

## Chapter 3

# Testing Rival Models



THE AIM OF THIS CHAPTER IS TO EVALUATE the alternative theories of participation discussed in chapter 2 and to apply this evaluation to the task of explaining political participation in the British party system. Clearly, the starting point of the analysis is to define participation in this context, in particular high-intensity participation. As we pointed out in chapter 1, all too often debates about political participation, particularly in the rational choice tradition, have been dominated by the analysis of voting behavior and explanations of voter turnout (Riker and Ordeshook 1968; Ferejohn and Fiorina 1974, 1975; Silberman and Durden 1975; Palfrey and Rosenthal 1985; Uhlaner 1989). But as Aldrich (1993) points out, this provides only a relatively weak test of theories of participation because voting is such a low-cost activity.

The advantage of studying party members and party activists is that the variation in participation is much greater among this group. At one end of the scale party members get involved in low-intensity forms of participation such as donating money and voting in party ballots. In this respect these members are very similar to voters. At the other end of the scale some members get involved by working for campaigns, running the party organization, raising money, organizing elections, and running for elected office, both within and outside the party. These are the high-intensity participants. One interesting question is whether these two types of participation form a single continuum, with low-intensity forms leading naturally to high-intensity forms of participation. Alternatively, the two types of participation could be quite distinct, with party members

being involved in one but not necessarily the other. This is one of the topics to be examined in this chapter.

The chapter is divided into four sections. We begin by developing political participation scales using data from our 1989–90 survey of Labour party members and our 1992 survey of Conservative party members in Britain. The details of these surveys are discussed in the appendix. The scales include a wide range of political activities common to both parties, varying from low-intensity to high-intensity activities. Needless to say, the scales have considerably more variance and are more reliable than the dichotomous voting turnout variable often used to model participation.

In the second section we specify rival specifications of the theories discussed in chapter 2, identifying the variables required to test the alternative perspectives. The third section is a methodological discussion designed to briefly examine the encompassing approach to the testing of rival theories, a strategy for theory building that arises out of recent work in applied econometrics (see Mizon 1984; Hendry and Richard 1990). The fourth section is devoted to applying this strategy to the task of evaluating the alternative theories of participation, using data from the surveys. This examination prepares the groundwork for a discussion of the dynamics of participation in chapter 4.

### Measuring Participation



In earlier work (Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley, Seyd, and Richardson 1994) we identified three different aspects of political activism or political participation in parties. The first aspect related to levels of contact between party members. Obviously highly active party members are likely to have a lot of face-to-face contact with each other at the local level, but it would be a mistake to think that contact is synonymous with activism. It is quite possible, for example, for party members to be relatively inactive but to have regular contact with other members either socially, through their families, or because activists call on them to donate money, to sign petitions, to remind them to vote on election day, or to collect their membership subscriptions. Clearly contact is a necessary but not sufficient condition for activism.

In table 3.1 the contact dimension is measured in 1989–90 for Labour and in 1992 for the Conservatives. It can be seen that markedly different

rates of contact were experienced by the average member in the two parties. Roughly, Conservative party members were about twice as likely to have no contact at all with other members in comparison with Labour party members. A similar picture emerges in relation to attending meetings, an important indicator of contact often used as a key measure of high-intensity participation. In this case Labour party members were about four times more likely to attend meetings frequently than were Conservatives.

The second dimension of participation relates to campaigning. This involves fund-raising, organizing membership recruitment drives, arranging meetings, and running local election campaigns. For a general election, the “long campaign,” or the eighteen months leading up to a general election, is particularly important (Miller et al. 1990). The work of the general election campaign itself is relatively short, typically five or six weeks, but it is also very intensive.

Key indicators of the campaigning dimension appear in table 3.2. These measures are not comprehensive in that they focus primarily on election-related activities and ignore campaigning linked to local or national policy issues. Nonetheless, they are reasonably good indicators of the amount of campaigning occurring at the grass roots level. Again, Labour party members were more involved in campaigning activities than were Conservatives, with the single exception of donating money. Gen-

**TABLE 3.1. The Contact Dimension of Party Activism (in percentages)**

“Thinking back over the last year, how often have you had contact with people active in your local branch or constituency party?”

	Labour	Conservatives
Not at all	10	22
Rarely	17	30
Occasionally	29	21
Frequently	44	27

“Thinking back over the last year, how often have you attended a party meeting?”

Not at all	36	66
Rarely	14	14
Occasionally	20	8
Frequently	44	12

*Note:* Data are from Labour party members in 1989–90 and Conservative party members in 1992.

erally the data show that a significant proportion of party members were involved in campaigning activity, and this is true in both parties.

The third dimension of activism is the representation dimension. This is the activity of holding elective office, either within the party organization or in outside bodies such as the local council, a National Health Service (NHS) trust, or the governing body of a local school. This type of activity is classically high-intensity participation, since the meetings of party committees or local council committees can take up a great deal of time, particularly if the party controls the local authority. Not surprisingly, the representation dimension of activism involves a much smaller proportion of the party members than do the other dimensions. As can be seen in table 3.3, 30 percent of the Labour party members had stood for office within the party organization on at least one occasion within the previous five years, compared with only 11 percent of Conservatives. The corresponding figures for running for office outside the party organization are, not surprisingly, smaller for both parties. This end of the participation scale comprises the very active members who devoted many hours of their time to party activities in the average month.

We proceed by investigating whether these different measures can all be captured in a single scale. Thus the participation scale is built from the responses to the variables in tables 3.1 through 3.3. Nine of the variables

**TABLE 3.2. The Campaigning Dimension of Party Activism  
(percentage who have done this at least once in previous five years)**

	Labour	Conservatives
Displayed an election poster	90	51
Signed a petition supported by the party	94	49
Donated money to the party	82	85
Delivered leaflets	83	39
Canvassed voters	66	25

**TABLE 3.3. The Representation Dimension of Party Activism  
(percentage who . . .)**

	Labour	Conservatives
Stood for office in party in last five years	30	11
Stood for outside office in last five years	15	6
Currently hold office in party	14	8
Currently hold office on outside body	15	7

