Grunts in the ground game: UK party members in the 2015 general election

Tim Bale (Queen Mary University of London) and Paul Webb (University of Sussex)

Paper prepared for the Conference on 'The 2015 British General Election: Parties, Politics, and the Future of the United Kingdom', 2 September 2015, UC Berkeley.

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the question of what party members do for their parties during a general election campaign, drawing on new survey data gathered in the immediate aftermath of the UK General Election of 2015. Uniquely, the data were simultaneously gathered from samples of six British parties. This facilitates the exploration of differences between parties, and enables us to ask whether activity at elections can be explained by the 'general incentives' model created by the pioneers of research into party members. We find that, inasmuch as we can compare over time, members of what until recently were the three biggest British parties (the Conservatives, Labour and the Lib Dems) do less for their parties at elections than was the case in the early/mid 1990s. We also find that social liberals are significantly more likely to help out at elections regardless of party. Selective incentives, personal efficacy and social norms are also consistently important in driving campaign activism. Other aspects of the model feature significantly in various, if less consistent ways, all of which points to the continuing usefulness of the general incentives approach.

In the run-up to the 2015 election, it was widely assumed that the governing Conservatives would outspend their Labour rivals. The standard response by Labour was to suggest that its boots on the ground would trump the Conservatives' cash in the bank. Sadly for Labour, they did not. It lost the election and did not perform particularly well in many of the seats it was supposedly targeting (see Geddes and Tonge, 2015). But was the Party wrong even to hope that campaigning could make a difference?

Perhaps not. There is, after all, some evidence to suggest that there exists a small but nonetheless significant correlation between parties' activity and their electoral performance (Johnston and Pattie, 2003; Karp, Banducci and Bowler, 2008; Fisher and Denver, 2009; André and Depauw, 2015). There is also some evidence to suggest that party members in particular make a difference (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992: 195-200) – not surprisingly, perhaps, since it is they who provide a good deal (although not necessarily the bulk [see Fisher, Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2014; Scarrow, 2015: 103-109]) of the voluntary workers who man phone banks, deliver leaflets, and canvass door-to-door in the run-up to the election and then remind people to vote and even help them get to the polling stations on election day itself. Along with contributing funds, playing some role in policy formation, being 'ambassadors in the community', providing a pool of recruits for elected office, and providing a degree of legitimacy for what would otherwise be transparently hollow organisations, these campaign activities are at the root of what members supposedly do for their parties (Scarrow 1994).

It is therefore somewhat surprising that, notwithstanding a handful of colourful qualitative case studies (see Holt and Turner [1968] for what is still probably the best example), we have relatively little hard information about what party members actually do during campaigns – especially in the twenty-first century. When putting together a larger research project on contemporary party membership in the UK, we therefore made a point not just of including survey questions designed to elicit that information, but of posing them within a week or so of a general election in the hope that respondents' recall of what they did during the campaign would be as accurate as possible. Our aim in this paper,

however, is not simply to describe what members do for their party during the heat of battle but to explore, firstly, whether there are any significant differences between the members of different parties and, secondly (recalling the seminal contribution of Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley to the study of grassroots party activism in general) to understand what motivates some members to do more at election campaigns than other members.

Expectations

Our central goal in this paper is to describe and explain the campaign activity of British party members. Looking back at the classic work by Seyd and Whiteley (and their collaborators), they were concerned with activism more generally, but did ask respondents a number of questions that clearly related directly to election campaign activities – questions about displaying an election poster, delivering leaflets during an election, canvassing voters on behalf of the party, and standing for elected office in a national or local election. The answers they elicited are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1:
Election-related activity by party members in the 1990s

Activity	Con	Lab	LD	Mean
Displayed election poster in window	51	90	70	70
Delivered leaflets	39	83	62	61
Canvassed voters	25	66	28	40
Stood for elected office	6	15	17	13

Notes: Percentages compiled from Seyd and Whiteley (1992: 95), Whiteley, Seyd and Richardson (1994: 258), and Whiteley, Seyd and Billinghurst (2005: 72).

After further surveying their samples of party members in 1992 (Labour) and 1994 (Tories), Whiteley and Seyd noted a decline in activism compared to what they had found earlier (in 1989-90 and 1992 respectively) – one which affected Labour more than Conservative members. What they called 'de-energization'

occurred against a backdrop of secular decline that could be explained by a combination of the following (Whiteley and Seyd, 1998; see also Whiteley, 2011): the increased availability of alternative political and non-political activities; the ageing of Tory members and the increasing middle-class membership of the Labour Party putting off young Tories and working-class Labour people; the decline in the power and prestige of local government rendering a career as a councillor less attractive; the centre of gravity shifting to the right in the Conservative Party and the centre in the Labour Party, thereby alienating those members who were apparently most active in each; partisan (and class) dealignment; and the fact that, as they shrank, parties became increasingly disconnected from the communities in which they operated. The reason Labour's grassroots were affected even more than the Conservatives' in the two years between each of the surveys' two waves, however, was apparently down to more short-term, contingent factors: Labour had been out of power for so long that it was unable to deliver much to its members, while the loss of the 1992 election (the fourth in a row) led to a 'spiral of demobilisation' among Labour members, whereas their Conservative counterparts were buoyed up by their party's success.

