terms, but the difference in the means is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Looking at the bar charts of opinion in 1997 and 1999, in figure 2.1, the skew of the graph has also changed, making the move in opinion clear: the graphs are almost mirror images of one another. Both the “strongly disagree” and the “disagree” percentage values have increased, while the other three values (“neither”, “agree”, and “strongly agree”) have decreased. This indicates a general shift in membership attitude. In particular, the total who agree (i.e. those who agree or strongly agree) falls from 45% in 1997 to 37% in 1999, and the total who disagree (i.e. those who disagree or strongly disagree) rises from 34% in 1997 to 45% in 1999.⁶ This may, however, reflect the difference in views between those who are in power and those who are attempting to gain power: the latter are more prepared to make compromises in order to achieve their goal.

A related question is whether party members should be prepared to compromise their political principles if the party is to achieve electoral success. Again, there is a change between 1997 and 1999, as table 2.4 shows: the total who agree falls from 39.4% to 29.9%, and the total who disagree rises from 43.0% to 52.0%. This is significant at the 0.001 level.

⁶Values for graphs given to nearest whole number.

Figure 2.1: The Labour Party should move to capture the middle ground (percentage charts 1997 and 1999)

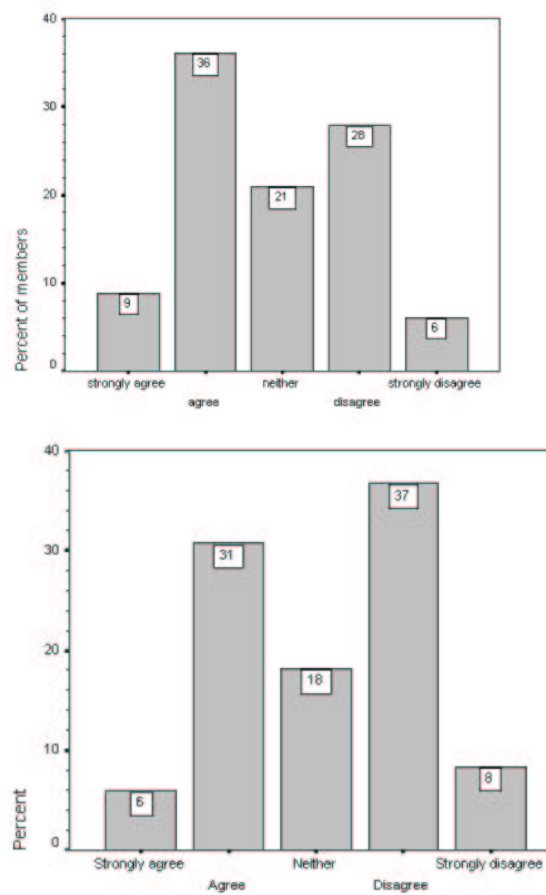


Table 2.5: The Labour Party should stand by its principles even if this means losing an election (percentages 1997 and 1999)

	1997	1999
strongly agree	18.8	15.4
agree	41.5	44.3
neither	17.7	17.3
disagree	19.2	20.2
strongly disagree	2.8	2.9

There is also the question as to whether the Labour party should always stand by its principles even if this should lose it an election, as in table 2.5. Here the change is significant only at the 0.1 level. The majority still wish the party to stick to its principles. It is useful to look at the 1999 figures and compare the attitude of satisfied and dissatisfied members, as in table 2.6. These figures indicate that dissatisfied members are very unwilling to see the party compromise its principles — 71.5% agree or strongly agree with the statement, as against 13.6% who disagree or strongly disagree (for satisfied members, these figures are 54.6% and 27.0%). Comparing the attitudes of satisfied and dissatisfied members in 1999 on the two questions examined above, a similar difference is seen — dissatisfied members disagree/strongly disagree in greater numbers (65.3%, against 37.5% of satisfied members) that the Labour Party should adjust to capture the middle ground, and also disagree/strongly disagree in greater numbers (72.7%, against 43.3% of satisfied members) that party members should be prepared to compromise their principles.

However, on this last question (whether the Labour Party should always stand by its principles, even if this should lose it an election) it is worth noting that different individuals may see Labour principles differently — for example, there is a spread of opinion when considering the question “the Labour Party has not moved away from its traditional values and principles”, as shown in table 2.7. Clearly, the majority of members (60.8%) feel that the party has moved away from its traditional principles

Table 2.6: The Labour Party should stand by its principles even if this means losing an election (percentages, satisfied and dissatisfied members 1999)

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
strongly agree	10.5	26.8
agree	44.1	44.6
neither	18.4	15.0
disagree	23.7	11.9
strongly disagree	3.3	1.7
n:	361	895

Table 2.7: The Labour Party has not moved away from its traditional values and principles (percentages, all members 1999, satisfied and dissatisfied members 1999)

	All members	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
strongly agree	5.3	4.5	7.3
agree	23.7	31.1	5.4
neither	10.3	13.6	2.5
disagree	42.5	43.8	37.7
strongly disagree	18.3	7.0	47.0

(i.e. they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement); but a reasonable number (29.0%) feel that it has not (i.e. they agree or strongly agree with the statement). Significantly more dissatisfied than satisfied members (84.7%, against 50.8%) feel that it has moved away from traditional principles. It seems reasonable to assume that this is an indication of different views of what traditional Labour principles are. It must also be remembered that some members who feel that Labour *has* moved away from its traditional values may not see this as a bad thing.

The variables discussed seem intuitively to be closely linked — a correlation analysis of the pairs (table 2.7) demonstrates that they are. There are particularly strong links between the questions “The Labour Party should adjust to capture the

middle ground” and “Party members should be prepared to compromise their political principles if the party is to win elections” and between the questions “Party members should be prepared to compromise their political principles if the party is to win elections” and “The Labour Party should stand by its principles even if this means losing an election” (clearly, the negative direction of this correlation matches common-sense expectations.). There seems to be very little direct correlation between the questions “The Labour Party should stand by its principles even if this means losing an election” and “The Labour Party has not moved away from its traditional values and principles”, but both of these are correlated with the other questions. It is interesting that there is a reasonably strong correlation between “The Labour Party should adjust to capture the middle ground” and “The Labour Party has not moved away from its traditional values and principles”. Perhaps those agreeing with both statements feel that the party has not moved away, but ought to — however, this seems unlikely as it is quite clear that the party has moved, explicitly and deliberately, towards the middle ground. More likely is that this demonstrates, as mentioned above, a variety of views on what constitutes Labour’s “traditional values and principles” — a significant number of people feel that it is possible both to capture the middle ground and to retain these principles, and indeed, presumably feel that Labour has done so.

The links between the responses to these questions mean that only one of them should be included as part of the proposed model, since otherwise the effects of the statement on the dependent variable will be hidden by the multicollinearity. I use the question “The Labour Party should adjust to capture the middle ground”, since it is the most strongly linked with the other related questions.

Attitudes towards other parties

Another set of variables which, according to my theory, are likely to be of use are members’ attitudes towards the alternative parties available to them. In particular,

Table 2.8: Correlation values (Pearson's R) between the data from various questions.

	midground	compromise	LP_prin	LP_trad
midground	.	0.39	-0.19	0.27
compromise	.	.	-0.43	0.18
LP_prin	.	.	.	-0.07
LP_trad

midground “The Labour Party should adjust to capture the middle ground”

compromise “Party members should be prepared to compromise their political principles if the party is to win elections”

LP_prin “The Labour Party should stand by its principles even if this means losing an election”

LP_trad “The Labour Party has not moved away from its traditional values and principles”

their attitude to the Conservatives is valuable, as one might anticipate that the more the Conservatives are disliked, the more likely the member is to be motivated by a desire to keep them out of power, even at the expense of seeing Labour drift further away from the member's desired political direction. Given the British political system, the Conservatives are still the main opposition to Labour, and certainly the only realistic government alternative. However, attitudes towards the other parties are also valuable, as they can reveal whether changing allegiance to another party is an option for dissatisfied members. Those who belong to a political party are likely to be sufficiently interested in politics that they would not wish simply to abandon active politics. The decision to leave would be likely to be much easier if there were an available alternative so that the individual could continue their political activity.

I compared the overall attitudes of members surveyed towards other parties with the attitude of those members who are dissatisfied with the Labour Party. Thus I aimed to establish whether dissatisfied members would have particular problems with leaving the party, if for example they felt more strongly than other members that the Conservatives must be kept from power at all costs, or if they considered there to be no other viable alternative for them. The differences were not huge, but it was true that dissatisfied members had a slightly lower mean temperature score for the Conservative party and the Liberal Democrats, and a slightly higher score for Plaid Cymru, the Green Party, and the SNP. Comparing the set of dissatisfied members with the set of satisfied members (rather than the set of all members) brought this comparison out more clearly, as seen in table 2.9. The difference between the satisfied and dissatisfied members' means was statistically significant at the 0.005 level for opinions on the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, the Green Party, and the SNP. It was significant at the 0.05 level for opinions of Plaid Cymru, and not significant at all for opinions of the Conservatives.

Clearly, both dissatisfied and satisfied members are deeply concerned with keeping the Conservatives out of power, and there is no significant difference of opinion between the two groups. However, the (significant) increased dislike of dissatisfied

Table 2.9: Attitudes of sets of members to Labour and to other parties (mean of temperature score, measured on a scale of 1–11)

	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	All (1999)
Labour	7.14	9.27	8.66
Conservatives	1.48	1.52	1.50
Liberal Democrats	4.35	5.04	4.85
Plaid Cymru	3.69	3.34	3.46
Greens	5.12	4.60	4.76
SNP	3.68	3.09	3.26

members for the Liberal Democrats, as the other main national party in British politics, implies that these members would not see them as a viable exit option. However, it is worth noting that while dissatisfied members have a lower temperature score for the Liberal Democrats than do satisfied members, this score is still higher than the temperature score of either of the nationalist parties. Thus the Liberal Democrat exit option may not be ruled out entirely. It is also notable, and unsurprising, that the temperature score for Labour is significantly lower for the dissatisfied members (although still much higher than that for the other parties). The difference in temperature between Labour and the Liberal Democrats is also lower for the dissatisfied members, which again may imply that the Liberal Democrats are not ruled out entirely as an exit option.

Dissatisfied members' average temperature score for the Greens is (significantly) higher, and thus they might well be seen as a viable alternative. The fairly low scores for the nationalist parties, although higher than those of satisfied members (the difference being significant in the case of the SNP), imply that these parties would not be seen as an option. These scores are lower than those for the Liberal Democrats or the Greens, so one of these two parties would be preferred. The problem, of course, is that the Greens are not a nationally viable party in terms of gaining power through seats in Parliament, although they do win seats on some city and county councils

(for example in Oxford). The SNP and Plaid Cymru may well be viable within Scotland and Wales, but they are now concentrating more on the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly than on Westminster — and as discussed, these parties are less likely to be seen as an exit option by dissatisfied members. Thus, members who feel very strongly that the Conservatives must be kept from power may be disinclined to see the Greens as an exit option, since campaigning for them is unlikely to help in the rout of the Conservatives. Campaigning for the Liberal Democrats is much more likely to be of use, as there are a significant number of constituencies where the Liberal Democrats are the second party to the Conservatives, or where the Conservatives are the second party to the Liberal Democrats. In these constituencies in particular, dissatisfied Labour members might be more likely to see the Liberal Democrats as an option. However, it is not possible with the data which I have to explore the relevance of whether the Liberal Democrats are the second party to the Conservatives in a particular constituency to the behaviour of members in that constituency⁷ (this would certainly be an interesting area for further investigation). The fact that dissatisfied members have a (significantly) stronger dislike of the Liberal Democrats than other members might also reduce this likelihood. Thus, the combination of feelings for other parties seems to indicate that dissatisfied members are severely restricted in their exit options. I shall, however, explore the statistical relevance of these factors in behaviour prediction.