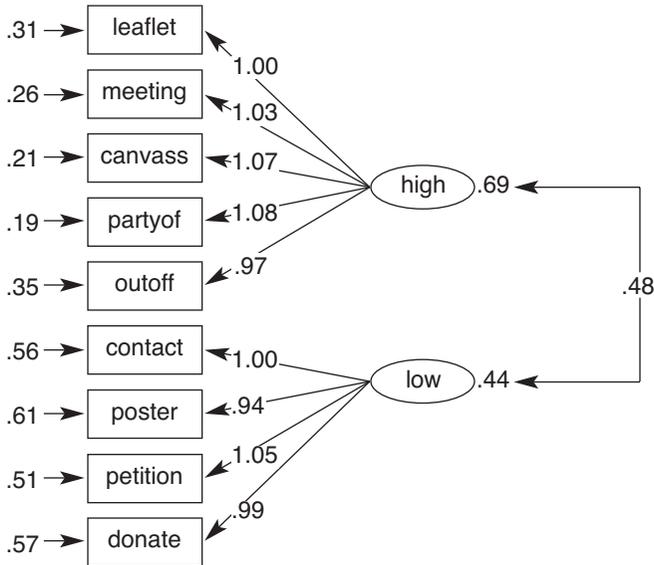


Fig. 3.1. The high- and low-intensity participation scales for Labour party members. *Leaflet* = delivering leaflets; *meeting* = attending a meeting; *canvass* = canvassing voters; *partyof* = running for office in the party; *outoff* = running for office outside the party; *contact* = had contact with activists; *poster* = displayed an election poster; *petition* = signed a petition; *donate* = donated money to the party.

in these tables were measured in four-point scales,<sup>1</sup> such that a measurement model was constructed using these indicators with the LISREL8W maximum likelihood estimation procedure (see Jöreskog and Sörbom 1993). The chi-square goodness-of-fit statistics indicated that a two-factor model fitted better than a single-factor model for both parties, and the results of this analysis appear in figures 3.1 and 3.2.<sup>2</sup>

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 contain the maximum likelihood estimates of the two underlying activism scales, labeled “low-intensity” and “high-intensity” participation respectively. They are derived from nine of the variables in tables 3.1 through 3.3. Each of the observed indicators is represented by an abbreviated label in a box in the diagram, the details of which appear in figure 3.1. The maximum likelihood estimates of the effects of each observed variable on the underlying scale appear on the arrows, and they are all statistically significant at the usual levels.

It is clear that, although the earlier theoretical discussion suggested

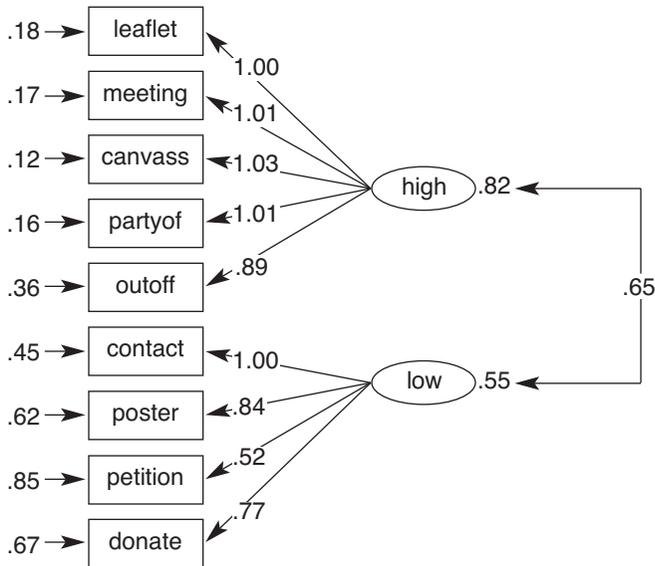


Fig. 3.2. The high- and low-intensity participation scales for Conservative party members. The indicators are the same as those in figure 3.1.

that participation can be described in terms of three dimensions, empirically the results suggest that two dimensions are adequate for understanding different aspects of participation. The low-intensity scale measures activities that involve modest costs in the way of time or effort. Putting up a poster in a window, signing a petition, or making a donation are all important from the point of view of the party and election campaigning, but they are easily accomplished without much time and effort.

In contrast, the high-intensity scale refers to high-cost activities such as attending meetings, canvassing, and running for office, the kinds of activities that keep the party organization going and that help to ensure that elections are won and campaigns are successfully conducted. The two scales are not independent of each other, since the correlations between them that appear in the figures are moderately high; the correlation for Labour party members is 0.48 and for Conservatives is 0.65. Thus it is reasonable to think of participation in the grass roots parties in terms of these two linked dimensions rather than in terms of the three dimensions discussed earlier.

In the light of this discussion we examine the specifications of the alternative models of participation discussed in chapter 2 next. Once the predictor variables in these models are identified, we go on to model the determinants of both the low-intensity and high-intensity participation scales.

### Specifying the Determinants of Participation

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#### *The Civic Voluntarism Model*

In our discussion of the civic voluntarism model in chapter 2, we observed that the authors explained participation in terms of individuals' resources, their psychological engagement with politics, and recruitment processes that bring them into political activity (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: 272). In the light of that discussion we can specify a civic voluntarism model of party activism and apply it to the task of explaining variations in activism in the Labour and Conservative parties. For the moment, activism will be defined in terms of both low-intensity and high-intensity participation. These will be distinguished from each other later. The model can be specified as follows:

$$A_i = a_j + b_1p_i + b_2R_i + b_3ED_i + b_4SC_i + b_5INC_i + b_6FT_i + u_i \quad (1)$$

where

$A_i$  is individual  $i$ 's level of activism in the Labour party.<sup>3</sup>

$p_i$  is individual  $i$ 's sense of personal efficacy.

$R_i$  measures if the individual was asked to join the party by friends, family, or work colleagues.

$ED_i$  is individual  $i$ 's educational attainment.

$SC_i$  is individual  $i$ 's occupational status.

$INC_i$  is individual  $i$ 's income.

$FT_i$  measures if individual  $i$  works full-time.

$u_i$  is the residual, with  $E(u_i) = 0$ ,  $E(u_i u_j) = \sigma^2$ , where  $i = j$ , 0 otherwise.

The first predictor in this model measures the psychological engagement aspects of the civic voluntarism model. As mentioned in chapter 2, this aspect of the model is defined principally in terms of the individual's sense of political efficacy (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: 272). The

Likert-scaled indicators used to capture this dimension of participation appear in table 3.4.<sup>4</sup>

It can be seen in table 3.4 that the sense of personal efficacy measured by the two statements is quite high, particularly among Labour party members. The average party member feels a reasonably strong level of civic engagement that should, according to the civic voluntarism model, promote activism. The variables are coded so that a high score is given to individuals who feel a strong sense of efficacy.<sup>5</sup>

The recruitment aspect of the civic voluntarism model is captured in table 3.5, which measures the percentage of party members recruited by family, by friendship networks, or in the workplace. It can be seen that this form of recruitment is not very important for either party, although it is more important for the Conservatives than for Labour. To be fair, these figures may understate the role of such recruitment networks in the civic voluntarism model, since in the model the authors stress the importance of requests for involvement from all types of people. However, they do emphasize the particular importance of friends and family as agents for recruiting new participants into politics (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: 272).<sup>6</sup> One important feature of the recruitment variable is that it represents the mobilization model of participation discussed in chapter 2, which stresses the importance of significant others in motivating the individual to participate. Accordingly, when it comes to estimating effects, we can regard the mobilization model as being nested within the civic voluntarism model.