Inasmuch as it is possible to make the comparison over time, then, we would expect, firstly, that members' activity at election time – at least as it is measured by these four activities among members of three parties – has further declined overall, since most of these social and cultural trends have continued apace. Secondly, we would expect that said decline will be more pronounced among Labour than Conservative (and indeed Liberal Democrat) members, since their party lost office in 2010.

Seyd and Whiteley, however, did more than map activity among party members; they also attempted to explain it. That explanation took the form of the 'general incentives' model. This approach was 'grounded in the assumption that participation occurs in response to different kinds of incentives…but it goes beyond a narrowly cast economic analysis of incentives to include emotional attachments to the party, moral concerns, and social norms, variables which lie outside the standard cost-benefit approach to decision-making' (Whiteley, Seyd

and Richardson, 1994: 109; see also Seyd & Whiteley 1992 and Whiteley, Seyd and Billinghurst, 2005). To summarize the model, it incorporates a combination of the following:

- The respondent's perception of the probability that his/her personal participation will achieve a desired collective outcome;
- The respondent's perception of the probability that participation in group activity through the party will achieve a desired collective outcome;
- The respondent's desired collective outcome;
- The respondent's perception of the costs of activism;
- The respondent's assessment of the selective outcome benefits of activism;
- The respondent's assessment of the selective process benefits of activism;
- The respondent's ideological motivations for activism;
- The respondent's altruistic motivations for activism;
- The respondent's perception of social norm incentives for activism;
- The respondent's expressive or affective motivations for activism.

We would expect that differing levels of activity among members during the 2015 election campaign can be similarly explained, so the major question at the heart of this paper is 'how well does the general incentives model perform now?' Given the wider range of party samples that we are working with compared to Seyd & Whiteley, there may be some variation of results across the parties. However, we have no *a priori* reasons for expecting differences, beyond sheer random noise.

Data and descriptives

We surveyed 5696 members of six British parties just after the general election in May 2015. The (online) survey was conducted for us by YouGov and funded by the ESRC as part on an ongoing project on party membership in the UK. Some basic demographic and attitudinal data are presented in Table 2 below, while Table 3 presents our data on members' campaign activity.

Table 2: Social characteristics of British political party members, 2015.

Attribute	Con	Lab	LD	UKIP	Green	SNP	Total
Mean age	54	51	51	58	42	49	51
% male	71.2%	61.6%	68.5%	75.9%	57.5%	56.4%	65.0%
% graduates	37.9%	56.3%	55.8%	23.1%	56.4%	41.7%	45.4%
ABC1	74.6%	69.7%	76.0%	59.9%	65.2%	61.9%	68.2%
Mean length of membership (yrs)	20.60	18.76	17.59	4.41	3.09	8.26	13.05
Left-right*	2.24	7.61	5.9	2.66	8.1	7.04	5.56
Number	1193	1180	730	785	845	963	5696

Notes: Left-right (self-location) = mean *self*-location on a scale running from 0 (right-wing) to 10 (left-wing).

Table 2 reports key demographic attributes by party. The mean age of party members across the sample as a whole is 51, but there is some variation around this by party, with the Greens being the youngest (at 42) and UKIP the oldest (at 58). All party membership have male majorities, but once again UKIP are the most distinctive in that they have the most masculine profile, with less than a quarter being women, compared to the SNP and Greens for each of whom women constitute more than 40% of the memberships.

In terms of educational background 45% of our sample are graduates (a little higher than the national figure of 38% for the national working age population [see Office for National Statistics 2013]), with Labour and the Greens having

the highest proportion (56% each) and UKIP the lowest (23%). Two-thirds of our sample is from non-manual occupations, which is no surprise given that this figures closely matches recent official labour market statistics.[1] The most middle class of our party samples are the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, while the most manual are UKIP and the SNP.

Finally, we think it interesting – and potentially significant for the some of the analysis to come – to assess how long our respondents have been members of their parties. This shows a clear pattern: on average, the major three parties' members have been registered adherents for much longer than their counterparts in the minor parties. To the nearest year, Tories, Labour respondents and Liberal Democrats have been members for 21, 19 and 18 years respectively, while SNP, UKIP and Green respondents have been members for just 8, 4, and 3 years. As is now widely recognised, each of these smaller parties has benefited from an influx of new members during the past few years (Keen 2015), so it is really no surprise that their followers in the survey generally turn out to be of far more recent provenance.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the activities that are least costly to members in terms of time and effort are most likely to be reported. 'Liking' a post on Facebook, tweeting messages on Twitter, and displaying party posters in the window are easily done and roughly a third to a half of all respondents did these things in the election. Attending public meetings and delivering leaflets on behalf of a candidate both take more effort, but do not necessarily require any on-going commitment, and overall between 40% and 45% of our respondents report having done these. The heavier commitments, such as standing for elective office (locally or nationally), running party committees, or 'knocking-up' and driving voters to the polls on election day, attracted far fewer participants, however: under 10% engaged in these activities. Finally, about one-sixth of members (16.3%) admitted to having done nothing for their parties during the campaign.