The surveys did not ask about the Socialist Alliance (presumably since it did not exist in 1997 and had only just started up in 1999), nor about any of the other socialist parties (such as the Socialist Workers' Party), so I cannot add data on opinions of these parties to my analysis. However, it is possible to look at the vote figures for the Socialist Alliance in 2001, which are very small at 57,553 votes, 0.2% of the vote in the country.⁸ It therefore seems unlikely that opinion of it, or of other

⁷Although the data I have do include a value for which constituency particular members came from, the lack of documentation means that I do not know which value corresponds to which constituency. Thus testing the strategic situation is not possible.

⁸This was reasonably even over the country, with the vote in particular areas varying from 0.6% (in London) to 0.1% (in the South East and South West). The Socialist Labour party also received

socialist parties, is a major factor. On the other hand, the departure of Liz Davies (ex-Greenroots Alliance NEC member and Labour Party member for over 20 years) for the Socialist Alliance indicates that this may be seen by some Labour members as an exit possibility and thus might be relevant. This is something that would be worth further investigation, but would require the collecting of appropriate data.

Left/right placement

One of the questions asked in the survey asks members to place themselves on a left/right scale (valued from 1 to 9) within the Labour party and then asks them to place themselves on a similar scale within British politics as a whole. I felt that the first scale (left/right within the Labour party) would be more useful for my purposes, since I am interested specifically in Labour party members, and do not need to compare them with members of other political parties. I felt that this would also provide a more accurate measure of political positioning, since it is reasonable to assume that the majority of Labour party members would place themselves to the left of the scale which referred to British politics as a whole. Thus, the “left/right within the Labour party” scale would act as a subdivision of the left-hand section of the “left/right within British politics as a whole” scale. In fact, when I checked the data for left/right placement within British politics as a whole, I found that this was accurate, as shown by table 2.10. 72% place themselves in the first four categories, and 89% within the first five. The presence of the 3.5% in the two farthest right categories is something of a mystery.

As well as using the “left/right within the Labour party” variable as an interval scale in my regressions, I also recoded it as a binary variable, based around the mean (4.2). Thus 1–4 was coded as 1 and 5–9 was coded as 0. I also tried recoding it into three categories (left, 1–3, centre, 4–6, and right, 7–9), which variable I treated as a similar share of the vote. The Socialist Alliance did not stand in Scotland or Northern Ireland. (source: BBC Vote 2001 website)

Table 2.10: Members' placement of themselves on a left/right scale within British politics as a whole (1 = left, 9 = right, percentages, 1999)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11.6	17.7	25.2	17.3	16.9	4.8	3.2	1.4	2.1

categorical when running the regression.

Pre- and post-1994 members

This was of course one of the easiest variables to handle. Members were asked in the original 1997 survey which year they joined the Labour party in, and this was recoded into a binary variable to represent pre- and post-1994 joiners. As mentioned in Chapter 1, 1994 is relevant due to its being the year both that Tony Blair became party leader, and that the old Clause 4 was abolished. 56% of those surveyed in 1997 were pre-1994 members, and 39% were post-1994 (5% of answers were missing).

Belief in ability to have an influence in politics

The final question of use was the statement "People like me can have a real influence in politics if they are prepared to get involved" (asked in both 1997 and 1999; respondents were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed, or neither, with the statement). It is noticeable (see table 2.11) that there has been a change in members' feelings between 1997 and 1999. There has been a clear, although small, drop in the numbers of those agreeing that they can have a real influence, and a corresponding rise in those disagreeing.

I thus also coded a "loss of belief in influence" variable, which had a value of 1 if the member's belief in their ability to have an influence in politics had decreased, and 0 if it had increased or remained the same, in order to investigate whether this

Table 2.11: “People like me can have a real influence in politics if they are prepared to get involved” (percentages 1997 and 1999)

	1997	1999
Strongly agree	12.1	8.8
Agree	59.7	54.8
Neither	14.0	14.1
Disagree	12.8	19.4
Strongly disagree	1.4	3.0

disillusionment had a direct effect on members’ behaviour. I hypothesised that a member who had lost this belief would be more likely to reduce their activity or to leave than one who had never had such a belief in the first place.

This is clearly related to the statement “When Labour members are united and work together they can really change Britain” (again, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement). In fact, a correlation analysis demonstrates that they are related, with a Pearson’s R statistic of 0.287 with significance at the 0.001 level. Thus, I use only the first of these two variables in my analysis, in order to avoid multicollinearity.

As discussed in chapter 1, this variable can be used as an indirect indicator of voice. Members who still believe that they can have an influence on politics are more likely to attempt to use their voice option, rather than leaving. Thus this variable can be used to test the “voice” section of Hirschman’s theory.

Further variables

Whilst in this thesis I use the variables discussed above, it is possible that the construction of indices of particular variables would be useful in further investigation, in order to assess members’ overall opinions and beliefs. For example, an index

constructing a left/right scale on the basis of answers to certain questions could be useful as a comparison to members' self-placement on a left/right scale within the party. Such indices could be included in any further research on this topic.

Chapter 3

Creating a model

3.1 Variables of interest

As discussed in chapters 1 and 2, the variables of interest which I investigate in the model are:

1. the strength of an individual's identification with the Labour party;
2. their feelings about the various other parties;
3. their opinion on whether Labour should shift to capture the middle ground;
4. their self-defined position within the party in left/right terms;
5. their belief in their own ability to have an influence on politics, and the change in that belief.

These are used to test the hypotheses discussed in chapter 1. I also include sex, age, class, and income variables as a control.

The next consideration is how to treat these variables. As recorded by Seyd and Whiteley, variables 1, 3 and 5 are ordinal variables. Ideally, the model to

use for ordinal explanatory variables with a binomial dependent variable would be a multinomial logit model. This is an extension of the binary logit model which implies that an ordinary logit model holds for each pair of response categories. However, this is currently not available via SPSS. Thus, these variables could be treated either as interval variables (by using the numerical scores assigned to them by Seyd and Whiteley), as categorical variables (using the methods available in SPSS), or by recoding them into binary variables. Treating variables 1, 3 and 5 as interval variables would be misleading, since ordinal variables simply are not on an interval scale, and cannot be interpreted as such. I therefore construct below different models for each variable, using both a binary recode of these variables, and treating them as categorical variables. Variables 2 and 4 were both measured on scales (1 to 9 in the case of the self-defined left/right positioning, 1 to 11 in the case of feelings about the other parties). These can therefore legitimately be treated as interval variables, which makes the best use of the available information.

I first test my variables of interest independently of each other, to establish whether they have any effect on their own. I then construct a full model (section 3.3, page 69).

3.2 Testing variables separately

My models are constructed on the set of dissatisfied members (as my primary interest), and the analysis is a logistic regression analysis, since my dependent variables are binary.¹ Logistic regression works by looking at the effect of the presence of a variable as compared to its absence. In the case of binary variables, this is straightforward - one of the options is treated as the reference category (specifically, that one which is coded as 0), and the effect of the presence of the option coded as 1 is assessed, compared with its absence (i.e. the presence of the option coded as 0). In the case of ordinal variables, it is necessary to choose one of the options as a

¹I used SPSS V10 for Windows for the analysis.

reference category, and construct a set of binary dummy variables for the other options. In each case, the effect of the dummy variable is to be interpreted as its effect compared to that of the reference category. A concrete example: the loyalty variable has four options — “very strong” loyalty, “fairly strong” loyalty, “not very strong” loyalty, and “not at all strong” loyalty. I use the last category as the reference category, and thus construct three dummy variables, one comparing the effect of “very strong” loyalty against “not at all strong” loyalty, one comparing “fairly strong” against “not at all strong”, and the third comparing “not very strong” against “not at all strong”. Note that if one of these variables has value 1, the others must have value 0, and if all have value 0, this indicates that the loyalty variable has the “not at all strong” value. The reference categories for categorical variables are indicated for each set of equations below which use such variables: it is always the lowest of the values (i.e. “strongly disagree” for variables with categories from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”; “not at all strong” for loyalty which has the scale discussed above). More information on logistic regression models is available from Agresti & Finlay (1999).

Actions of dissatisfied members

The first hypothesis tested is the basic one that dissatisfied members are in general not leaving the party, but that they are becoming less active. Looking at the figures for those leaving the party, overall 15% of respondents to the 1999 survey had left. Subdividing this into satisfied and dissatisfied members, 35% of the dissatisfied members had left, but only 7% of the satisfied members. Thus it seems that the first part of my hypothesis is true in that the majority of dissatisfied members have remained in the party; but more have left than I would have expected. Investigation of the further hypotheses should explain why this is the case.

Looking at the figures for reduced activity levels, overall 47% of respondents had reduced their activity level. Looking at the dissatisfied members, this figure rose to

68% (as compared to 38% of the satisfied members). Thus, it seems that the second part of my hypothesis is also true: dissatisfied members are reducing their level of activity. This provides a base on which to continue my investigation of further hypotheses about the effects of various factors on reduction of activity or on leaving the party.

Loyalty

The next hypothesis examined is that the stronger the feelings of loyalty which a dissatisfied member has towards the party, the less likely they are to leave or to become less active.

It transpires that strength of feeling towards Labour, which I interpret as loyalty, does have a significant impact on dissatisfied members' behaviour. The stronger their loyalty, the less likely they are to leave or to reduce their activity level. The impact of this factor is stronger with leaving the party as the dependent variable, although its effect is also noticeable for activity level reduction as the dependent variable.

More specifically, I used loyalty as both a binary variable and a categorical variable.² This produced the following results, with p value and R^2 value given for each model³:

- Resigning: binary coding of loyalty:

$$\text{logit}(\pi) = -1.78(\text{loyalty}) + 0.42$$

$$p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.20$$

²Categorical variables were defined with “not at all strong” as the reference category. Binary coding was 1 = “very or fairly strong”, 0 = “not very or not at all strong”. See chapter 2 for further details.

³p measures significance; R^2 is a measure of the reduction in prediction error of the model compared to a model consisting of just the sample mean. R^2 closer to 1 indicates a better model. In fact, all R^2 values given in this thesis are pseudo- R^2 .

- Resigning: categorical coding of loyalty (levels of strength):

$$\text{logit}(\pi) = -3.49(\text{very}) - 2.85(\text{fairly}) - 1.96(\text{not very}) + 1.74$$

$$p < 0.001 \text{ for all values, } R^2 = 0.29$$

- Activity level: binary coding of loyalty:

$$\text{logit}(\pi) = -1.15(\text{loyalty}) + 1.58$$

$$p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.08$$

- Activity level: categorical coding of loyalty (levels of strength):

$$\text{logit}(\pi) = -1.82(\text{very}) - 1.63(\text{fairly}) + 2.15$$

$$p < 0.001 \text{ for all values except "not very" for which } p = 0.12 \text{ (hence its exclusion), } R^2 = 0.09$$

Clearly, loyalty does have a strong effect — strongest in the case of “leaving the party” as dependent variable, but quite strong for “activity level” as well. The direction is negative, i.e. increased loyalty will decrease the likelihood of a member leaving the party or reducing their activity, and it is particularly strong for the highest value of loyalty. It is also strong for the reference value, “not at all strong” loyalty (the values for the other categories are given in comparison to this).