Table 3.6 measures the resources aspect of the civic voluntarism model. As the quote in chapter 2 suggests, resources can be evaluated in terms of time, money, and civic skills. In the case of time, individuals who work in full-time occupations are less able to participate than are part-timers, the retired, or individuals in full-time education, so this is used as a proxy measure of the time variable. It is measured by a dummy variable scoring one if the individual is in full-time employment and zero otherwise.

**TABLE 3.4. Indicators of Psychological Engagement or Personal Efficacy (percentage who strongly agree or agree)**

	Labour	Conservatives
“People like me can have a real influence on politics if they are prepared to get involved.”	74	57
“When party members work together they can really change Britain.”	92	75

The money dimension is measured by a six-point income scale, and civic skills are measured by occupational status and educational attainment, the latter being the key indicator in the American version of the model (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: 19). The social class indicator is based on the Hope-Goldthorpe occupational classification scale (see Goldthorpe 1980) and is coded using the five-point version of the scale. Thus white-collar professionals or members of the salariat score one and blue-collar workers score five. Educational attainment is measured by means of a dummy variable that scores one if the individual is a graduate and zero otherwise.

As can be seen in table 3.6 Labour party members are more likely to be in full-time occupations than are Conservatives, largely because so many of the latter are retired. Despite this fact, Conservatives tend to be more

**TABLE 3.5. The Recruitment Aspect of Civic Voluntarism (percentage of party members recruited by members of their family, friends, or workmates)**

	Labour	Conservative
	7	12

**TABLE 3.6. Indicators of Resources in the Civic Voluntarism Model (in percentages)**

	Labour	Conservative
In full-time employment	52	27
Not in full-time employment	48	73
Under £10,000 per annum	38	27
£10,000 to £15,000	18	18
£15,000 to £20,000	15	14
£20,000 to £30,000	17	19
£30,000 to £40,000	8	10
Over £40,000	4	13
Salariat	49	55
Routine nonmanual	16	18
Petty bourgeoisie	4	13
Foreman and technician	5	6
Working class	26	8
Graduate	29	12
Nongraduate	71	88

affluent, although it is noteworthy that about one-quarter of them are in the lowest income category. The social class scale shows that Conservatives are more likely to be white-collar professionals than are Labour party members, although the difference between the two parties is not large. However, only about one-quarter of Labour party members are members of the working class, and for the Conservatives this group makes up less than 10 percent of the sample. Thus participation in British political parties is dominated by the middle class. Nearly 30 percent of the Labour party members are graduates, compared with only 12 percent of Conservatives, again reflecting the fact that Conservatives tend to be a lot older than Labour party members and have consequently missed out on the expansion of higher education in Britain, which has occurred particularly over the last twenty years.

As mentioned earlier, the central focus of the civic voluntarism model is resources, and practically all of the variables in the model measure different aspects of resources. In contrast, the key focus in rational choice accounts of participation are incentives, and these are discussed next.

#### *The Rational Choice Model*

As the discussion in chapter 2 indicates, the main problem for rational choice accounts of participation is dealing with the paradox of participation first formulated by Olson (1965). Following Olson's work, a rational choice model of party activism can be specified as follows:

$$A_i = a_j + b_1 (p_i * B_j) - b_2 C_i + b_3 O_i + b_4 P_i + b_5 ID_i + u_i \quad (2)$$

or alternatively in additive form:

$$A_i = a_j + b_1 p_i + b_2 B_j - b_2 C_i + b_3 O_i + b_4 P_i + b_5 ID_i + u_i \quad (2a)$$

where  $A_i$  and  $p_i$  are the same as in model (1), although the interpretation of  $p_i$  is rather different, as we explained earlier. In this model efficacy has to be based in objective reality and cannot be merely seen as a psychological attitude. The other variables are:

$B_j$  are the collective benefits resulting from the expected implementation of the party's program.

$C_i$  are the costs of participation.

$O_i$  are selective outcome incentives from participation.

$P_i$  are selective process incentives from participation.

$ID_i$  are selective ideological incentives from participation.

The distinction between the collective and private benefits arising from political activity is central to this model (see Olson 1965). Collective benefits,  $B_j$ , are the public goods associated with the policy goals pursued by the political parties. The essential idea here is that party members have a greater incentive to be active if their party is pursuing policies that closely accord with their own policy preferences, in other words if their policy goals are congruent with the goals of the party as a whole. The theory predicts that greater policy congruence should promote greater participation.

As mentioned earlier, such collective benefits give rise to the problem of free riding, and as a consequence in a purely rational choice account few party members would be motivated to participate by such incentives.<sup>7</sup> However, we hypothesize that such incentives are an important influence on the individual's decision to participate. This implies that our working hypothesis is that the free-rider problem is not a serious impediment to participation in practice, since members are not narrowly rational in their behavior.<sup>8</sup>

In the traditional specification of this model, the collective benefits measure is weighted by personal efficacy,  $p_i$ , although the model can also be specified in an additive form. Empirical tests will determine whether the additive version of the model (2a) is preferable to the interactive version (2). Personal efficacy is measured by the same indicators used in the civic voluntarism model set out in table 3.4, although the interpretation of the variables differs between the two models. In rational choice accounts feelings of efficacy have to be grounded in objective reality, while this is not true of the civic voluntarism model. However, in measurement terms, the variables are the same in both models.

Table 3.7 contains the policy indicators that are used to define the collective benefits scale. The indicators touch on the key issues of redistribution, health care, trade union rights, and public spending, which have been at the forefront of British politics for many years. The first indicator of collective benefits relates to the issue of poverty. Relative poverty significantly increased over the years of Conservative incumbency from

1979 to 1997, indicating that this was a low priority for the Conservatives, despite the fact that many of their party members support spending on poverty.<sup>9</sup> Following this logic, Conservative party members who discount the importance of poverty have a greater incentive to be active than do members who attach considerable importance to the relief of poverty, since their preferences are congruent with the policy goals of the party. The reverse would be true of Labour, which in opposition and in the run-up to the general election of 1992 argued that alleviating poverty would be a high priority for a Labour government.<sup>10</sup> Thus Labour members who thought that the government should definitely spend more on poverty scored five, while Conservatives who thought this scored one.