Table 3: Which of the following things did you do for the party during the 2015 election campaign?

Activity	Con	Lab	LD	UKIP	Green	SNP	Total
Displayed election poster in window	29.6	51.2	37.8	42.9	45.1	67.7	45.7
Delivered leaflets	43.5	42.5	45.9	38.3	28.8	35.4	39.4
Attended public meeting or hustings	31.3	31.4	28.2	40.5	27.3	49.0	34.6
Canvassed face to face or by phone	36.5	35.7	32.6	26.1	19.1	28.2	30.4
'Liked' something by party/candidate on FB	39.6	51.1	47.4	44.2	67.6	72.7	53.4
Tweeted/re-tweeted party/candidate messages	26.0	36.9	31.1	22.9	45.7	48.6	35.2
Stood as candidate yourself (councillor or MP)	9.1	7.0	15.1	13.0	10.2	0.2	8.6
Helped run party committee	12.5	8.4	13.0	5.7	2.4	5.3	8.1
Drove voters to polling stations	6.4	7.2	4.9	5.7	2.6	7.5	5.9
Other	16.3	14.2	20.8	14.1	12.8	16.6	15.7
None	23.0	12.9	18.4	20.8	15.3	7.8	16.3
Number	1193	1180	730	785	845	963	5696

Note: All figures are percentages.

These are the general patterns of campaign activism, but there are of course some variations by party. With respect to non-participation, there seems to be something of a left-right split, with Conservative (23%) and UKIP (21%) members being significantly more likely to admit having done nothing at all in the campaign, while – at the other end of the scale - the extraordinary surge of enthusiasm around the SNP in 2014-15 seems to have driven more than 90% of its membership to do something for the party during the campaign. This willingness to engage on the part of SNP members is reflected in well-above average tendencies to display the party's posters, attend hustings and be active

on social media – who knows some of those we surveyed may be among the fabled 'cybernats'! But these are the 'low-cost' activities, and the SNP members are no more likely (indeed, perhaps even less likely) than their counterparts in other parties to have taken part in canvassing or to have stood for office.

The SNP apart, the smaller parties generally return higher percentages of members who are willing to stand for elective office, although this may of course be a simple function of size: if the smaller parties stand anything like the same number of candidates as their larger counterparts, then a greater proportion of their members are bound to be called upon. Not altogether surprisingly, the parties with the oldest members (UKIP and the Tories) show least inclination to engage in social media, while the one with the youngest members (the Greens) is second only to the SNP in its enthusiasm for such activities. The oldest and perhaps most institutionalized parties (Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats) are still the ones most likely to find members willing to undertake the crucial organizational tasks of running party committees and canvassing electors. This might indicate that, while the parties like the SNP, UKIP and Greens enjoyed a surge in membership prior to the election, its commitment does not yet run as deep as it does in the older, more established parties.

The detail of Table 3 is interesting, but it is a little hard to take in at a glance, so Table 4 presents a simple additive index, ordered by party, that summarizes the overall level of activism among respondents during the election. This simply ascribes a score of 1 for each of the 10 activities referred to in Table 3, and thus runs from a minimum of 0 (for people who do nothing) to 10 (for those who do everything listed in Table 3). Table 4 actually shows relatively little variation around the overall sample mean of 2.77. UKIP's supporters score lowest, but even they fall within 0.23 of the overall mean on the scale. The one outlier is the SNP: its members are fully 0.54 above the overall mean – a striking symbol of the surge of enthusiasm and hope around the SNP in 2015 that enabled the party to take 56 of the 59 Scottish seats at Westminster.

Table 4: Mean 2015 campaign activism index score, by party

Party	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Conservative	2.51	1193	2.22
Labour	2.86	1180	2.15
Liberal Democrat	2.77	730	2.25
UKIP	2.54	785	2.15
Green	2.61	845	1.96
SNP	3.31	963	2.02
Overall sample mean	2.77	5696	2.15

Note: Figures are mean scores on an additive scale that runs from 0 (no activity during the election campaign) to 10 (maximal activity during the campaign).