This finding implies that Hirschman’s “loyalty” factor is indeed justifiable. It seems that loyalty is an important factor which impacts on whether or not a member will exit (its overall importance will be confirmed later in the chapter when a full model is constructed). Thus, while Hirschman uses loyalty as a post hoc equation filler, in fact it can be demonstrated to be an important part of the equation of whether or not a member leaves. So Hirschman was justified, at least in terms of the Labour Party (and this can probably be extended to other parties). In fact, this result is not really surprising. Intuitively, one would expect loyalty to be a factor in choosing to leave a party or stay within it. Empirically it is quite clear that

individuals *do* often become emotionally attached to a political party, and a basic awareness of human emotional behaviour and motivation leads one to conclude that this is highly likely to affect their actions. Presumably, this was part of Hirschman's rationale for including loyalty in his theory when it became clear that his initial model was insufficient. However, it is useful to demonstrate empirically that loyalty *is* relevant, at least in this sort of situation, and an excellent result to find that it is of such high relevance. When I construct a full model, later in this chapter, its relevance in comparison to the other factors will also be clear. Whether loyalty is so relevant in the application of his theory to a consumer situation (which is what is explicitly considered in Hirschman's book, although he does mention the possible application to political party membership) is another matter.

Testing the model on the set of satisfied members shows that loyalty has less effect on the behaviour of these members than on that of dissatisfied members (in terms of leaving the party or reducing their activity). It is possible that this difference between satisfied and dissatisfied members is due to satisfied members being more likely to leave or reduce their activity due to factors which are not relevant for my purposes, such as illness, moving house, or family issues. This can be assessed by examining the descriptive statistics on "reason for reduction in activity" for both sets of members. It is not possible to examine the descriptive statistics for "reason for leaving" as these are coded simply as "comment" and "no comment", although a slightly larger percentage of the satisfied members (11.1%) made no comment than did the dissatisfied members (3.2%). Table 3.1 shows the percentage of dissatisfied and satisfied members giving particular reasons, and table 3.2 shows the percentages recoded into political, non-political, and "other" categories (the basis of the recoding is given in the final column of table 3.1). The second table shows the difference more clearly — many more of the dissatisfied members reduced their activity for political reasons, and many fewer for non-political reasons. A number of the "other" reasons also gave comments which indicated that the member had had a political reason for reducing their activity level, but coding these is beyond the scope of this thesis. These statistics indicate that my speculation is probably correct. Strength of feeling

Table 3.1: Percentage of members giving particular reason for reduced level of activity

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Recode
Lack of spare time	28.1	7.9	†
Deterioration in health	25.3	9.4	†
Move of home	1.1	0.4	†
Change in work circumstances	5.5	3.7	†
My current disillusionment with politics	6.8	21.3	★
No longer being a party official	0.9	0.4	†
Frustration at being unable to influence politics	1.6	6.4	★
Change in family circum- stances	5.7	1.9	†
Changes within the party	3.4	25.5	★
Other reason	21.5	23.2	○

★ = political reason, † = non-political reason, ○ = other

is unlikely to make as much difference to changes in activity or to leaving when the change or departure is due to external factors. Since satisfied members are more likely to leave or to reduce their activity due to these external factors than to political factors, strength of loyalty will therefore have less of an effect on the probability of these events. The converse is of course true for the dissatisfied members — they are more likely to leave or to reduce their activity for political reasons, and thus strength of loyalty will have a stronger effect on their decisions.

Loyalty can pose a problem for rational choice theory, as it is obviously not explicable in terms of material benefit. However, rational choice theory is not limited purely to material costs and benefits. It can also deal with emotional costs. Whilst proposing loyalty, as Hirschman did, as a post hoc factor to fill an empirical gap,

Table 3.2: Percentage of members giving particular reason for reduced level of activity (recoded from table 3.1)

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Political	11.9	53.2
Non-political	66.7	23.6
Other	21.5	23.2

is highly dubious, here it is demonstrated explicitly that it has a measurable effect. Humans are emotional creatures, and breaking a bond of loyalty has deleterious emotional effects. This is, clearly, a cost, and as such, a rational choice approach can explain the negative effect of loyalty on leaving the party or reducing levels of activity.

Attitude to other parties

The next hypothesis is that members who see alternatives available are more likely to leave. However, the regression testing indicated that in the main, the temperature scores which an individual gave to other parties are not relevant. The exception to this was the SNP — for leaving the party as the dependent variable, the SNP temperature score is significant at the 0.05 level,

$$\text{Leaving: } \text{logit}(\pi) = 0.17(\text{SNP}) - 0.89$$

with $R^2 = 0.03$. This means that a liking for the SNP makes a member more likely to leave. Part of the reason for this is obvious, since the increased liking for the party increases the likelihood that the member will see them as a viable alternative, and thus as an exit option. However, this is surely only an option within Scotland — outside Scotland, the SNP are clearly not an exit option. The probable explanation for this is the fact that the SNP are seen as an “Old Labour” party. Hence, liking for the SNP is a surrogate for having “Old Labour” values, and thus what this really

indicates is that (unsurprisingly) those with “Old Labour” values are more likely to exit. Evidence for this claim is given by Iain McLean in the notes to his article “The National Question”. McLean quotes Professor James Mitchell (by letter) as saying that ongoing surveys of Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) show that judging by their issue positions, SNP MSPs are to the left of Labour (McLean 2001). This would also explain the significance of the difference in dissatisfied members’ opinion of the SNP, compared to satisfied members’ opinions, when the difference between the groups’ opinion of Plaid Cymru, the other nationalist party, is not significant (see page 41). The SNP opinion is acting as a surrogate for “Old Labour” values, and thus dissatisfied members, who are more likely to be “Old Labour” than satisfied members, have a higher opinion of the SNP.

However, it should be noted that the SNP effect is rather small. This variable was not significant (nor were any of the others) for the activity level dependent variable.

I amalgamated the temperature scores to give a “total score” (more accurately, to give a mean of all the scores given by a member to the various parties), in order to see whether this might be more useful. There were a couple of issues surrounding this. The first was which parties should be amalgamated with which. I tried amalgamating the scores for all the other parties (Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Plaid Cymru, the Green Party, and the SNP), on the grounds that although the attitude to the Conservatives can be described in different terms (more dislike of the Conservatives means less likely to exit) than that to the Greens or the SNP (more liking of these alternative parties means more likely to exit), the net effect is the same — a higher temperature score makes an individual more likely to exit. However, this is not significant for either dependent variable.

I then amalgamated them into two different variables — liking for the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, and liking for Plaid Cymru, the Greens, and the SNP. This division was on the basis that the statistics indicated that dissatisfied members disliked the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats more than the average

member, but liked the other parties more than the average member — thus I felt that these could justifiably be seen as different factors. Using this recoding (again, I took the mean of the scores), it transpires that for the “change in activity level” dependent variable, the amalgamated value for Plaid Cymru, the Green Party, and the SNP is significant at the 0.05 level. Specifically:

$$\text{Activity level: } \textit{logit}(\pi) = 0.124(\text{PC} + \text{Green} + \text{SNP}) + 0.40$$

with $p = 0.002$ and $R^2 = 0.02$. This effect is in the positive direction, i.e. increased liking for these three parties made a dissatisfied member more likely to decrease their activity. However, note again that the value is quite small. This variable was again significant for the “resigner” dependent variable but this time only at the 0.1 level. Again, the effect was in a positive direction, i.e. increased liking for these groups made a dissatisfied member more likely to exit. However, the value was again small, and smaller than for the “activity level” dependent variable:

$$\text{Leaving: } \textit{logit}(\pi) = 0.085(\text{PC} + \text{Green} + \text{SNP}) + 0.40$$

with $R^2 = 0.01$.

Finally, I tried recoding the variables as binary variables, by coding 1 as above the mean and 0 as below the mean (the means are shown in table 2.9, and I used the “all members” value for the mean, for obvious reasons). The analysis showed that none of the variables coded in this way are significant.

It seems that feelings for Plaid Cymru, the Green Party, and the Scottish Nationalists do have an effect on the actions of dissatisfied members, and this effect is in the predicted direction — liking for these other parties makes a member more likely to lessen their activity or to leave. This is explicable in straightforward rational choice terms as far as the increased likelihood of leaving is concerned — members who like these parties may see them as an exit option. However, it is less obvious as to why there should be an effect on lessened activity. It is possible that the effect for the combined group is riding on the effect of the SNP temperature score; this,

however, ought not to be the case when drop in activity level is the dependent variable, since the SNP score taken independently is not significant for this dependent variable. There does, therefore, seem to be more to explain than simply the SNP effect. A possible explanation may be that higher temperature scores for the nationalist parties are more common in Wales and Scotland, in constituencies where these parties are particularly strong, and thus members feel able to reduce their activity since the main opposition is from these parties, which the member feels reasonably well towards. This may also be linked to the dislike for the Conservatives. Dislike for the Conservatives is very high among all party members, and it seems probable (certainly there is plenty of anecdotal evidence for this) that the wish to keep the Conservatives out of power is a strong impetus for Labour party member activity.⁴ Thus, in Wales and Scotland, where the Conservatives have very little presence, this motivation is less strong, so there is a higher likelihood that members will reduce their activity. Since temperature scores for Plaid Cymru and the SNP are likely to be higher in Wales and Scotland respectively, this may explain the connection — it would thus be essentially a secondary connection.

This explanation, though, would seem not to work in the case of the Green Party, who are obviously not in a position to win parliamentary seats. However, they are in some areas in a position to win council seats, and a reduction in activity by members will include a reduction in activity in campaigning for local elections. So a similar effect may be occurring — in some areas, if the Greens are particularly strong, members who feel better towards them may well be less inclined to campaign so strongly, since the opposition is more acceptable to them (certainly more acceptable than the Conservatives). Presumably members would prefer a Labour victory, since otherwise they would leave and join the Greens, but they may feel that they do

⁴Certainly there is empirical evidence for anti-Conservative voting in 1997 and 2001, and it seems reasonable that this should extend to party members. There is also evidence from the Seyd and Whiteley data that a desire to oust the Conservatives is a motivating factor for members: 11% of members joined the party specifically to oppose the Conservatives, and this figure is slightly higher for dissatisfied members.

not want to campaign for a Labour party which they disagree with, and lack the impetus provided by the feeling that a win by the opposition would be much, much worse. In rational choice terms: campaigning is costly to the individual, and if the perceived benefits of campaigning are smaller, due to disagreement with Labour and a lack of strong dislike for the opposition, then it becomes rational for the individual not to campaign. This seems like the most likely explanation for the relevance of this factor; however, it is only speculation. I do not have the data to investigate the effect of the strength of a particular party in a member's constituency, together with the feelings of that member for the party, on the member's behaviour.⁵ This would, however, be something that would be interesting to investigate further.

An interesting speculation concerns the effect that members' opinions of the alternative socialist parties — in particular, of the Socialist Alliance — has on their behaviour (this was not a question asked by Seyd and Whiteley so cannot be analysed with this data). Working on the basis of the discussion above, it would seem that it was unlikely to have much, if any, effect, since the Socialist Alliance are not strong in any seats, parliamentary or council. Their low vote in 2001 (see page 46) also indicates that there would be likely to be little effect. However, Labour Party members have left the Labour Party for the Socialist Alliance (a relatively high-profile example being Liz Davies, former Grassroots Alliance NEC member). It seems possible that this would be more likely to make a difference in safe Labour seats. Members in these seats would not risk letting in the Conservatives by reducing their activity, or leaving the party, in these constituencies. They might even see the Socialist Alliance as having a reasonable chance of doing well in such constituencies (though it is highly unlikely that anyone expected the SA to win any parliamentary seats in 2001). Thus, they would be more prepared to reduce their activity for Labour, perhaps even in order to campaign for the SA (although they would then risk being ejected from the Labour Party), or to leave in order to join the SA. Note, in support of this theory, that the Socialist Alliance in 2001 stood primarily in safe Labour seats, since they too did not want to let in the Conservatives by decreasing

⁵See footnote on page 45.

the Labour vote in marginals. This implies that this line of argument is at least defensible. Investigating this further would be valuable research.