The second and third indicators relate to health care and the growth of private medicine in Britain. Because the postwar Labour government founded the NHS, Labour party members tend to be particularly hostile to policies that undermine the NHS. The Conservative government implemented a number of policies designed to promote private health care in Britain,<sup>11</sup> so again Conservatives who attach little priority to the NHS have more of an incentive to participate than do Conservatives who want to strengthen the NHS.

In contrast, Labour's manifesto expressed strong support for the NHS and stressed the need to improve resources for it.<sup>12</sup> By the same logic Labour party members who attach a high priority to spending on the NHS have a greater incentive to be active than do those who attach a lower priority to this objective. Thus Labour members who definitely supported spending on the NHS and definitely opposed the growth of private medi-

**TABLE 3.7. Collective Benefits Measures in the Rational Choice Model (percentage who think definitely or probably should)**

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"Please indicate whether you think the government should or should not do the following, or doesn't it matter either way?"

	Labour	Conservatives
Spend more money to get rid of poverty	99	81
Put more money into the National Health Service	99	80
Encourage the growth of private medicine	4	52
Reduce government spending generally	21	60
Give workers more say in the places where they work	94	64
Introduce stricter laws to regulate trade unions	12	66

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cine scored five for each of these indicators. Conservatives with the same profile of opinions scored one for each of the indicators.

The fourth collective benefits measure is an indicator of attitudes toward cuts in government spending, which also discriminates between the parties. The Labour party has been traditionally committed to high levels of public spending, particularly on the welfare state, and the Conservatives have been committed to cuts in spending. Thus the 1992 Labour party manifesto stated, "We therefore believe . . . that for liberty to have real meaning the standards of community provision must be high and access to that provision must be wide" (Labour Party 1992: 7). In contrast the Conservative manifesto stated, "Our policy is to reduce the share of national income taken by the public sector" (Conservative Party 1992: 6).<sup>13</sup> Thus Labour members who definitely supported such cuts scored one, whereas Conservatives with the same views scored five.

The fifth and sixth indicators of collective benefits relate to trade union and workers' rights in Britain. Again, this relates to clear policy differences between the parties, because the Conservatives embarked on a series of trade union laws after they were first elected that in the words of one writer aimed to "(a) reduce the scope of regulations designed to protect labour, and (b) increase the scope of regulations controlling trade union behaviour" (Crouch 1990: 322). Thus the Conservatives took vigorous action to undermine the organizational strength of trade unions when they were in office. In contrast Labour, with its long tradition of links with the trade union movement, stressed the importance of giving employees rights in the workplace, including the right to trade union recognition (Labour Party 1992: 13). Thus Labour members who definitely supported workers' rights and definitely opposed stricter laws on trade unions scored five for each measure. Conservatives with the same views scored one for each of the measures.

To sum up, Conservative party members who favored cuts in spending on poverty, government support for private health care, reductions in government spending, and more restrictions on trade unions and workers' rights have a greater incentive to be active than do Conservatives who oppose these policy objectives, and they thus score five for each indicator. The reverse interpretation applies to Labour party members, such that members who support spending programs, the NHS, and workers' rights should have a greater incentive to work for the party than should members who disagree with some, or all, of these policy goals. For both parties

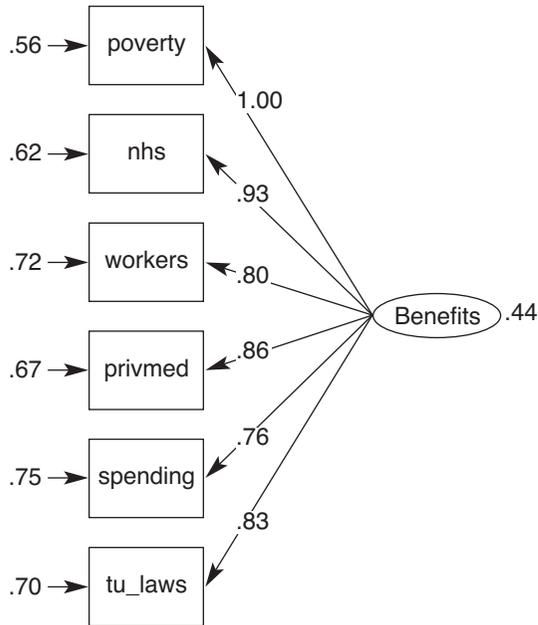


Fig. 3.3. The collective benefits scale for Labour party members. *Poverty* = spending on poverty; *nhs* = spending on the National Health Service; *workers* = give workers more say; *privmed* = encourage private medicine; *spending* = reduce government spending; *tu\_laws* = introduce stricter trade union laws.

high scores denote policy congruence or agreement with the party policy goals, and low scores denote the opposite.

The degree of policy agreement or disagreement among the party members can be seen in table 3.7. There is a strong consensus in both parties about the need to spend money on poverty and the NHS and, in the case of Labour, the need for enhanced workers' rights. Thus on the face of it policy agreement provides a greater incentive for Labour party members to be active than it does for the Conservatives. However, the caveat to this argument is that the Conservatives were in government during the period 1984 to 1992 when the surveys were conducted, and therefore in a position to deliver on policy promises. In contrast Labour supporters had to discount their evaluation of policy congruence by taking into account the fact that the party was in opposition and was thus unable to deliver on policy promises.

The maximum likelihood estimates of the collective benefits scales for

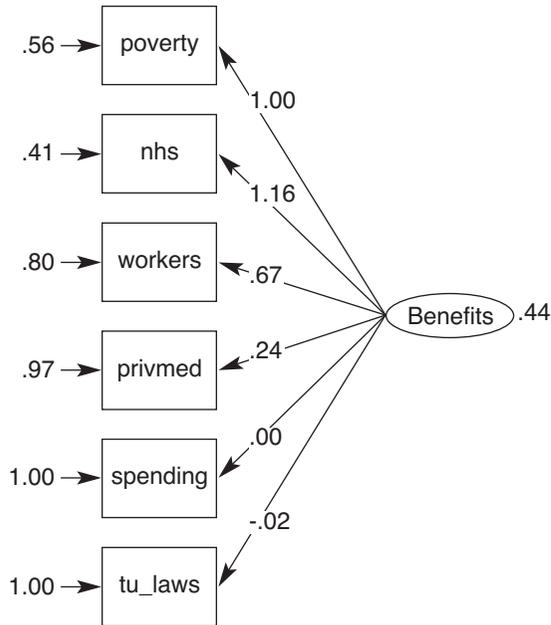


Fig. 3.4. The collective benefits scales for Conservative party members. The indicators are the same as those in figure 3.3.