What, then, do our descriptive data tell us about change over time? We can gauge this to some extent by comparing Tables 1 and 3; broadly speaking, this suggests a decline in activity – although it depends slightly on which activity (and, indeed, which party) we are looking at. Certainly, people seem to be more reluctant than they were to display election posters seems: whereas 70% of those Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat members surveyed by Seyd and Whiteley claimed to have done so, only 40% of those members of the same parties who we questioned said they had done the same. Delivering leaflets is also less popular than it once was: in the 1990s, the proportion of members of Britain's three biggest parties claiming to have done it was 61%; it is now down to 44%. There has also been a drop in members canvassing and standing as candidates, although this is slightly less precipitate, at 5 and 3 percentage points respectively.

In terms of party, we also see considerable change over time. Tory members are still more reluctant to display posters than their Liberal Democrat and particularly their Labour counterparts, but the drop in enthusiasm for nailing one's colours to the mast between the 1990s and 2015 is, in fact, more marked among the latter. When it comes to leafletting, today's Tory members are actually marginally slightly keener than they were in the 1990s, but, once again, Liberal Democrat and especially Labour members are far less enthusiastic than

they were previously. The same pattern is evident when it comes to canvassing: the Conservative grass roots seem to be less shy about knocking on doors and/or telephoning voters than they once were, whereas their Liberal Democrat and especially their Labour counterparts are much less keen than they were a couple of decades ago. When it comes to standing as a candidate in a local or national contest, the small proportion of Labour members willing to do it in 2015 is the same as it was back in the 1990s. The number of Liberal Democrat and Tory members willing to stand has risen slightly but not by very much. All this confirms our expectations since it accords with the findings of Whiteley and Seyd (1998), namely continuing overall decline but one that is most marked among the members of the party that lost the previous election – in this case Labour.

So, we have seen that, as reported in many previous studies of political participation, the activities that require most of people in terms of time and effort are the things they are generally least likely to do, and that the older, larger, and more institutionalized parties have something of an advantage over the smaller parties in these high-cost activities. However, there is some evidence that activism might be continuing to decline among these parties, while the smaller parties have enjoyed a recent surge in membership and support that probably evened things out to some extent during the election campaign of 2015. It is now time to consider the underlying factors that might have driven the patterns of activism that we have recorded.

Modelling campaign activism in Britain today

Our intention here is to update and test a general incentives model in relation to current British party memberships, while controlling for demographic factors and party affiliation. A key question will be whether a single model fits all six party memberships reasonably well, or whether it performs variably according to party. The dependent variable that we test here is the campaign activism index, running from 0-10 (campaign scale). We treat this as an interval scale and run Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) analysis on it.

With respect to the independent variables, the respondent's *perception of the probability that his/her personal participation will achieve a desired collective outcome* is measured by the degree of agreement or disagreement with two Likert-style statements: 'Politicians don't care what people like me think' (coded 1-5, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 strong agreement) and 'people like me can have a real influence on politics if they are prepared to get involved' (coded 1-5, with 1 indicating strong agreement and 5 strong disagreement). Responses have been added together, standardized and coded into a combined scale where 0 represents low personal efficacy and 1 represents high personal efficacy.

Respondent's perception of probable group influence is measured through an index created from degree of agreement/disagreement with two statements: 'when party members work together, they can really change the local community or country' (1-strong agreement, 5 = strong disagreement), and 'the party leadership doesn't pay a lot of attention to ordinary party members' (1-strong agreement, 5 = strong disagreement). Responses have been added together, standardized and coded into a combined scale where 0 represents low group efficacy and 1 represents high group efficacy.

We depart slightly here from Seyd and Whiteley's original approach in measuring the *respondent's desired collective outcome*; they distinguished 'the value of collective good incentives' with an additive scale derived from responses to a set of questions about specific policy preferences in the British Elections Studies of the 1980s: these included questions about support for or opposition to private health, NHS spending, anti-poverty spending, private education, trade union laws, defence spending, income tax and public spending levels. In their various studies Seyd and Whiteley then coded responses according to whether they were generally close or distant to those of the party whose members they were investigating. In our case, however, we are attempting to build a single model with consistent codings that will be simultaneously tested against six different sets of party members, so it is impossible to replicate Seyd and Whiteley's approach exactly; we cannot code responses so that they simultaneously represent the answers closest to Conservative policy, Labour policy, Lib Dem policy, and so on, in a single

model. We have therefore constructed a collective incentives index from the additive responses to the questions: 'How important a reason for joining the party were the following (please rate from 0 [not important at all] to 10 [extremely important])? – To support the party's general policies or a specific policy that mattered greatly to me; To oppose the policies of a rival party, or the power of a social or economic group (such as big business or unions)'. Responses have been added together, standardized and coded into a combined scale where 0 represents low collective incentive and 1 represents high collective incentive.