Middle ground

The next hypothesis concerns the effect of members' opinions on whether Labour should, or should not, move towards the middle ground in order to win an election. Using leaving the party as the dependent variable, the statistical results indicated that this is not significant, and thus not an important factor.

Using drop in activity level as the dependent variable, however, opinion as to whether Labour should move to the middle ground is significant, at the 0.005 level for the binary recode of the original variable. Specifically:

$$\text{Activity level: } \textit{logit}(\pi) = 0.72(\text{disagree}) + 0.30$$

with $R^2 = 0.04$. This means that those who do not feel that Labour should move to capture the middle ground are more likely to reduce their activity level, though, as the previous paragraph indicates, this will have no effect on whether or not they leave the party. Using the variable as a categorical variable,⁶ the significance values vary between categories (from 0.004 to 0.20). Only the "agree" category (at the 0.005 level) and the "neither" category (at the 0.05 level) are significant. Both of these have negative effects, specifically:

$$\text{Activity level: } \textit{logit}(\pi) = -1.19(\text{disagree}) - 1.03(\text{neither}) + 1.37$$

with $R^2 = 0.05$. This means that in comparison to the reference category, which is "strongly disagree", these two variables decrease the probability of a drop in a member's activity. In other words, those members who strongly disagree with the statement that "Labour should move towards the middle ground" are the most likely to lessen their activity. This is reasonably straightforward in rational choice

⁶"Strongly disagree" is used as the reference category.

terms: strong disagreement with this statement would imply strong disagreement with recent Labour Party policy, and this thus acts as an intensifier of dissatisfaction. Members who strongly disagree will obtain even lower benefits from activity, as they are more dissatisfied with the party, and thus there is a higher likelihood that these benefits will fail to outweigh the costs. Thus these members will become less active.

Left/right placement

Using left-right placement as an interval value, the statistical results indicate that members' placement of themselves on the left/right axis within the party is not significant for either dependent variable.

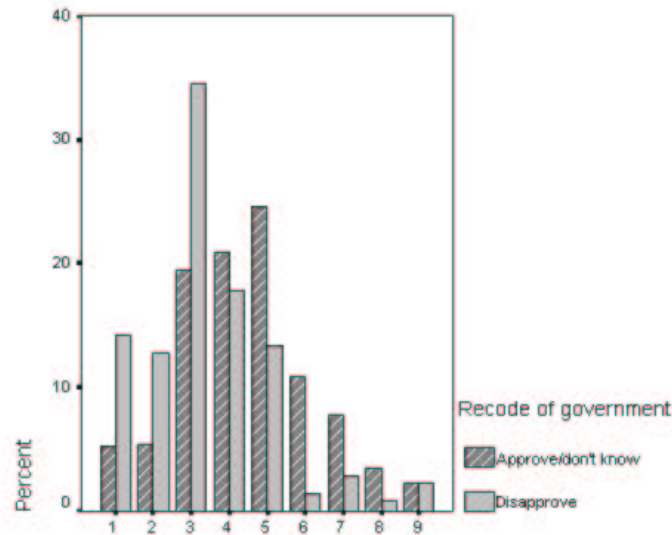
I attempted to confirm this finding by recoding the variable into a binary variable, with a value of 1 for values below the overall mean (the mean being 4.16, thus values 1–4 were recoded to 1) and a value of 0 for values on or above the overall mean. This proved to be significant at the 0.005 level for lowering of activity level as the dependent variable: specifically,

$$\text{Activity level: } \textit{logit}(\pi) = 0.85(\text{left of mean}) + 0.08$$

with $R^2 = 0.04$. In other words, left-wing dissatisfied members were more likely to reduce their level of activity. However, this variable was not significant for leaving the party as the dependent variable. I also tried recoding the variable into left/centre/right (1–3 recoded to 1, or left; 4–6 to 2, or centre; 7–9 to 3, or right) and treated this as a categorical variable. However, this proved not to be significant for either dependent variable.

There is a question as to why left/right placement has this effect, to which the answer is far from clear. We would expect left-wing members to be more likely to be dissatisfied. Indeed, I was able to confirm the existence of a correlation between left/right placement and dissatisfaction — members who consider themselves to be on the left of the party are more likely to be dissatisfied, as is quite clearly

Figure 3.1: Graph of dissatisfied members by position on left-right axis, scale 1–9



shown by table 3.3 and by figure 3.1. The percentage of dissatisfied members in a particular group decreases steadily as one moves towards the right of the left-right scale, although there is another rise at the farthest right edge of the graph. This is, of course, hardly a surprising finding. However, this does not explain the significance of left/right placement in explaining a drop in activity level. Since I use only the set of dissatisfied members, left/right placement must have an effect beyond merely its link with dissatisfaction. In fact, the most likely explanation is to do with level of dissatisfaction. The “dissatisfied” variable measures only whether members are dissatisfied, not how dissatisfied they are. It seems likely that the more left-wing a member is, the stronger their dissatisfaction will be, and this would make them more likely to reduce their level of activity. This is certainly justifiable from a rational choice perspective: the benefits of activity are lower, due to increased disagreement with the party, and if these benefits sink below the costs of activity, it becomes rational to reduce activity in order to lower the costs (as argued above for the “middle ground” variable). Since the variable which I use to measure dissatisfaction has only three levels (satisfied, dissatisfied, and neither), it is not possible to confirm this hypothesised explanation, but it does seem plausible.

Table 3.3: Percentage of members who are dissatisfied, grouped by their self-identification as left or right within the party (on a scale of 1–10)

Views L/R within party	Dissatisfied	Not dissatisfied
1	53	47
2	29	51
3	42	58
4	26	74
5	18	82
6	5	95
7	13	87
8	9	91
9	29	71

Differences between pre- and post-1994 members

My next hypothesis is that members who joined the party pre-1994 are more likely to be dissatisfied, but less likely to leave, than post-1994 members. The percentages of dissatisfied members in the pre- and post-1994 groups are shown in table 3.4. In fact, the difference is very slight — only 4% fewer of pre-1994 members are dissatisfied. However, the figures for the percentages of pre- and post-1994 members who left the party did agree with the second part of my hypothesis (see table 3.5). Less than a third (30%) of the pre-1994 members left, compared with very nearly half (49%) of the post-1994 members. This is probably due to the fact that pre-1994 members have had more time to develop an attachment to the party than the more recent joiners. It is fairly easy to see that leaving would become steadily more difficult as the length of one's association with the party increased — it would become part of the furniture of one's life, which would increase the costs of making any change.

Table 3.4: Percentage of members who are satisfied/dissatisfied

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Members who joined pre-1994	70	30
Members who joined post-1994	74	26
All members	71	29

Table 3.5: Percentage of members who left the party

	Remained	Left
Members who joined pre-1994	70	30
Members who joined post-1994	51	49
All members	64	36

Belief that individual can have an influence in politics

My next hypothesis is that dissatisfied members are less convinced that their actions can make a difference to the party. The figures are shown in table 3.6. The total percentage of dissatisfied members who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “people like me can have a real influence in politics if they are prepared to get involved” was 44%, compared to 71% of the satisfied members. 40% of the dissatisfied members, compared to 16% of the satisfied members, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Thus, it seems that this hypothesis is also correct. There is a question as to whether the members are dissatisfied because they feel they cannot have any influence, or whether their dissatisfaction causes them to feel that they do not have any influence, but the data available is not sufficient to decide the answer.

My final hypothesis is that members who still believe that they can make a difference are less likely to become less active or to leave the party. I treated the

Table 3.6: “People like me can have a real influence in politics if they are prepared to get involved” (percentages of members)

	Dissatisfied	Satisfied
Strongly agree	5	10
Agree	39	61
Neither	16	13
Disagree	33	14
Strongly disagree	7	2

variable first as a categorical variable⁷ and then used it recoded as a binary variable.⁸ Using activity level as the dependent variable, agreement with the statement “People like me can have a real influence in politics if they are prepared to get involved” has no significant effect as a binary variable, but as a categorical variable it is significant at the 0.1 level ($p = 0.07$) for the “strongly agree” category. Specifically:

$$\text{Activity level: } \textit{logit}(\pi) = -1.22(\text{strongly agree}) + 1.1$$

with $R^2 = 0.02$. In other words, those who strongly agree with the statement that they can make a real difference if they get involved are less likely to reduce their activity; however, it is only those who feel so strongly about it that are significantly affected. Note that this effect is in comparison to the reference category of “strongly disagree”.

When leaving the party is the dependent variable, there is a significant effect with both codings of the variable. Using it as a binary variable (coding as before), it is significant at the 0.01 level. Using it as a categorical variable,⁹ it is significant at the 0.005 level. Specifically, the models produced are as follows:

⁷Reference category is “strongly disagree”.

⁸1 = disagree/strongly disagree, 0 = strongly agree/agree/neither.

⁹Reference category is “strongly disagree”.

- Leaving: belief in influence as binary:

$$\text{logit}(\pi) = 0.57(\text{influence}) - 0.88$$

$$R^2 = 0.03$$

- Leaving: belief in influence as categorical variable (SA = strongly agree, A = agree, N = neither, D = disagree):

$$\text{logit}(\pi) = -2.46(\text{SA}) - 2.34(\text{A}) - 1.70(\text{N}) - 1.89(\text{D}) + 1.28$$

$$R^2 = 0.10$$

The first model implies that members who do not feel that they can have an influence are more likely to leave the party. The second model implies that members who strongly disagree with the statement are the most likely to leave the party, since all the other categorical variables have a negative effect, i.e. their presence reduces the likelihood of leaving. If none of the categorical variables are present, this corresponds to “strongly disagree”. Notice that the coefficients for the four categories are close to one another, although the “strongly agree” coefficient is the highest. This indicates that the reference category has the strongest effect, and that the effects of the other categories are similar. In other words, those who feel strongly that they lack influence are most likely to leave the party. The higher value of the pseudo- R^2 for the second model is unsurprising, as this variable uses more information.

This result is as would be expected. The important factor in the cost-benefit calculus is not what actual benefits are achieved, but what the individual expects those benefits to be. A lower belief in one’s own efficacy will lower the expected benefits of action, and thus action becomes less rationally justifiable. Depending on other factors and on the actual level of belief, this will lead either to a reduction in activity or to leaving the party altogether.

I also looked at whether the loss of belief in the ability to have an influence in politics was relevant. It is not significant when activity level is the dependent variable,

but it is significant at the 0.005 level when leaving the party is the dependent variable. Again, the effect is positive, with a coefficient of 0.65 (the variable was coded so that 0 corresponded to an increase in belief or no change, and 1 corresponded to a decrease in belief). Specifically:

$$\text{Leaving: } \text{logit}(\pi) = 0.65(\text{loss of belief}) - 0.91$$

with $R^2 = 0.03$. This is interpreted as meaning that those who have suffered a decrease in their belief in the ability of individuals to have an influence are more likely to leave the party. This, again, fits with what we would expect: these individuals are becoming disillusioned about the likely success of their own efforts, and are thus more likely to leave. This also fits with Hirschman's exit, voice, and loyalty theory: these individuals are losing their faith in the impact of voice, and so are more likely to choose to leave.

Relevance of control variables

My regression analyses indicated that of the control variables of gender, age, or social class, age is significant at the 0.001 level for the dependent variable of reducing activity level (older members are less likely to reduce their activity), and both age and income are significant (at the 0.001 level and the 0.05 level respectively) for the dependent variable of leaving the party (older or better-off members are less likely to leave). Neither gender nor social class have any impact on the likelihood of dissatisfied members leaving the party or reducing their level of activity.

3.3 Full model

This brings me to the construction of a full model of the factors discussed above for the two different dependent variables. I chose to use categorical rather than binary variables for loyalty, belief in ability to influence politics, and agreement

that Labour should move to capture the middle ground. All these variables are significant when examined independently, as both binary and categorical variables, and categorical variables contain more information. I used two separate methods to enter the variables: forward stepwise likelihood ratio (forward LR) and backward stepwise likelihood ratio (backward LR). I was thus able to compare the results of the two methods, as a check on the models produced. The regressions were run on the set of dissatisfied members.