Labour and the Conservatives appear in figures 3.3 and 3.4. It can be seen that for Labour all of the indicators have a significant relationship with the underlying scale; however, for the Conservatives it appears that, although the relief of poverty, NHS funding, and workers' rights all have significant relationships to the scale, the other measures do not. Thus attitudes toward government spending in general, private medicine, and trade union laws are unrelated or weakly related to the scale. This may reflect the fact that Conservatives have less coherent ideological beliefs than do Labour party members. In the light of these findings we will utilize all six indicators of collective benefits for Labour and the three significant indicators for the Conservatives in the subsequent analysis.

Table 3.8 contains the indicators of perceptions of the costs of participation, which aim to measure the extent to which respondents feel that campaigning for a political party is both tiring and time-consuming. A high perception of costs should inhibit political activism, so respondents

in both parties who strongly agree with these statements score five for each measure.

A second type of motivation for participation in the rational choice model derives from selective incentives, or the private returns from involvement. It will be recalled from the discussion in chapter 2 that these incentives represent Olson's (1965) solution to the free-rider problem. Table 3.9 contains indicators of selective incentives in the rational choice model. The indicators of outcome and process incentives are Likert-scaled statements, and the indicators of ideology are nine-point scales of a type that has frequently been used in the comparative analysis of ideology (see, for example, Barnes and Kaase 1979). Respondents in both

**TABLE 3.8. Indicators of Perceptions of Costs in the Rational Choice Model (percentage who strongly agree or agree)**

	Labour	Conservatives
Attending a party meeting can be pretty tiring after a hard days' work.	72	69
Working for the party can be pretty boring at times.	76	43

**TABLE 3.9. Indicators of Selective Incentives in the Rational Choice Model (percentage who strongly agree or agree)**

	Labour	Conservatives
<i>Outcome incentives</i>		
A person like me could do a good job as a local (party) councillor.	49	27
The party would be more successful if more people like me were elected to Parliament.	35	23
<i>Process incentives</i>		
Being an active party member is a good way to meet interesting people.	68	59
The only way to be really educated is to be a party activist.	44	36
<i>Ideology<sup>a</sup></i>		
Percentage in three left-wing categories for party	39	8
Percentage in three right-wing categories for party	15	44
Percentage in three left-wing categories for Britain	68	2
Percentage in three right-wing categories for Britain	10	61

<sup>a</sup>Indicators of ideology are nine-point scales.

parties who strongly agree with the indicators of outcome and process incentives score five for each measure. In the case of ideology, the expectation is that left-wingers are more active in the Labour party and that right-wingers are more active in the Conservative party, an interpretation consistent with the curvilinear disparity thesis discussed in chapter 2.

The data in table 3.9 suggest that outcome incentives are more important for Labour party members than for Conservatives, with small but fewer significant differences between the two parties in relation to process incentives. Thus nearly one-half of the Labour members thought that they could do a good job as a local councillor, compared with just over one-quarter of Conservatives. Close to seven out of ten Labour members thought that party activism was a good way to meet interesting people, compared with six out of ten Conservatives. In relation to ideology, not surprisingly, Labour party members coded themselves in the left-wing categories of the ideological scales and Conservatives in the right-wing categories.

Social psychological models of participation are also preoccupied with incentives, as the earlier discussion indicated. But social norms and the desire of the individual to conform to such norms are also key issues in this theoretical approach, which is discussed next.

### *The Social Psychological Model*

As we mentioned in chapter 2 social psychological models of participation have tended to focus on unorthodox participation and to stress the importance of social norms as well as the expected benefits from participation. We can specify the social psychological model as follows:

$$A_i = a_j + b_1(p_i * EB_i) + b_3N_i + b_4E_i + u_i \quad (3)$$

or the additive version:

$$A_i = a_j + b_1p_i + b_2EB_i + b_3N_i + b_4E_i + u_i \quad (3a)$$

where

$A_i$  and  $p_i$  are the same as in model (1).

$EB_i$  are the expected benefits from participation.

$N_i$  are social norms that promote participation.

$E_i$  are expressive or affective factors that promote participation.

Personal efficacy appears in this model as it does in the previous models. In the social psychological model it can be interpreted as a normative justification for participation, such that an individual who believes that he or she can be influential is seen as justifying participation privately to themselves. As we mentioned in the discussion in chapter 2, this variable says nothing about the objective validity of such a belief.

Similarly, the expected benefits measure differs from its equivalent in the rational choice model in that it focuses on attitudes to the behavior in question rather than attitudes to expected outcomes from that behavior (see Fishbein 1967: 490). Thus the questions should be about the immediate benefits resulting from different acts of participation rather than about the policy gains or losses that might occur from participation, possibly in the long run. Indicators of this type appear in table 3.10.

There are considerable differences between Labour and Conservative party members in their perceptions of the effectiveness of particular types of activity. Part of these differences is due to small differences in question wording,<sup>14</sup> but they are also the result of differences in the perceptions of the members about which political actions are effective. Respondents who thought that a particular activity was very effective scored four, and those who thought it was not at all effective scored one.

Table 3.11 measures the influence of social norms on the individual's attitudes toward party activism. In the case of Labour, such norms were measured by two Likert-scaled statements, which both related to their perceptions of the status of party activists in the minds of other people. Party members who strongly agreed with the statements scored one, and those who strongly disagreed scored five. As the data suggest most Labour respondents thought that the public sees party activists as extremists and

**TABLE 3.10. Indicators of Expected Benefits in the Social Psychological Model (percentage who think activity is very effective or effective for Labour and is influential to a large extent or to some extent for the Conservatives)**

	Labour	Conservatives
Displaying an election poster	68	23
Donating money to party funds	87	56
Delivering party leaflets during an election	87	45
Attending a party meeting	63	31
Canvassing voters on behalf of the party	89	41
Standing for elected office within the party	75	32
Standing for elected office at a local or national election	83	45

that their work is very often not recognized. This was a direct way of measuring members' perceptions of the social norms surrounding party activity. The implication is that their perceptions that most people have a poor image of party activism should deter such activism.

In the case of the Conservatives an alternative approach was adopted, that of asking them how a significant other person in their lives would react to two Likert statements, both of which asked about the images of party members. As can be seen in the table Conservatives thought that their significant other would disagree with the proposition that party activists are extremists. Similarly, they believed this person would think that party members are respected in the local community.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, Conservatives who strongly disagreed that party members are perceived as extremists and strongly agreed that they are perceived as respected figures in the local community scored five for each measure.

Table 3.12 contains the indicators of expressive or affective motives

**TABLE 3.11. Indicators of Social Norms in the Social Psychological Model (percentage who strongly agree or agree)**

	Labour
Many people think party activists are extremists.	75
The amount of work done by ordinary party members is very often unrecognized.	85
	Conservatives <sup>a</sup>
Many Conservative party activists are extremists.	17
On the whole, members of the local Conservative association are respected figures in the local community.	70

<sup>a</sup>For Conservatives, the preamble to the Likert statement said: "Think about those people whose opinions are especially important to you, for example, your spouse, friends, or colleagues. Consider the person whose opinions you most respect: would you say that they agree or disagree with the following statements?"