The respondent's ideological incentives for activism are measured by reference to various attitudinal scales which tap ideological dimensions widely recognised as salient features of contemporary British politics. The first is a well-known left-right scale drawing on a battery of questions that have routinely been asked of respondents to the British Election Study (and other surveys) since the 1990s (Heath et al 1993). The left-right additive scale runs from 1 (right-wing) to 5 (left-wing) and the scale items from which it is constructed produce a very high Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 9.15. [2] Our model also includes an additive scale designed by Heath and his colleagues to tap respondents' positions on questions of social liberalism and authoritarianism (with 1 representing the liberal end of the scale and 5 the authoritarian end)[3]; this is also eminently reliable (Alpha = .846). In addition, we have sought to gauge the degree of post-materialist orientation among the different party memberships, using a classic Inglehartian measurement based on four policy objectives which respondents are invited to express their preferences about; two (maintaining order in the nation, and fighting unemployment) which constitute materialist preferences and two (giving people more say in important government decisions, and protecting freedom of speech) which constitute post-materialist preferences. Respondents selecting the two materialist options as their first and second priorities are designated materialists, while those selecting the two post-materialist options are designated as post-materialists, and everyone else is deemed to be attitudinally 'mixed' on this dimension of belief. Finally, we have sought to gauge the attitudes of our party memberships towards matters of Britain's relationship

with Europe, currently one of the burning questions of British politics. We have broached this by asking about the promised referendum on UK membership of the EU: If there were a referendum on EU membership prior to the next general election, how would respondents vote? They were given the options of staying in, regardless of any renegotiated terms of membership that the government might achieve; leaving regardless of renegotiated terms; or indicating that their decision would depend on the outcome of negotiations.

The respondent's perception of the costs of activism is measured by a simple additive scale created from responses to two Likert-style questions: 'working for the party can be pretty boring at times', and 'party activism often takes time away from one's family'. Responses have been added together, standardized and coded into a combined scale where 0 represents low cost perception and 1 represents high cost perception.

The respondent's assessment of the selective outcome benefits of activism is measured by responses to three survey items: first, response to the statement 'a person like me could do a good job of being a local councillor or MP'. This is designed to gauge how far members engage with party activity because they see it as a necessary path to a particular outcome that will benefit them personally – a career in elective politics. And secondly, response to the question: 'How important a reason for joining the party was the following (please rate from 0 [not important at all] to 10 [extremely important]): To become an elected politician?' Responses have been added together, standardized and coded into a combined scale where 0 represents a low perception of selective process benefits from activism and 1 represents high perception of selective outcome benefits.

The respondent's assessment of the selective process benefits of activism is measured by a simple additive scale created from responses to three Likert-style questions: 'Being an active party member is a good way to meet interesting people'; 'getting involved in party activities is the best way to find out about political issues'; and 'How important a reason for joining the party was the following (please rate from 0 [not important at all] to 10 [extremely important]): Being able to engage in activities in which you would be mixing

with like-minded?' Responses have been added together, standardized and coded into a combined scale where 0 represents a low perception of selective process benefits from activism and 1 represents high perception of selective process benefits.

The respondent's altruistic incentive for activism is measured by response to the Likert scale statement: 'Every citizen should get involved in politics if democracy is to work properly', and the question 'How important a reason for joining the party was the following (please rate from 0 [not important at all] to 10 [extremely important]): To support the democratic process?' Responses have been added together, standardized and coded into a combined scale where 0 represents a low altruistic incentive for activism and 1 represents high altruistic incentive.

The respondent's perception of social norm incentives for activism is measured through responses to the following two questions: 'Thinking about those people whose opinions are most important to you – relatives, friends, colleagues and perhaps other party members - overall, do you feel that it matters to them that you are a member of a political party?'; and, 'how important a reason for joining the party was the following (please rate from 0 [not important at all] to 10 [extremely important]): The influence of family, friends or colleagues? These questions are designed to tap whether or not the respondent feels a certain social pressure to engage in party activity because it is a norm of his or her closest personal contacts. Responses have been added together, standardized and coded into a combined scale where 0 represents a low perception of a social norm of party engagement and 1 represents a high perception of such a social norm.

The respondent's expressive or affective motivations for activism is gauged through responses to three survey items that have been combined into a single scale. The first is the classic partisan identification question 'would you call yourself very strong, fairly strong, or not very strong Conservative/Labour/Liberal Democrat/UKIP/Green/SNP?' Note that just 17 respondents out of 5696 did not fit into any of these three categories by failing

to answer the question or indicating that they did not know how strong their partisan identity was, and they have been excluded from the analysis. The other two items that form part of the expressive motivations scale are 'How important a reason for joining the party were the following (please rate from 0 [not important at all] to 10 [extremely important]): An attachment to the party's principles?' and 'Belief in the party's leadership?' Responses have been added together, standardized and coded into a combined scale where 0 represents a low expressive incentive for activism and 1 represents high expressive incentive.

Table 5 reports the results for the model incorporating the entire pooled dataset. In addition to the general incentives independent variables described above, we have also added dummy variables for the parties in order to pick up any party effects, and we have controlled for key demographic variables (namely, social class, age left full-time education, gender and age). The key assumptions regarding OLS have all been met.[4] The Table reports the standardized beta coefficients for each term in the model, its statistical significance, the adjusted R-square for the model, and the number of valid cases included in the analysis.