Dependent variable: leaving the party

I investigate two different models for this dependent variable. The first includes the factors of age, income, loyalty, SNP temperature score, belief in ability to influence politics, and loss of belief in ability to influence politics. The second is identical save for the replacement of the SNP temperature score with the recoded variable for the mean of the Plaid Cymru, Green Party, and SNP temperature scores. Obviously, these two variables are closely connected, and testing them in the same model would produce multicollinearity. In fact, it transpires that neither is significant in the full model.

The results of the first model are shown in table 3.7. It is clear that age, loyalty, and belief in ability to influence politics should be included in the model. Less clear is whether income should be included, as it was significant in the model produced by backward LR, but not in that produced by forward LR. In fact, in the model produced by backward LR it is not significant at the 0.05 level (its significance is 0.068, noticeably higher than any of the other variables), and it has a large standard error. It is therefore excluded from the model, on the grounds that its significance is small, its standard error is relatively large, and simpler models are generally considered to be better. My next problem was which set of coefficients to use. Given that the values were very close to each other, I use those given by the forward LR model, since this excludes income as a variable, and its inclusion is likely to

have been the cause in the change in the coefficients of the other variables in the backward LR model.

This produces a model as follows¹⁰:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Leaving}(1): \text{logit}(\pi) = & -0.04(\text{age}) - 3.79(\text{VSL}) - 2.98(\text{FSL}) - 2.23(\text{NSL}) \\ & - 2.38(\text{SAI}) - 2.87(\text{AI}) - 2.19(\text{NI}) - 2.23(\text{DI}) + 7.25 \end{aligned}$$

Interpreting this model, it is clear that although age is a significant factor, its influence (which is negative, i.e. higher age reduces the likelihood of leaving) is very small indeed. Loyalty is clearly the most important factor, and as would be expected, the likelihood of a member leaving decreases with increased loyalty. In particular, it is notable that all three non-reference categories (very strong, fairly strong, and not very strong loyalty) significantly decrease the likelihood of leaving compared with the reference category of not at all strong loyalty. Belief in the ability to influence politics is also an important factor (although less so than loyalty). Again, it is notable that the major effect is in the reference category; the non-reference categories have quite similar coefficients. Strongly disagreeing that one can influence politics by getting involved thus makes an individual much more likely to leave the party. The relatively large standard errors (in comparison to the value of the coefficient) also indicate that these are less important variables. In contrast, the loyalty variables have low standard errors in comparison with their coefficients, thus further indicating the importance of loyalty as a factor, and its reliability. The R^2 value of this model is 0.42, which is a good level of explanation for survey-based data.

The results of the second model are shown in table 3.8 — both forward and backward regression gave identical results, which indicates that the model is reasonably good. It is clear that age, income, loyalty, and belief in ability to influence politics should be included in the model, judging by these results. It is worth noting, however, that the significance level of income is 0.047 — very close to the 0.05 cutoff.

¹⁰Variable coding: VSL = very strong loyalty, FSL = fairly strong loyalty, NSL = not very strong loyalty, reference category = not at all strong loyalty; SAI = strongly agree with influence statement, AI = agree, NI = neither, DI = disagree, reference category = strongly disagree.

Table 3.7: Results from testing of first full model for leaving the party as the dependent variable: coefficients of independent variables as given by logistic regression (standard error in brackets)

	Forward LR	Backward LR
Age	-0.04 (0.01)	-0.05 (0.01)
Income	x	-0.19 (0.11)
Loyalty: VS	-3.79 (0.61)	-3.78 (0.61)
Loyalty: FS	-2.98 (0.54)	-2.96 (0.55)
Loyalty: NS	-2.23 (0.56)	-2.23 (0.57)
Loyalty: reference category NAAS	-	-
SNP temperature	x	x
Influence: SA	-2.38 (1.12)	-2.44 (1.16)
Influence: A	-2.87 (0.74)	-2.75 (0.75)
Influence: N	-2.19 (0.78)	-2.14 (0.80)
Influence: D	-2.23 (0.73)	-2.10 (0.75)
Influence: reference category SD	-	-
Loss of belief in influence	x	x

Loyalty: VS = very strong, FS = fairly strong, NS = not very strong; reference category NAAS = not at all strong
 Influence: SA = strongly agree (that can have influence in politics if get involved), A = agree, N = neither, D = disagree; reference category SD = strongly disagree
 Other: x = variable not significant

Its standard error is also high in comparison to the coefficient, which indicates that it is not an important factor. The R^2 value was 0.44, again showing a good level of correlation (and better than the first model — this is due to the addition of income as an extra independent variable). Note also that the coefficients produced from this second model are slightly different to those produced from the first model — again, this is due to the inclusion of income as a further independent variable.

This produces a model as follows¹¹:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Leaving(2): } \textit{logit}(\pi) = & -0.04(\text{age}) - 0.21(\text{income}) - 3.78(\text{VSL}) - 3.07(\text{FSL}) - 2.15(\text{NSL}) \\ & - 2.44(\text{SAI}) - 2.76(\text{AI}) - 2.02(\text{NI}) - 2.01(\text{DI}) + 7.37 \end{aligned}$$

The interpretation of this model is much the same as the interpretation of the first model. The only real difference is in the inclusion of income. Its influence is small compared with the loyalty and belief in influence variables, and acts in a negative direction, i.e. higher income makes an individual less likely to leave the party.

The final question is which is the better model — whether income should be included or excluded. I tested this by running forward and backward LR tests omitting the SNP temperature, Plaid Cymru/Green Party/SNP mean temperature, and loss of belief in influence variables, since none of these were included in my first two models. It seems likely that loss of belief in influence is omitted due to its link with current belief in influence. This produces a model as follows¹²:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Leaving: } \textit{logit}(\pi) = & -0.05(\text{age}) - 0.20(\text{income}) - 3.89(\text{VSL}) - 3.12(\text{FSL}) - 2.18(\text{NSL}) \\ & - 2.06(\text{SAI}) - 2.33(\text{AI}) - 1.37(\text{NI}) - 1.44(\text{DI}) + 6.83 \end{aligned}$$

with $R^2 = 0.44$. The Hosmer and Lemeshow test, which tests goodness of fit, also indicates that the model is a good fit. Both forward and backward likelihood ratio methods produced identical models. Thus, it seems that income should be included, and that the above is the best available model.

¹¹See footnote 10 for variable coding.

¹²See footnote 10 for variable coding.

Table 3.8: Results from testing of second full model, with leaving the party as the dependent variable: coefficients of independent variables as given by logistic regression (standard errors in brackets)

	Forward and Backward LR
Age	-0.05 (0.01)
Income	-0.21 (0.10)
Loyalty: VS	-3.78 (0.60)
Loyalty: FS	-3.07 (0.55)
Loyalty: NS	-2.15 (0.56)
Loyalty: reference category NAAS	-
PC/Green/SNP mean	x
Influence: SA	-2.44 (1.16)
Influence: A	-2.76 (0.75)
Influence: N	-2.02 (0.79)
Influence: D	-2.01 (0.75)
Influence: reference category SD	-
Loss of belief in infl	x

Loyalty: VS = very strong, FS = fairly strong, NS = not very strong, reference category NAAS = not at all strong

Influence: SA = strongly agree (that can have influence in politics if get involved), A = agree, N = neither, D = disagree, reference category SD = strongly disagree

Other: x = variable not significant

By exponentiating the variable coefficients, it is possible to interpret them in terms of their individual effect on the likelihood of a member leaving. Table 3.9 shows this. The strongest effect is clearly that of loyalty — both very strong and fairly strong loyalty values decrease the likelihood of leaving by over 95%. However, belief in ability to have an influence in politics also has a strong effect. It is important to bear in mind that the effect of the loyalty and influence variables is being measured in both cases against a reference category. Very strong loyalty decreases the likelihood of a member leaving by 98% compared with the case if that member had “not at all strong” loyalty. Similarly with the reference category for influence, which is “strongly disagree”. For both the main factors, it is the most strongly negative category that has the most effect. This is not surprising: most people would have to feel quite strongly to put themselves into these bottom categories, and those feeling that strongly negative about the party and about their ability to change things are obviously going to be the most likely to leave.

This model does also confirm Hirschman’s theory further, since loyalty is the most important factor. It also can be interpreted as illustrating the effect of voice. Those who believe that they can have no influence — that their voice is ineffective — are most likely to leave. This fits with Hirschman’s idea of exit as an alternative when voice fails. Note also the reasonably similar coefficients for the “belief in influence” variables — unlike the “loyalty” variables, there is no clear scale of size of effect. This implies that the reference category, “strongly disagree” is the most relevant category. There is a strong distinction between those who strongly disagree with the statement that they can have an effect in politics, and those who place themselves in all other categories.

The effects of age and income are clearly small, compared to loyalty and belief in influence. It is interesting that age has a negative effect. It is probable that those who are older are longer-term Labour party members, and thus have stronger links to the party. However, clearly the effect cannot be explained simply by loyalty as accompanying age, since both factors are significant in the model. It is possible

Table 3.9: Effect of logistic regression coefficients (β) of variables in full model for dependent variable “leaving”; effect shown as percentage increase in likelihood of leaving

	β	e^β	likelihood increase (%)
Age	-0.05	0.95	-5
Income	-0.20	0.82	-18
Loyalty: very strong	-3.89	0.02	-98
Loyalty: fairly strong	-3.12	0.04	-96
Loyalty: not very strong	-2.18	0.11	-89
Influence: strongly agree	-2.06	0.13	-87
Influence: agree	-2.33	0.10	-90
Influence: neither	-1.37	0.25	-75
Influence: disagree	-1.44	0.24	-76

Loyalty: reference category = not at all strong

Influence: reference category = strongly disagree

that the effect is partly a result of habit — leaving the party would be a bigger break for those who are older. Another possibility is to do with the fact that it is known that there are certain periods of life, at around the age of 30, where political activity tends to decrease (as a result of other life events). Then, when these people get a little older, their children move out, and they retire, they may well have more time to take part in political activity. Thus, increased age can have a propensity to increase as well as to decrease political activity. In addition to this, there are of course factors working in the opposite direction: advancing old age can reduce political activity for obvious reasons of health; the young are frequently the most energetic and enthusiastic. This would explain the small size of the effect.

Table 3.10: Results from testing of full model, with drop in activity level as the dependent variable: coefficients of independent variables as given by logistic regression (standard errors in brackets)

	Forward and Backward LR
Age	-0.02 (0.01)
Loyalty: VS	-2.10 (0.65)
Loyalty: FS	-2.02 (0.64)
Loyalty: NS	-1.37 (0.67)
Loyalty: reference category NAAS	-
PC/Green/SNP mean	x
Middle ground	x
Left/right position	0.76 (0.33)

Loyalty: VS = very strong, FS = fairly strong, NS = not very strong, reference category NAAS = not at all strong

Other: x = variable not significant

Dependent variable: drop in activity level

I test only one model for this, with variables age, loyalty (as a categorical variable¹³), Plaid Cymru/Green Party/SNP mean temperature, agreement that Labour should move to capture the middle ground (as a categorical variable¹⁴), and position on left/right scale coded as a binary variable¹⁵. The results are shown in table 3.10. Both forward and backward LR produce the same results, which is a good indication of the correctness of the model. Age, loyalty, and left/right position are all significant; Plaid Cymru/Green/SNP mean temperature score and agreement that Labour should move to capture the middle ground are not.

¹³Reference category is “not at all strong”.

¹⁴Reference category is “strongly disagree”.