**TABLE 3.12. Indicators of Expressive Attachments in the Social Psychological Model (strength of attachment to their party) (in percentages)**

	Labour	Conservatives
Very strong	55	33
Fairly strong	38	50
Not very strong	6	14
Not at all strong	1	4

for participation in the social psychological model. They are the intensity of partisanship indicators that have been used in the American and British Election Studies for many years (see Campbell et al. 1960; Butler and Stokes 1974). In the present context these indicators measure the individual's emotional attachment to his or her party, and the strength of this attachment should be an important influence on his or her participation in the social psychological model of participation. For both parties respondents who are very strong identifiers score four and those whose identification is not at all strong score one.

### *The General Incentives Model*

The last of the models examined in chapter 2 is the general incentives model, which can be regarded as a hybrid model that includes rational choice and social psychological variables. The general incentives model can be specified as follows:

$$A_i = a_j + b_1(p_i * B_j) + b_2C_i + b_3O_i + b_4P_i + b_5ID_i + b_6G_i + b_7E_i + u_i \quad (4)$$

or in additive form:

$$A_i = a_j + b_1p_i + b_2B_j - b_2C_i + b_3O_i + b_4P_i + b_5ID_i + b_6G_i + b_7E_i + u_i. \quad (4a)$$

All of the variables in this model have been defined previously, with the exception of  $G_i$ , a measure of group efficacy. The essential idea here is that individuals are motivated to be active if they believe themselves to be part of a highly successful organization that is able to achieve its goals.

The indicators of group incentives to participate appear in table 3.13.

**TABLE 3.13. Indicators of Group Incentives in the General Incentives Model (percentage who strongly agree or agree)**

	Labour	Conservatives
The party leadership doesn't pay a lot of attention to the views of ordinary party members.	39	43
Parties in general are only interested in peoples' votes, not in their opinions.	51	—
Voting is the only way people like me can have any say about how the government runs things.	—	76

The measures tap into the sense of the effectiveness of group action by party members acting together and not just as individuals. Roughly 40 percent of the members of both parties agree with the proposition that the party leadership does not pay a lot of attention to party members. In the case of the second indicator, which concerns the effectiveness of political action, the wording of the Conservative measure is different from that of the Labour measure. Accordingly, respondents who strongly disagreed with the statements scored five, and respondents who strongly agreed scored one. Thus the highest scores went to those respondents who thought that parties are effective and that the party leaders are responsive to their members. Perceptions of group effectiveness are clearly different from the perceptions of individual efficacy examined in table 3.4.

Given that the measures in the various models have now been defined, in the next section we go on to examine the methodological strategy aimed at determining which model provides the best account of party activism.

### The Encompassing Approach to the Testing of Rival Theories



The discussion in the previous section indicates that personal efficacy is common to all of the models, although it has a different interpretation in rational choice and social psychological accounts. Similarly, the general incentives model shares many variables with the rational choice and social psychological models, although there are also significant differences among these models.

The standard political science approach to evaluating alternative models has been to use a goodness-of-fit measure such as  $R^2$  or the  $t$ -statistic associated with a particular estimate. However, applied econometricians are increasingly skeptical of the value of these measures in the absence of clearly specified alternative models (Charemza and Deadman 1992: 14–30). In an influential article Leamer argues:

Diagnostic tests such as goodness of fit tests, without explicit alternative hypotheses, are useless since, if the sample size is large enough, any maintained hypothesis will be rejected. . . . Such tests therefore degenerate into elaborate rituals for measuring the sample size. (1983: 39)

Recent developments in applied econometrics have created an alternative “encompassing methodology” that is explicitly designed to test rival theories and avoid this criticism (Mizon 1984; Granger 1990; Hendry 1995). Encompassing methodology involves the idea that the best theory should be able to account for, or incorporate, the results of rival theories by outperforming them in various diagnostic tests.

The approach starts with the theoretical construct of a data generating process (DGP), which is the mechanism underlying the observed data (Granger 1990). The DGP is usually very complex and can only be approximated in practice by the models that are estimated. In this situation the best methodological approach involves testing rival models against each other to see which is the best at approximating the DGP. If one model is better than another it should encompass the alternative; that is, it should be able to predict or account for the results of an alternative model as well as predict phenomena that the rival model is unable to predict. No one model is likely to give a perfect representation of the DGP, but the aim of empirical research should be to try to identify the best of a set of alternative models.

One important distinction is found between nested and nonnested models; a model is nested within another when parameter restrictions placed on the latter produce the former. For example, model (2) is nested within model (4), such that tests of the hypothesis that coefficients  $b_6$  and  $b_7$  in model (4) are equal to zero will allow the researcher to establish whether the latter can be reduced to the former, thus providing a more parsimonious representation of the DGP without loss of explanatory power. Similarly, the mobilization model is nested within the civic voluntarism model.

In contrast, models (3) and (4) are nonnested because they contain different variables, making it impossible to obtain one specification by restricting the parameters of the other. In this situation, we can start with a global model, or a model containing all the variables that appear in both, and then impose restrictions on this to determine if one or another of the original models, or some hybrid combination of the two, provides the best representation of the DGP. In any exercise of this kind one model may encompass another or none of the models may encompass each other. In the latter case the individual models may represent elements of a more general model, perhaps even the global model, which encompasses them all.

The exercise of starting with a global model and restricting its param-

ters to identify the best model is an aspect of the general-to-specific modeling strategy advocated by Hendry (1995) and others. It runs counter to the traditional political science approach of building simple models to begin with and then making them more elaborate subsequently. The traditional strategy, exemplified in an extreme form by stepwise regression techniques, is considerably inferior to the general-to-specific approach since it invalidates the test statistics and leads to misspecification errors that are unlikely to be identified by the model-building strategy (see Spanos 1990).

A final issue of considerable importance in encompassing methodology is the question of whether predictor variables are endogenous or exogenous, that is, whether they are determined by other variables in the model or determined by factors entirely outside the model. In the case of the civic voluntarism model, variables such as class and income are clearly exogenous, since there is no sensible theoretical support for the proposition that participation determines socioeconomic status; the causal process clearly runs from socioeconomic status to participation. But the personal efficacy variable in the model is more problematic; clearly, participation may determine personal efficacy, despite that the specification defines the relationship in the other direction.