What does it tell us about the drivers of activism during the 2015 election campaign? First of all, we see that the following factors are positively and significantly associated with being active: being left-wing, socially liberal and post-materialist; being motivated by expressive loyalty to the party, by social norms, by selective outcome and process incentives, by a sense of personal or group efficacy; and by being younger and more middle class (ie, ABC1 rather than C2DE). The reference category for the party dummies is the SNP, and it is perhaps not surprising in view of what we have already seen that all of the other parties - except UKIP – score significantly lower on the campaign activism scale than Scottish Nationalist members. The factors in the model that do not appear to have any significant influence on the dependent variable are attitude towards EU membership, collective incentives, altruistic incentives, the 'costs' of activism, gender and education.

Table 5: Party members' activism models, pooled cross-party data

Right-Left	.061**
Liberty-Authority	-.181**
Post-materialism	.040*
EU	-.006 (ns)
Collective	-.011 (ns)
Expressive	.100**
Selective outcome	.166**
Selective process	.188**
Altruistic	-.003 (ns)
Social norm	.093**
Personal efficacy	.142**
Group efficacy	.089**
Costs	.004 (ns)
Gender	-.002 (ns)
Education	-.026 (ns)
Social grade	-.030*
Age	-.074**
Conservative dummy	-.068*
Labour dummy	-.096**
LibDem dummy	-.100**
UKIP dummy	.016 (ns)
Green dummy	-.052**
Adjusted R-square	.233

Notes: All figures are standardized beta estimates. *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ns=non-significant; n=3990. [5]

None of these substantive findings run directly counter to the expectations of the general incentives model, although not every term included appears to have a significant impact. Among the general incentives factors, selective incentives and political efficacy seem to be particularly weighty influences, while social liberalism counts for a good deal in terms of ideological orientation.

The significant parameter estimates for the party dummies indicate that the model should vary in terms of how it performs at the level of each individual party. We think it is interesting, therefore, to investigate *exactly* how the model differs for each set of party members. Consequently, in Table 6 we report the result for the models for each individual party sub-sample of the dataset. This allows us to identify various specific details missing from the broader-brush picture painted above, with the caveat that the R-squared statistics imply that this model is rather less successful at explaining campaign activism for Labour and Liberal Democrat members than it is for members of other parties

First, being on the left actually only impacts significantly on the activism levels of Labour and Liberal Democrat members, and post-materialism only on the latter, whereas being socially liberal affects activism in all parties, bar the Liberal Democrats. Attitude towards EU membership only makes a significant difference to members of the smaller parties; *hostility to* the EU made campaign activism more likely among UKIP and Green members, while *support for* EU membership was a driver of SNP activism during the campaign. Expressive incentives were a significant motivation for Liberal Democrat, UKIP and Green members (especially the latter), while selective incentives mattered for all parties (excepting selective outcomes for SNP members). Neither altruistic nor collective incentives made a significant difference, while social norms were a positive factor for all parties except UKIP and the Liberal Democrats. Personal efficacy was clearly an important factor, as suggested by the pooled data analysis in Table 5, so it is no surprise to see that it was significant for all parties except UKIP and the Greens; by contrast, group efficacy only seems to have been a significant consideration for UKIP and SNP members. Interestingly, calculation of the costs of activism appears to have been of no importance for any party. Gender and education only made a difference to the Tories, with men being significantly more likely to have been active in the election campaign than women, and members who quit full-time education earlier being more active those who were educated to an older age. Social class only made a difference to UKIP, with more middle-class members doing more. Finally, younger members were generally significantly more active

in the campaign than older members among Conservative, Liberal Democrat and UKIP members.

Table 6: Campaign activism models, by party

	Conservative	**Labour**	**LibDem**	**UKIP**	**Green**	**SNP**
Right-Left	-.041 (ns)	.076*	.103*	.040(ns)	.024(ns)	.071(ns)
Liberty-Authority	-.071*	-.137**	-.064(ns)	-.153**	-.106*	-.137**
Post-materialism	.006 (ns)	-.031(ns)	.089*	.058(ns)	.065(ns)	.044(ns)
EU	.004 (ns)	.014(ns)	.026(ns)	-.162**	-.085*	.120**
Collective	.035 (ns)	-.045(ns)	-.022(ns)	-.044(ns)	.014(ns)	-.049(ns)
Expressive	-.013 (ns)	.052(ns)	.088*	.095*	.171**	.075(ns)
Selective outcome	.294**	.105**	.130**	.194**	.217**	-.020(ns)
Selective process	.202**	.116**	.182**	.162**	.218**	.321**
Altruistic	-.042 (ns)	.050(ns)	-.038(ns)	.032(ns)	-.008(ns)	-.027(ns)
Social norm	.086**	.095**	.069(ns)	.060(ns)	.160**	.121**
Personal efficacy	.216**	.168**	.242**	.059(ns)	-.016(ns)	.101**
Group efficacy	-.006 (ns)	.059(ns)	.037(ns)	.161**	.088(ns)	.135**
Costs	.051 (ns)	-.007(ns)	.013(ns)	.021(ns)	-.043(ns)	-.014(ns)
Gender	.083**	-.017(ns)	-.005(ns)	-.073(ns)	.009(ns)	-.010(ns)
Education	-.073*	-.073(ns)	.035(ns)	-.029(ns)	-.005(ns)	.008(ns)
Social grade	.001 (ns)	-.055(ns)	-.001(ns)	-.085*	-.071(ns)	-.024(ns)
Age	-.131**	-.052(ns)	-.117*	-.124**	.040(ns)	-.019(ns)
Adjusted R-square	.316	.148	.225	.261	.295	.265
Sample Number	865	874	574	525	483	669