¹⁵1 = left of mean, 0 = right of mean

This gives the following model¹⁶:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Activity level: } \textit{logit}(\pi) = & -0.02(\text{age}) - 2.10(\text{VSL}) - 2.02(\text{FSL}) - 1.37(\text{NSL}) \\ & + 0.76(\text{left}) + 3.17 \end{aligned}$$

Again, age clearly has a very small, although significant, effect, and again it is in the negative direction, i.e. increased age means that one is less likely to reduce activity levels. As with the similar effect for leaving as the dependent variable, this is slightly odd in that one might expect that advancing age would reduce the ability to be active in the party. As discussed in the previous section, however, there are several factors at work. The difference between the size of this effect and the effect of age on leaving as a dependent variable is presumably due to the fact that being active in the party requires more effort than does simply being a member, and thus that the factors of ill-health and similar are more important and reduce the size of the age effect.

Loyalty is again in a negative direction, i.e. increased loyalty results in a smaller likelihood of an individual reducing their activity. Note again that the major effect is from the reference category of “not at all strong” loyalty, and that the standard errors are, at least for the top two categories of “very strong” and “fairly strong”, reasonably small in comparison with the coefficients, indicating that these variables are reliably important. However, the effect is less strong than is the effect of loyalty on leaving the party altogether. This is unsurprising: one would expect feelings of loyalty to have more of an impact if one was considering leaving the party altogether, whereas simply lowering the level of activity is an easier matter. The fact that loyalty has a strong effect on reduction of activity (although less than its effect on leaving the party) also implies that, in the context of Hirschman’s theory, it is correct to consider a reduction of activity as an exit choice, rather than a voice option. Loyalty, in Hirschman’s theory, should not reduce voice. If anything, it could be argued that the more loyal members should be the ones most prepared to voice their opinions, as

¹⁶See footnote 10 for variable coding.

Table 3.11: Effect of logistic regression coefficients (β) of variables in full model for dependent variable “reducing activity level”; effect shown as percentage increase in likelihood of reducing activity level

	β	e^β	Likelihood increase (%)
Age	-0.02	0.98	-2
Loyalty: very strong	-2.10	0.12	-88
Loyalty: fairly strong	-2.02	0.13	-87
Loyalty: not very strong	-1.37	0.25	-75
Left-wing	0.76	2.138	113

Loyalty: reference category = not at all strong

they would be the most concerned about the position of the party. Again, therefore, this model confirms Hirschman’s claims about the impact of loyalty: it does reduce the probability of exit.

Being on the left of the party, independently of its correlation with dissatisfaction (discussed earlier), also has an effect, although note that its standard error is nearly half the value of the coefficient, thus indicating that it may not be reliable. The effects can be seen more clearly in table 3.11, where the coefficients are exponentiated. In fact, this table demonstrates that the effect of left-wing positioning is actually rather strong — increasing the likelihood of a member reducing their activity by 113%.¹⁷ As discussed earlier in this chapter (page 64), it seems likely that this is due to left-wing positioning acting as an intensification of dissatisfaction. More left-wing members will also tend to be more ideologically driven (as otherwise they would place themselves nearer the middle of the scale) and are therefore likely to feel more strongly about campaigning for a party with whose actions in government they are dissatisfied, and to be less pragmatic about campaigning for the best available option.

¹⁷The size of the effect compared to the apparent size of the coefficient is a function of the logistic model — the effect of the factor is measured by e^β , not by β .

Chapter 4

Probabilities and decision tree

Using the data and models discussed in chapters 2 and 3, it is possible to construct a decision tree for dissatisfied members, identifying the likelihood of members leaving under various conditions, and under various leadership actions.

The model discussed in the previous chapter indicates that different factors affect members' preference structures. The stronger a member's loyalty to the party, the less likely they are to choose to exit, even if they are dissatisfied; similarly the stronger their belief in their ability to have an influence, the less likely they are to choose to exit. It is important to remember that different factors influence exit as leaving the party, and exit as reducing activity: these two possible outcomes must be treated separately.

4.1 Decision tree

Using Hirschman's exit, voice and loyalty structure as a basis, it is possible to construct the following decision tree, which is illustrated in figure 4.1:

- Members are dissatisfied (basic assumption).

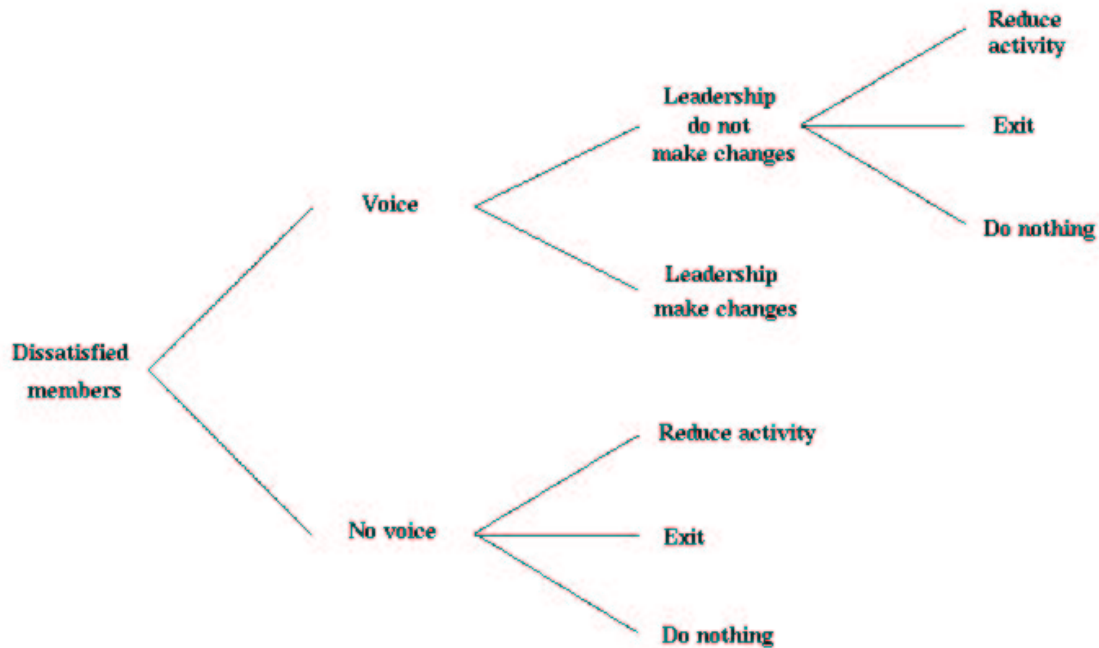
- They can then choose either to voice their dissatisfaction, or to remain quiet.
- If they choose not to voice their dissatisfaction, then they have the choice of exit, reduction in activity, or no action.
- If they choose to voice their dissatisfaction, then there are two possibilities: either the party leadership makes the appropriate changes, or they do not.
- If the leadership make changes, then the tree ends.
- If the leadership do not make changes, then members have the choice of exit, reduction in activity, or no action.

It can be assumed that if the leadership do make changes, previously dissatisfied members will become satisfied members, and thus will not choose either form of exit. The question is which choice they will make if the changes are *not* made. This is where the model from the previous chapter comes in. It is also important to remember that this is a repeated game. If members do anything other than exit (leave the party) at the end of the tree, then they are returned to the beginning and have the same choices again. Thus there is the possibility for the parameters of the situation to change, such as members' loyalty or belief in their own influence altering, and hence for their likely actions to change. Note that this is also true if members decide to reduce their activity: they are still members of the party and thus still affected by what goes on within the party, and they can still choose to exit altogether.

4.2 Factors influencing members' preferences

The crucial factor, as demonstrated in chapter 3, is of course loyalty. Members with a higher strength of feeling towards Labour are much more likely to remain in the party. The other factors are: for leaving, belief in ability to have influence, age, and income; for reducing activity, age and left/right position. It is possible, using

Figure 4.1: Decision tree for members (without preference values)



the model from the previous chapter, to calculate what values of loyalty, belief in influence, and left/right position will cause a member to be likely to make which decision.

I am interested in the values for which $P(\text{exit})$ and $P(\text{reduction in activity}) > 0.5$ (where $P(\text{exit})$ is the probability of a member exiting). These values of P obviously make a member more likely to exit/reduce their activity. In order to assess this, we need the following equation:

$$\pi = \frac{e^{\text{model}}}{1 + e^{\text{model}}}$$

for both leaving and reduction in activity level, where

$$\begin{aligned} \text{model (leaving)} = & -0.05(\text{age}) - 0.20(\text{income}) - 3.89(\text{VSL}) - 3.12(\text{FSL}) - 2.18(\text{NSL}) \\ & - 2.06(\text{SAI}) - 2.33(\text{AI}) - 1.37(\text{NI}) - 1.44(\text{DI}) + 6.83 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{model (activity level)} = & -0.02(\text{age}) - 2.10(\text{VSL}) - 2.02(\text{FSL}) - 1.37(\text{NSL}) \\ & + 0.76(\text{left}) + 3.17 \end{aligned}$$

as produced in chapter 3 (see footnote 10 in chapter 3, page 71 for variable coding).

In order to obtain probability values from the equations, age and income are held constant at their mean values (for dissatisfied members) of 51.2 and 3.9 respectively. Solving the equation produces the probability values shown in table 4.1 for leaving the party as the dependent variable, which are summarised here:

- Leaving the party as dependent variable:
 - When loyalty is very strong, all possible belief in influence values give probabilities of < 0.5 , i.e. a dissatisfied member with very strong loyalty is unlikely to leave regardless of their opinion of their possible influence.
 - When loyalty is fairly strong, the only belief in influence value giving a probability < 0.5 is “strongly disagree”. Dissatisfied members with all other values are unlikely to leave.
 - When loyalty is not very strong, the belief in influence value must be “strongly agree” or “agree” for dissatisfied members to be unlikely to leave.
 - When loyalty is not at all strong, all possible belief in influence values give probabilities of > 0.5 , i.e. a member with not at all strong loyalty is likely to leave regardless of their opinion of their possible influence.

Solving the equation for reduction in activity as the dependent variable, if age is held constant at the mean of 51.2, there are *no* combinations for which $\pi < 0.5$: i.e. all members are likely to reduce their activity. If age is raised to 60, non-left wing members with very strong or fairly strong loyalty are likely not to reduce their activity, but all other members are still likely to reduce their activity. Table 4.2 shows probabilities at ages 30, 51.2 (the mean), 60, and 70.

Table 4.1: Probability values for leaving the party for various combinations of loyalty and belief in influence, holding age and income constant ($> 0.5 \Rightarrow$ member will leave)

		Belief in influence:				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
Loyalty:	very strong	0.07	0.06	0.15	0.14	0.40
	fairly strong	0.16	0.12	0.27	0.26	0.59
	not very strong	0.32	0.27	0.51	0.47	0.79
	not at all strong	0.81	0.76	0.89	0.89	0.97

SA = strongly agree, A = agree, N = neither, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree (that one can have an influence in politics)

Table 4.2: Probability values for reducing activity level for various combinations of loyalty, left-wing status (LW/Not LW), and age ($> 0.5 \Rightarrow$ member will reduce activity level)

		Age 30		Age 51.2		Age 60		Age 70	
		LW	NLW	LW	NLW	LW	NLW	LW	NLW
Loyalty:	very strong	0.77	0.62	0.69	0.51	0.65	0.47	0.61	0.42
	fairly strong	0.79	0.63	0.71	0.53	0.67	0.49	0.62	0.44
	not very strong	0.88	0.77	0.82	0.68	0.80	0.65	0.76	0.60
	not at all strong	0.97	0.93	0.95	0.90	0.94	0.88	0.93	0.85

4.3 Interpreting decision tree

The figures shown in table 4.2 indicate that all dissatisfied members under the age of around 60, and most of those over that age, are likely to reduce their level of activity. This is, of course, assuming that the leadership fail to make changes. If they were to make changes, it is likely that these members would cease to be dissatisfied, and thus this model would not hold, and they would instead be likely to increase their activity again (although there will of course always be some dissatisfied members). As discussed previously, this reduction in activity is something which should concern the leadership. Note that several of the values in table 4.2 are quite close to 0.5: thus it would not take much to swing these members back to not being likely to reduce their activity level. One obvious question which arises here is why, given these figures, it is not in fact the case that all dissatisfied members have reduced their activity level. The point is that this model measures probabilities, not certainties. It is probable that (almost) all dissatisfied members will reduce their activity level; but it is not guaranteed. Individual members may be motivated by factors which are not statistically significant overall. Also, the closer π is to 0.5, the less certain the outcome.