The standard way of dealing with interactions of this type in cross-sectional data is to specify two equations, one for activism and one for efficacy, to estimate the effects. However, as is well known, such specifications require instrumental variables, or variables that are significant predictors in only one of the interactive equations, if the model is to be identified (see Pindyck and Rubinfeld 1991: 292–96). Such instruments are not always available, or they may not be adequate to identify links. A much better way of identifying such interactions is to use panel surveys or time series data. We examine this issue in chapter 4.

In the light of these various points, we next examine the relationship between the four models that have been set out.

### Testing Rival Theories of Participation



Given that there are two participation scales for each party, we begin by examining the rival theories applied to the task of explaining variations in the low-intensity scale for Labour members. This is done in table 3.14.

Table 3.14 contains the maximum likelihood estimates of the rival

models discussed earlier applied to the task of explaining the low-intensity participation dimension. The various measurement models are not shown for reasons of space, but all of the coefficients in these measurement models are statistically significant. In addition to the familiar  $R^2$  statistic, there is a chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) attached to the civic voluntarism, social psychological, and rational choice models. This measures the reduction in the goodness of fit of the global model caused by constrain-

**TABLE 3.14. Rival Models of Low-Intensity Participation for Labour Party Members (maximum likelihood estimates)**

	Civic Voluntarism	Social Psychological	Rational Choice	General Incentives
Personal influence	0.43** (16.6)	0.20*** (8.4)	0.15*** (3.5)	0.14* (1.9)
Full-time employment	0.02 (1.5)	—	—	—
Household income	0.02 (1.6)	—	—	—
Social class	-0.03** (2.5)	—	—	—
Educational attainment	0.02* (1.8)	—	—	—
Recruitment to party	-0.02*** (3.0)	—	—	—
Group influence	—	—	—	-0.05* (1.9)
Collective benefits	—	—	0.11*** (8.4)	0.13*** (5.7)
Costs	—	—	0.11*** (4.6)	0.10*** (3.0)
Outcome incentives	—	—	0.12*** (9.6)	0.10*** (6.7)
Process incentives	—	—	0.14*** (3.4)	0.09 (1.3)
Ideology	—	—	-0.07*** (4.5)	-0.05*** (3.6)
Expected benefits	—	0.08*** (8.3)	—	—
Social norms	—	-0.03*** (3.9)	—	—
Expressive incentives	—	0.17*** (16.8)	—	0.12*** (11.2)
$R^2$	0.17	0.30	0.33	0.36
$\chi^2$	24.6*** (5 df)	11.7*** (2 df)	80.7*** (6 df)	—

\* $p < 0.10$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

ing the values of the model under consideration to equal zero. In this way we can test whether the model explains anything at all when its rivals are taken into account. For example, the chi-square statistic increases by 24.6 for the gain of 5 degrees of freedom when the variables unique to the civic voluntarism model were set to zero in the global model. This is a statistically significant change,<sup>16</sup> meaning that the goodness of fit of the global model deteriorates significantly if the civic voluntarism model is ignored.

This means that some or all of the variables in the civic voluntarism model are required to properly model low-intensity participation. This also implies that the rational choice and social psychological models do not encompass the civic voluntarism model. It is worth noting that the traditional political science model building strategy would have preferred the social psychological model to the civic voluntarism model merely because of its higher  $R^2$  statistic.

Having identified that some or all of the variables in the civic voluntarism model are required in an encompassing model, it is noteworthy that the latter explains only a modest percentage of the variance and that only four of the variables are significant. These are personal influence, social class, education, and recruitment. The estimates suggest that party members who have high levels of personal efficacy, are middle class, graduates, and were not recruited by friends, family, or workmates are more likely to score highly on the low-intensity participation scale than are members lacking these characteristics. Oddly, the recruitment variable has the opposite sign to that predicted by the civic voluntarism model, which implies that members who were recruited by family and friends have less contact with the party rather than more, as the theory would suggest.<sup>17</sup> It is also the case that neither time nor income appears to be significant influences on low-intensity participation, a finding that is not that surprising given the low-cost activities that make up the scale.

It may be recalled that the recruitment variable represents the mobilization model that is nested within the civic voluntarism model. That the sign is the opposite to that predicted by the mobilization model, and also that other variables are important in the civic voluntarism model, means that the latter encompasses the former. Thus the civic voluntarism model unequivocally does a better job at explaining contact than does the mobilization model. More generally, the civic voluntarism model is not encompassed by the other models, but it does appear to produce one perverse effect, relating to political recruitment, when it is applied to the task of explaining contact.

The social psychological model is a significantly better fit than the civic voluntarism model. Moreover, the signs of the predictors are consistent with theory, such that personal efficacy, expected benefits, social norms, and expressive incentives all stimulate low-intensity participation.<sup>18</sup> It is also the case that the other models do not encompass the social psychological model, since the goodness of fit of the global model significantly deteriorates if it is removed.

Turning to the rational choice model, the additive version is estimated in table 3.14, and it is clearly not encompassed by the other models in view of the chi-square statistic. Moreover, with one exception the signs of the predictor variables are consistent with theory and the  $R^2$  statistic is larger than the other two models. Thus personal efficacy, collective benefits, outcome, process, and ideological incentives all significantly influence low-intensity participation.

As mentioned earlier, personal efficacy has to be consistent with objective efficacy, which is problematic even for low-intensity activities such as donating money or signing a petition. It is hard to make the case that a single individual can be effective in changing policy goals or policy outcomes by getting involved in low-intensity participation. Thus although the effect is significant, its meaning is not clear in a purely rational choice model.

The other variables all have signs consistent with theory, such that congruence between the respondent and the party on policy objectives promotes participation, as do the selective outcome and process incentives. It is noteworthy that the effect of the ideology scale is negative, indicating that left-wingers are more involved in low-intensity participation than are right-wingers, a finding consistent with the law of curvilinear disparity discussed in chapter 2.

One puzzle is that the effect of costs on participation is positive rather than negative in the rational choice model. Thus respondents who perceive that participation carries high costs are nonetheless more involved in low-intensity participation than are their counterparts. Such an effect has appeared in earlier research (Muller and Opp 1986) and can be interpreted in psychological rather than in cost-benefit terms; members scoring highly on the low-intensity participation scale are simply more aware of the potential costs of participation than are their inactive counterparts, but this does not deter them from participating. As mentioned earlier, since the low-intensity participation scale does not contain high-cost types of participation, the meaning of the indicators used to measure the

cost variable may be rather abstract in any case. On the other hand a positive sign on the cost variable is inconsistent with a purely rational choice theory of participation, in which perceptions of costs should deter action.