All figures are standardized beta estimates, unless otherwise stated. *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ns=non-significant.

Conclusion

According to our research, it remains the case a) that the election activities requiring most of party members in terms of time and effort are the things they are generally least inclined to do, b) that the older, larger, and more well institutionalized parties have something of an advantage over the smaller parties when it comes to these high-cost activities, and c) that it seems likely that campaign activism levels among these parties' members have continued to fall in recent years. This trend may have been somewhat offset by a recent surge in membership and engagement by adherents of smaller parties during the

election campaign of 2015. When we cut through the complexity and detail of our multivariate analysis a few major features stand out. People's core ideological values can be measured in many ways, but the one which most positively impacts on campaign activism appears to be social liberalism: social liberals are significantly more likely to help out at election time regardless of which party they belong to. In terms of the factors built into the general incentives model, selective incentives, personal efficacy and social norms are consistently important in facilitating activism at election time. Other aspects of the model feature significantly in various, if less consistent ways, all of which points to the continuing usefulness of the Seyd and Whiteley's approach, even if, of all parties, the model performs least well in explaining the campaign behaviour of members of the party with which they began their pioneering study – Labour.

We are nonetheless left with some questions. Some relate to potential refinements of the model itself. Could it, for instance, be improved by the addition of factors hitherto unconsidered? Could it be improved by better measurement of the some of the terms employed in it? And are there redundancies in the model? Others relate to questions that require further research and/or analysis. One obvious example is the relationship between activity between elections and activity during them: do campaigns energise the normally inactive or is it the case that the most active members simply do even more than they already. Another is the correlation between members' perceptions of whether particular activities are effective and their actually doing them. And then there is the question of whether members do more for their parties at election time than those who strongly identify with those parties but do not actually go so far as to join them – something additional surveys conducted for our project should eventually be able to tell us.

References

André, Audrey and Depauw, Sam (2015) 'The electoral impact of grassroots activity in the 2012 local elections in Flanders', *Acta Politica*.

Fisher, Justin and Denver, David (2009) 'Evaluating the Electoral Effects of Traditional and Modern Modes of Constituency Campaigning in Britain 1992–2005', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 62 (2), 196-2010

Fisher, J., Fieldhouse, E., & Cutts, D. (2014) 'Members are not the only fruit: Volunteer activity in British political parties at the 2010 general election', *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 16(1), 75-95.

Geddes, A. and Tonge, J. (2015) *Britain Votes, 2015* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Heath, Anthony, Geoffrey Evans and Jean Martin (1993) `The measurement of core beliefs and values: The development of balanced socialist/laissez faire and libertarian/authoritarian scales' *British Journal of Political Science* 24: 115-58.

Holt R. and Turner, J. (1968) *Political Parties in Action: The Battle of Barons Court* (London: Macmillan).

Ignazi, Piero (1992) 'The Silent Counter Revolution: Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right Wing Parties', *European Journal of Political Research*, 22/1: 3-34.

Johnston, R. and Pattie, C. (2003) 'Do canvassing and campaigning work? Evidence from the 2001 general election in England', *British Elections & Parties Yearbook*, 13 (1), 248-273.

Karp, J., Banducci, S. and Bowler, S. (2008) 'Getting Out the Vote: Party Mobilization in a Comparative Perspective', *British Journal of Political Science*, 38 (1) 91-112.

Keen, Richard (2015) *Membership of UK Political Parties* (London: House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/SG/5125, January).

Office for National Statistics (2013) *Full Report - Graduates in the Labour Market 2013* (http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_337841.pdf)

Office for National Statistics (2014) *Labour Market Statistics 2014: Public and Private Sector Employment* (http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/march-2014/statistical-bulletin.html#tab-Public-and-Private-Sector-Employment)

Scarrow, S. (1994) 'The "paradox of enrollment": Assessing the costs and benefits of party memberships', *European Journal of Political Research*, 25 (1) 41-60.