The probability of exit is more complicated, as it is influenced by both loyalty and belief in ability to influence politics. From table 4.1 it is clear that a member is likely to exit when either loyalty or belief in influence is low. This is where the fact that this is a *repeated* game becomes relevant. A dissatisfied member may start with a high belief in their own influence, but if they are repeatedly unable to have an effect on the direction and policies of their own party, then this belief is likely to be eroded. This is also likely to impact on their loyalty, as they become increasingly disillusioned with the party. As both of these factors fall, exit becomes more likely. Thus, this will become more of a problem for the leadership as time passes and they fail to make changes — more dissatisfied members are likely to start to leave.

Table 4.3: Drop in loyalty over period of surveys (1997–9) (percent)

	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	All
Decrease in loyalty	69.8	88.7	83.5
No change	16.3	8.3	10.6
Increase in loyalty	13.9	3.0	5.9

4.4 Relevance of this tree

Probably the most important thing that this brings out is the reliance on high levels of loyalty to ensure that dissatisfied members remain within the party. However, loyalty levels have fallen over the two years of the survey, as table 4.3 shows. Thus, it can be expected that more of these members will start to leave, as their loyalty to the party is reduced. These figures are, however, interesting in that they indicate that the loyalty level of dissatisfied members has fallen less than that of satisfied members. This may reduce the amount of exit from the party, but the fall in dissatisfied members' loyalty is still large.

Even high levels of loyalty are not sufficient to avoid members reducing their activity. The figures for reducing activity indicate that the only way to avoid a reduction in dissatisfied members' activity is for the leadership to make changes. This would also avoid a drop in dissatisfied members' loyalty and belief in their ability to influence politics, and thus would reduce the likelihood of these members leaving the party as well.

As discussed in chapter 1, this has relevance for the leadership in that members are valuable, in terms of election campaigns, finance (to a limited extent), and PR, among others (aspects mentioned in the literature include recruitment and socialisation of future leaders). As far as the PR aspect is concerned, this is really only affected if members actually leave. However, there is evidence of a drop in membership levels recently. Membership fell by 10% (from 311,000 to around 280,000,

according to the general secretary David Triesman) from 2001–2. Triesman claimed that “Part of the reason for the most recent fall is that we have stopped counting people who are probably not part of the active membership” and that the evidence was that disillusionment was not the majority reason for people leaving, although it “probably played a part in some people leaving” (*Metro* 28 Jan 2002). His concern with the possible negative PR implications of the drop in membership is clear from these quotes. It may well be that the drop in loyalty is already beginning to affect membership levels. As discussed in chapter 3, 35% of the dissatisfied members (15% of all respondents) had left the party by 1999. The relevance of the numbers involved here is discussed below (page 91). Note also that according to table 3.2 (page 57), Triesman is only partly correct in his claim. Whilst it is true that most satisfied members leave for non-political reasons, most dissatisfied members leave for political reasons.

Activity levels

Election campaigning is clearly affected if members either leave or reduce their activity. However, it might be felt by the Labour leadership that their 130-odd seat advantage in a General Election¹ gives them sufficient security not to be overly concerned about this. This attitude, however, would seem to be at best somewhat short-sighted. It is informative to note the previous level of activity of dissatisfied members. In 1997, 60% of dissatisfied members² averaged no activity per month; by 1999, this had risen to 70%. Interestingly, however, the mean average of hours per month had risen very slightly from 2.50 to 2.51. This was calculated by taking the midpoint of each category (so, 2.5 for category 0–5, 7.5 for category 5–10, etc), and using the value of 45 for the last category (of 40 or more hours per month). As

¹The British electoral system is currently biased towards Labour: if both Labour and the Conservatives were to obtain an equal number of votes, with the current (uneven) vote distributions, Labour would win approximately 130 more seats than the Conservatives.

²i.e. those who were classified as “dissatisfied” by the 1999 survey.

Table 4.4: Frequency table of hours of party activity per month (percentages)

	Dissatisfied		Satisfied		All	
	1997	1999	1997	1999	1997	1999
None	59.8	69.8	58.8	62.2	58.9	64.6
<5	30.2	18.7	26.5	23.5	27.7	21.9
5–10	4.7	5.7	7.5	7.1	6.7	6.8
10–20	2.7	2.3	3.7	2.8	3.5	2.7
20–30	0.9	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.0	1.3
30–40	0.3	0.0	0.5	0.8	0.4	0.6
40<	1.5	2.0	1.9	2.2	1.8	2.1

table 4.4 shows, this is a result of a very small increase in the number of members undertaking relatively large amounts of party activity. The rise in the percentage undertaking no activity is probably more relevant. Indeed, if we exclude those in the “more than 40 hrs per month” category, the average falls to 1.86 hours/month in 1997, and 1.63 hours/month in 1999. This seems to be a more accurate representation of the figures, given the rise in the number of members undertaking no activity.

However, the average activity of satisfied members³ is 3.09 hours per month in 1997, rising slightly to 3.16 hours per month by 1999, so this is in fact higher than the average of the dissatisfied members. Also, a smaller percentage of satisfied than dissatisfied members recorded themselves as having averaged no activity per month in both 1997 and 1999 (the discrepancy between the percentage of satisfied and the percentage of dissatisfied members who had done no party work increased in 1999, from 1% to 7.6%, which is unsurprising). Again, note that the rise in the mean is due to a small number of individuals working particularly long hours. Excluding the “more than 40 hours per month” category, the means fall to 2.28 hours/month in 1997 and 2.22 hours/month in 1999. These, again, seem to be a better representation

³i.e. those who were classified as “satisfied” by the 1999 survey.

of the statistics, given the rise in the number of satisfied members doing no party work. However, the adjusted mean for the satisfied members is still greater than that for the dissatisfied members. Thus, it is possible that in fact the party leadership should not be so concerned about the loss of dissatisfied members, since they were working marginally less hard to start with. However, the differences in these numbers are still quite small, and it seems unlikely that the Labour Party has sufficiently large numbers of volunteers that it can afford to jettison entirely the 29% of members who are dissatisfied, even if their average activity is slightly lower than that of the remainder of the membership. After all, they are not able simply to hire replacement workers. Thus, it seems that the leadership should attempt to satisfy dissatisfied members, rather than simply giving up on them.

These activity results do not seem to fit particularly well with May's arguments on the Special Law of Curvilinear Disparity. He argues that those who are heavily involved with party activity on a local level are likely to be strongly ideological, since only the really committed will be prepared to do what are often dull and thankless tasks. It seems likely that dissatisfied members here will be those who are most ideologically committed, since Labour has been explicitly moving towards the middle ground in recent years. This is also backed up by the figures shown in table 3.3 (page 65) and figure 3.1 (page 64) in chapter 3 (members placing themselves on the left-wing of the party are more likely to be dissatisfied). But according to the figures presented here, it is not these members who have been most heavily involved.

One possible explanation which would fit with May's theory is that by 1997, the activity level of dissatisfied members had already dropped, and that it simply continued to drop further over the following two years. Thus these more ideological members might once have been the most heavily involved, but have been dropping their involvement over time. This is supported by the fact that the question on which my "activity level" dependent variable is based asks about drop in activity level over the last five years, whereas comparison of the answers to the question about hours worked per month obviously only covers two years. It is impossible to confirm this

Table 4.5: Drop in number of hours activity per month between 1997–99 (percentage members)

	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	All
Drop in hours	19.6	16.2	17.5
No change	70.5	71.3	71.1
Rise in hours	9.8	12.4	11.5

explanation empirically, as the data is simply not present.⁴ However, what is possible is to calculate the difference between the values of the variables for activity in 1997 and activity in 1999, and thus discover what percentage of members have reduced their activity over these two years. These figures are shown in table 4.5. It turns out that 19.6% of dissatisfied members (compared with 16.2% of satisfied members) have reduced their hours of activity over 1997–99 (the vast majority of both groups have not changed their level of activity). In comparison, 69.5% of dissatisfied members (39% of satisfied members) claim to have reduced their activity level over the last five years (1994–99). It seems that the proposed explanation for the lack of fit with May, therefore, may well be correct.

Financial implications

It might be assumed that the financial advantages of members would not be affected unless they were to actually leave, as otherwise they would still be paying their subscription money. However, many members contribute more than this. Examining the figures from the survey, shown in table 4.6, I concluded that in this case the median was likely to give a better average than the mean, since it does not take outliers into account (and as can be seen from the minimum and maximum figures

⁴I did check the data from Seyd and Whiteley's 1992 Labour party members survey (conducted on a different set of randomly selected members from that of the 1997/99 surveys), but this contained no questions about activity level. Thus using this data as any form of support for the explanation was not possible.

Table 4.6: Amounts donated by members over 12 months previous to survey, rounded to nearest pound sterling

	Dissatisfied		Satisfied		All	
	1997	1999	1997	1999	1997	1999
Mean	47	85	60	177	56	149
Median	24	20	25	30	25	28
Minimum	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum	1000	2400	2500	75000	2500	75000
25%	15	6	11	18	12	12
50%	24	20	25	30	25	28
75%	50	67	60	70	55	70

shown on the table, there are outliers in all groups of members). This shows that dissatisfied members are both tending to give less than satisfied members, and also tending to give less than they did in 1997. Note also that the median of satisfied and dissatisfied members' contributions was much closer in 1997, indicating that dissatisfaction is having a very clear effect over the two years between the surveys. Thus there is also a financial impact, which, as discussed previously, is something which (after the Neill reforms are implemented) the party leadership will need increasingly to concern themselves about.

Numbers involved

A relevant question for the leadership concerns the number of members who are dissatisfied. If the number is only small, then it might in fact be advantageous to lose this small number of members, and thus to reduce the possibility for adverse publicity of internal membership criticism. Connected to this is the issue of whether dissatisfaction is increasing — if more and more members are joining this dissatisfied group, then the issue will not simply go away, and the loss, or potential loss, of

members becomes more serious. As far as the first question is concerned, my figures indicate that of the 1999 survey sample, 361 of the 1325 respondents (1256 who answered the “opinion of government record” question) are dissatisfied, i.e. 27% (29% of those who answered). This is a reasonably large percentage of the membership, certainly enough to warrant at least some concern from the party leadership. I do not have the data available to answer the second question (since there was no dissatisfaction question in 1997, and I have no data beyond 1999), but it would be interesting to investigate. The fact that such a significant proportion of the membership are dissatisfied implies that this is a relevant issue, and one about which the party leadership should be concerned. It is also important to note, as mentioned above, that reasonably high numbers (35%) of these dissatisfied members are leaving, and that if the model in chapter 3 holds, if loyalty continues to decrease, more of these members will be leaving.

Should the leadership act?