Scarrow, S. (2014) *Beyond Party Members: Changing Approaches to Partisan Mobilization* (Oxford University Press).

Seyd, P. and Whiteley, P. (1992) Labour's Grass Roots: The Politics of Party Membership (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Whiteley, P. (2011) 'Is the party over? The decline of party activism and membership across the democratic world', *Party Politics*, 17(1), 21-44.

Whiteley, P., Seyd, P. and Richardson, J. (1994) *True Blues: The Politics of Conservative Party Membership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Whiteley, P. & Seyd, P. (1998) 'The dynamics of party activism in Britain: A spiral of demobilization?', *British Journal of Political Science*, 28(01), 113-137.

Whiteley, Paul, Seyd, Patrick and Billinghurst, Antony (2005) *Third Force Politics: Liberal Democrats at the Crossroads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Notes

[1] This estimate is arrived at by aggregating those in 'skilled trades' (10.8%), 'process plant and machine operatives' (6.3%), and 'elementary occupations' (10.9%) from Office for National Statistics' official Labour Market 'employment by occupation' tables for April 2014-March 2015. In addition to these 28.0%, there will almost certainly be some manual workers in the mixed 'caring, leisure and other' (9.2%) and 'sales & customer services' (7.8%) categories, which makes an estimate of approximately two-thirds of the working population in the non-manual ABC1 and one-third in the C2DE categories plausible. For details of the official statistics, see https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/gor/2092957698/report.aspx.

[2] The individual items on which these scales are based are as follows: Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: Government should redistribute income from the better-off to those who are less well off; Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers; Ordinary people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth; There is one law for the rich and one for the poor; Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance. Respondents could select from the following options in answering each of these questions: (1) Strongly agree; (2) Tend to agree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Tend to disagree; (5) Strongly disagree; (6) Don't know. Don't knows are excluded from analysis, and all left-right item responses are coded so that 1 is the most right-wing option, and 5 the most left-wing option. For the multivariate models reported later in this paper, the resulting scores are divided by 5 so that the final scale runs from 0.2-1. It should be noted that Seyd and Whiteley also had a separate measure of left-right ideology in their general-incentives model, which was based on self-location on a scale. While we have such a question in our dataset, we have left it out of this model because of a risk of multicollinearity, given that the left-right indices correlate quite highly (.688).

[3] The individual items from which the Liberty-Authority scale is constructed are as follows: Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional values; People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences; For some crimes the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence; Schools should teach children to obey authority; Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards. Responses are coded so that 1 is the most socially liberal option and 5 the most socially authoritarian option. For the multivariate models reported later in this paper, the resulting scores are divided by 5 so that the final scale runs from 0.2-1.

[4] That is, excepting the binary variables, we have evidence of significant linear relationships between dependent and independent variables; of homoscedasticity of error terms; and that there are no significant problems of autocorrelation, or multi-collinearity among the independent variables. Details of these OLS diagnostics available from authors on request.

[5] Variables in the models reported in Tables 5 and 6 are coded as follows:
Dependent variables
Campaign activism scale: 0 (no campaign activism) – 10 (maximum campaign activism)
Non-campaign activism scale: 0 (no activism) – 11 (maximum activism)
Independent variables
Right-Left scale: 0.2 (right-wing) – 1.0 (left-wing)
Liberty-Authority: 0.2 (liberal) – 1.0 (authoritarian)
Post-materialism: 0.33 (materialist), 0.67 (mixed), 1.0 (post-materialist)
EU: 1 (Leave the EU regardless of terms of membership), 2 (Depends), 3 (stay in EU regardless).
Collective: 0 (low collective incentive) – 1 (high collective incentive)
Expressive: 0 (low expressive incentive) – 1 (high expressive incentive)
Selective outcome: 0 (low selective outcome incentive) – 1 (high selective outcome incentive)
Selective process: 0 (low selective process incentive) – 1 (high selective process incentive)
Expressive: 0 (low altruistic incentive) – 1 (high altruistic incentive)
Social norm: 0 (low social norm incentive) – 1 (high social norm incentive)
Personal efficacy: 0 (low personal efficacy) – 1 (high personal efficacy)
Group efficacy: 0 (low group efficacy) – 1 (high group efficacy)
Costs: 0 (low cost of activism incentive) – 1 (high cost of activism incentive)
Gender: 1 (male), 2 (female)
Education: Age finished education – 1 (15 or under), 2 (16), 3 (17-18), 4 (19), 5 (20 or over), 6 (still in full time education)
Social grade: 1 (ABC1 –ie, non-manual employee), 2 (C2DE – ie, manual employee)
Age: Respondent's age in years
Conservative dummy: 1 (Conservative), 0 (other)
Labour dummy: 1 (Labour), 0 (other)
LibDem dummy: 1 (Liberal Democrat), 0 (other)
UKIP dummy: 1 (UKIP), 0 (other)
Green dummy: 1 (Green), 0 (other).