It must be remembered that there are advantages to losing dissatisfied members. From a PR point of view, they can no longer publicly challenge the leadership (more accurately, they can of course publicly challenge the leadership whether they are members or not, but criticism from outside the party is less damaging than criticism from within, and it is more acceptable to ignore it). The departure of dissatisfied members will also reduce the amount of disruption, or attempted disruption, of the plans of the leadership. Another important point is that in order to increase these members’ levels of satisfaction, the leadership would need to change their direction and plans. Since we can assume that they do have valid (almost certainly electoral) reasons for following their current line of action, we can also assume that changing tack in order to satisfy their more ideological members (and dissatisfied members are, in general, the more ideological ones, as discussed previously) would not be a popular step. The risk, as seen by the leadership, would be that satisfying the members would cause the general public to be dissatisfied; and more value is placed

on the satisfaction of the general public, since they are worth more votes.

However, this may be shortsighted. Firstly, it is not entirely clear that the general public would not be receptive to some changes. Recent evidence indicates that most people would, for example, be happy to see Railtrack, or air traffic control, returned to public ownership, and that they want more investment in the NHS and would be prepared to pay higher taxes for it. It might, after all, be possible to satisfy (at least to some extent) both members and public. Looking at the results from the 1997 British Election Survey discussed in chapter 1 (table 1.1, page 19), it is notable that the vast majority of Labour voters are against further privatisation, for example. Thus there is scope for satisfying dissatisfied members without losing voters. However, the leadership must also be aware that those who are in favour of privatisation are the most unsure Labour members, so the balancing act is likely to be difficult. Secondly, as discussed above and in chapter 1, vote does depend to some extent on membership and membership activity. If membership numbers fall, vote may well fall (going by Seyd & Whiteley's ((c)1992) results discussing the relationship between membership and vote); and if activity level falls, vote level will almost certainly fall (using Pattie et al.'s (1993) model as discussed in chapter 1). Also, by making some changes in order to keep currently dissatisfied members, they would no longer be dissatisfied and thus would cease to be disruptive (thus removing the first of the advantages of losing them).

It seems that the Labour party leadership do need to think seriously about the possibility of making some concessions to their dissatisfied members, in order to avoid losing firstly their activity, and eventually their membership. Although there are advantages to losing dissatisfied members, the disadvantages appear to outweigh these. It is of course possible that making changes in order to keep the dissatisfied members would be disapproved of by the satisfied members, and that they would become dissatisfied, thus simply moving the problem rather than removing it. However, it seems eminently possible to balance the desires of voters, satisfied members, and dissatisfied members — the leadership need to consider this carefully.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of results

Chapter 1 discussed the theoretical background to the problem and produced a set of hypotheses to test. I then discussed the details of the data used in chapter 2, and tested and interpreted models in chapters 3 and 4. The factor which has emerged as most important overall both in whether a dissatisfied member leaves the party, and in whether they reduce their activity, is loyalty. As discussed in chapter 3, this is a particularly valuable result in that it confirms Hirschman's use of loyalty in his "exit, voice, and loyalty" theory, as applied to political parties. The models developed also demonstrate that a dissatisfied member's belief in their ability to influence politics is important in determining whether they will leave the party (thus confirming Hirschman's argument concerning voice preventing exit); and that a dissatisfied member's self-positioning on a left-right scale is very important in determining whether they will reduce their level of activity. Age and income also have a small effect (age on both dependent variables, income only on whether a member leaves the party). In contrast, a member's opinion of whether Labour should move to the middle ground, and their opinion of alternative parties, do not have a significant effect when considered in conjunction with the other variables.

These findings were discussed fully in chapter 3.

On examining the probabilities given by these models, in chapter 4, I found that there is a very high likelihood of dissatisfied members reducing their level of activity. There is also a reasonable likelihood of some dissatisfied members leaving the party. Given that there is evidence of loyalty and of belief in ability to influence politics both dropping over the last two years, it is likely that the number of members who reduce their activity or leave will increase over time.

As discussed in chapters 1 and 4, the party does need members. As well as their importance in electoral campaigning, they are also financially necessary. 40% of current Labour Party income is from members — a significant amount. The Neill reforms mean that the party will increasingly be forced to rely on this, as their other sources of income will be restricted. The reforms also mean that volunteer member activity during elections will become more important, since electoral spending will be capped at £20 million per party (compare this with the £56 million that the Conservatives and Labour spent between them in the 1997 general election (The Committee on Standards in Public Life 1998)). Thus, the potential loss of members, and the increasing likelihood of such loss, is something about which the leadership should be concerned.

The problem was initially considered, in the first chapter, with reference to Downsian rationalism. What, then, are the implications of my findings here? In fact, these actors can be considered to be irrational only if one takes a very narrow view of rational choice theory, in which only material costs and benefits are of importance. As soon as less tangible, emotional concerns are taken into account, it is clear that dissatisfied members are behaving rationally. Loyalty is a powerful emotion, and breaking a bond of loyalty has an emotional cost. It is only when loyalty is already low that the cost of leaving is sufficiently low to allow members to leave (i.e. the cost is lower than the cost of remaining, which would be minimal if the member was not active in the party). The effect of members' belief in their own ability to influence politics indicates that they are taking a long-term view of the situation. They do

not wish the party to move to the centre, and so they remain within the party in an attempt to prevent this. Only when they do not believe that their efforts will have an effect do they leave. This is clearly rational behaviour, as otherwise they would be enduring a cost (the cost of membership and any activity) but receiving no benefit (the party would not be acting according to their principles, and they would have no option of making changes). This second factor clearly ties in with Hirschman's notion of "voice" — this is discussed further below. The high number of members reducing their activity also indicates rational behaviour: the benefits are decreasing (because the party is not acting according to these members' beliefs) so members reduce their costs by reducing their activity. Again, loyalty acts as a check on this, because a reduction in activity could feel like a betrayal, and lower loyalty reduces or removes this emotional cost.

Thus, these dissatisfied members can still be considered as Downsian rational actors, since their actions and the factors affecting their actions can be explained in rational choice terms. It is only if an unjustifiably narrow view of rational choice theory is taken that problems arise.

5.2 Voice

In chapter 1, I indicated that I would not be directly discussing voice, but that it is possible to see the "belief in influence" variable as a surrogate for voice. This variable measures the strength of a member's belief that they can have an influence in politics by getting involved, which can be seen as indicating their belief in the usefulness of voice. Although this variable deals explicitly with the individual's influence in politics as a whole, not simply their influence on the Labour Party, clearly the Labour Party is a subsection of politics as a whole. As such, this variable gives some indication of their belief in the effectiveness of voice within the party.

The conclusion that this factor does have an impact on whether members stay or

leave is therefore further supportive of Hirschman's theory. Hirschman claimed that consumers are more likely to leave when there are fewer perceived opportunities for voice. Here, we have those who do not perceive themselves as having an influence on politics, i.e. those who perceive few opportunities for effectively voicing their opinions, as being more likely to leave. Thus Hirschman's theory is supported.

Seyd and Whiteley did also ask questions about whether members feel that the party leadership pays attention to ordinary members, or that Labour MPs try to represent the views of ordinary members. These questions might provide a more direct surrogate for voice (although they still do not measure it directly), and for perceived effectiveness of voice. This would be an interesting area for further investigation.

5.3 Exit and alternatives

One factor which one would expect to influence exit is the availability of alternatives. In fact, the statistical analysis indicates that this does not have a significant influence. It is probable that this lack of effect is due to the fact that the British political system means that only two parties are in serious contention for government (Labour and the Conservatives currently), and that the way in which the Commons is run effectively guarantees that a government with any significant majority can pass any policies it chooses. Obviously, Labour Party members are extremely unlikely to be prepared to switch to the Conservatives, so they really have no alternative in the context of obtaining a UK government. It would be interesting to examine the situation of dissatisfied members in left-wing parties in countries with other electoral systems, such as Germany, and compare this to the UK situation — this would be a good area for further study. Another possibility would be to examine activity levels of dissatisfied Labour Party members in elections other than General Elections, such as elections to the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, the European Parliament, and local councils. These are all situations in which other alternatives may be realistically available, either due to different electoral systems (in the cases

of the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, and European Parliament), or to a different political situation (local councils can be controlled by parties other than Labour or the Conservatives). There is certainly some evidence that Labour Party campaigning in the 1999 European Parliament elections was low. This too would be an interesting area for further study.

Another possible form of alternative is non-party political groups — involvement with these might increase the likelihood of exit. This fits with the recent arguments about the increasing importance of “new social movements”, and the tendency of individuals to become involved in single-issue politics rather than party politics (although this is usually discussed with reference specifically to young people). There is information on respondents’ involvement in such groups in the Seyd and Whiteley data, but considering this form of alternative is outside the scope of this thesis. It would, however, be a further possibility for future investigation.

The final important thing to consider about exit is that it is in fact impossible for members to exit the party fully. In the case of a company producing a product, full exit will in general be straightforward — one simply stops buying the product, and ceases to be affected by it. However, in the case of a political party, merely ceasing to be a member will not remove all impact of the party on one’s life. National politics has an influence on non-party members as well as party members: this is of course particularly true of the party in government. Party policies will continue to have an influence on the former member, but they will have given up some of their possible influence on the policies. Their methods of influencing policy will now be restricted to those available to everyone, such as voting (which is limited in its effect due to only being possible every 4–5 years), writing to one’s MP, single-issue campaign groups, and so on. This is something which may well discourage exit. It relates back to the idea of members taking a long view: they feel that without their influence, the party will move even faster towards the centre, which will affect them regardless of their membership status. This ties in with the impact of the “belief in influence” variable. Once a member no longer believes that they can have an

influence, the impossibility of full exit ceases to have an impact on their decision to leave, since the “extra” voice avenues which they acquire through being a party member are no longer seen by them as useful.

5.4 Extending the results

As discussed in chapter 2 (page 29), the size of the survey means that these conclusions can legitimately be extended to the party membership as a whole. The comparisons with the 1997 British Election Survey, in chapter 1 (page 17), also indicate that it may be possible to extend the findings, to at least some extent, to non-member Labour voters and identifiers. Although members and voters differ in their extremism in some areas (note that on certain things voters are in fact more extreme than members), their opinions are broadly in the same direction. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that a certain number of voters are also dissatisfied with the government, and may also choose to exit, i.e. to stop voting Labour. The fall in turnout in the 2001 election, which was particularly pronounced in strong Labour areas, may indicate that these voters have already stopped turning out. This drop might be explicable by rational choice theory: rational actors would be less likely to bother to vote in a safe seat. However, these are seats which were also safe seats in 1997, and the drop in turnout in 2001 is in comparison to 1997 voting figures. Those rational actors who chose not to vote in 2001 due to the seat being safe should also have chosen not to vote in 1997. Thus the further drop does imply a certain level of dissatisfaction. This effect will have been less pronounced in non-safe seats due to the fear of letting the Conservatives back in (although turnout did drop in all seats). Those in safe seats did not have that fear and thus were free to indicate disillusionment by abstention. This difference in drop between safe and non-safe seats also indicates that the drop was not purely due to apathy about politics in general, or it would have been uniform across both types of seat.

A point to consider here is Hirschman’s discussion of the need for alert and non-

alert consumers. He argues that a company needs a mixture of the two: the alert will act as a warning that all is not well, and the non-alert will provide a “cushion” to enable the company to recover before losing all its business. In the context of the Labour Party, the dissatisfied members who are reducing their activity, and especially those who are leaving, can be seen as the alert customers. The Labour Party leadership need to consider whether ignoring these warning signals will lead to the non-alert members following suit. Not all members are dissatisfied; but the strong preference of almost all members for policies such as ceasing privatisation indicates that more may well become so if there are no changes.

If these results can, as it seems may be possible, be extended to Labour voters as well as Labour members, this indicates that the leadership has even more reason for concern. It is after all these people who keep them in power. Even if it is not considered necessary by the leadership to pay attention to the members, it clearly is necessary to pay attention to the voters. Labour should consider member dissatisfaction in the light of an early warning of voter dissatisfaction, as well as being concerned for the electoral and financial implications of losing members.

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