It is possible of course that the multiplicative version of the rational choice model (3) is superior to the additive version (3a). Accordingly, a multiplicative version of the model was estimated, but it proved to be inferior to the additive version.<sup>19</sup>

Since we know that the rational choice model is not encompassed by the other two models, this must also be true of the general incentives model because the former is nested within the latter, and so the encompassing test is omitted in this case. Incorporating expressive incentives and the group influence variable into the rational choice model significantly increases the  $R^2$ , so the general incentives model clearly encompasses the rational choice model. Expressive incentives are largely responsible for this improvement in fit, since the group incentives variable is barely significant in the larger model. Moreover this variable has a negative effect on the low-intensity participation scale, indicating that respondents who are likely to agree with the indicators in table 3.13 are more involved than those who disagree. Again, this is much more consistent with a social psychological model than a rational choice model.

Table 3.15 contains the estimates of the rival models of the high-intensity participation scale, or the high-cost types of political participation associated with campaigning and running for office set out in tables 3.2 and 3.3. There are important similarities and differences between the models in table 3.15 and the models in table 3.14. In the case of the civic voluntarism model, personal influence, social class, education, and recruitment are statistically significant with the same signs as in the earlier table. However, full-time employment and household income are now significant predictors of activism but with the opposite signs to those predicted by the civic voluntarism model.

Thus individuals with high incomes tend to be rather less active than are those with low incomes, other things being equal, and individuals in full-time occupations are more active than are those in part-time occupations or in no occupations at all. Clearly, these are anomalous results in terms of the civic voluntarism theory, casting some doubt on its validity in the case of high-intensity types of participation.

In contrast the social psychological model of high-intensity participation is very similar to the equivalent model in table 3.14, although the magnitude of some of the effects differs. Thus the indicator of efficacy or

personal influence is less important and the indicator of expected benefits is more important than in the low-intensity model. Perhaps it is not surprising that evaluations of expected benefits play a more important role in influencing decisions about high-intensity participation in comparison with low-intensity participation. A similar point can be made about the rational choice model of high-intensity participation; it is very similar to

**TABLE 3.15. Rival Models of High-Intensity Participation for Labour Party Members (maximum likelihood estimates)**

	Civic Voluntarism	Social Psychological	Rational Choice	General Incentives
Personal influence	0.48*** (14.5)	0.09** (2.1)	0.80** (2.4)	0.38*** (3.8)
Full-time employment	0.12*** (7.5)	—	—	—
Household income	-0.05** (2.7)	—	—	—
Social class	-0.05*** (2.7)	—	—	—
Educational attainment	0.06*** (3.5)	—	—	—
Recruitment to party	-0.03** (2.6)	—	—	—
Group influence	—	—	—	-0.02 (0.9)
Collective benefits	—	—	0.11*** (4.2)	0.13*** (3.7)
Costs	—	—	0.7*** (6.8)	0.00 (0.3)
Outcome incentives	—	—	0.38*** (19.4)	0.39*** (17.4)
Process incentives	—	—	0.12*** (8.6)	0.53*** (5.5)
Ideology	—	—	-0.05*** (2.8)	-0.03* (1.8)
Expected benefits	—	0.31*** (12.5)	—	—
Social norms	—	-0.09*** (7.9)	—	—
Expressive incentives	—	0.26*** (20.3)	—	0.16*** (11.3)
$R^2$	0.10	0.24	0.31	0.41
$\chi^2$	21.2*** (5 df)		196.0*** (6 df)	—

\* $p < 0.10$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

the low-intensity participation model, except that personal influence and outcome incentives are much more important than in the latter.

The goodness of fit of the general incentives model of high-intensity participation is rather better than the equivalent model of low-intensity participation, and this is largely explained by the role of selective incentives. The latter are significant but rather weak in the low-intensity model but are strong in the high-intensity model, particularly process incentives. Thus mixing with other like-minded individuals and harboring ambitions for a political career are both powerful motives for participating in high-cost types of activities. Not surprisingly, they play a much less significant role in explaining low-intensity participation.

The estimates for the low-intensity models for Conservative party members appear in table 3.16, and it can be seen that they share many of the features of the Labour models; thus the social psychological model is practically the same as in table 3.14, except that social norms are not significant. Similarly, the rational choice model is rather similar to the Labour case, except that outcome incentives are not significant and costs deter participation rather than enhance it, as in the Labour model. A similar point can be made about the general incentives model, although in this case group incentives have a positive effect on low-intensity participation and respondents on the right of the political spectrum are more involved than are those on the left. Again, this finding is consistent with the curvilinear disparity thesis.

The civic voluntarism model of low-intensity participation for the Conservatives differs most clearly from the equivalent Labour model. It may be recalled from table 3.14 that social class, education, and recruitment influenced low-intensity participation in the Labour model. In contrast, out of these variables only education is a significant predictor in the Conservative model. Moreover, the sign of the education variable is negative, suggesting that less educated Conservatives are more involved than are highly educated Conservatives, other things being equal. Another difference relates to full-time employment, which is a significant predictor of low-intensity participation in the Conservative model, although it was not significant in the Labour model; respondents in full-time employment tend to be more involved with the Conservative party than do others.

Overall, it appears that the general incentives model of low-intensity participation encompasses the rational choice model for the Conservatives. It is also the case that the social psychological model is encompassed by the other models, since the reduction in fit is not significant

when it is removed from the global model. This means that social norms and the expected benefits are superfluous in modeling the determinants of low-intensity participation for Conservative party members.

Table 3.17 contains the estimates of the models of high-intensity participation for the Conservatives, and once again there are important similarities with the Labour models; the social psychological, rational choice, and general incentives models are very similar for both parties, although

**TABLE 3.16. Rival Models of Low-Intensity Participation for Conservative Party Members**

	Civic Voluntarism	Social Psychological	Rational Choice	General Incentives
Personal influence	0.13*** (10.5)	0.10*** (3.6)	0.05* (1.9)	0.01 (0.6)
Full-time employment	0.07*** (6.3)	—	—	—
Household income	-0.02 (1.5)	—	—	—
Social class	0.02 (1.4)	—	—	—
Educational attainment	-0.05*** (3.7)	—	—	—
Recruitment to party	-0.02 (1.3)	—	—	—
Group influence	—	—	—	0.07*** (5.1)
Collective benefits	—	—	0.09*** (3.7)	0.05*** (2.3)
Costs	—	—	-0.04*** (2.7)	-0.03** (2.2)
Outcome incentives	—	—	-0.24 (0.6)	0.13*** (0.5)
Process incentives	—	—	1.30*** (3.0)	0.94*** (4.2)
Ideology	—	—	0.14*** (9.6)	0.12*** (8.6)
Expected benefits	—	0.45*** (12.6)	—	—
Social norms	—	0.01 (0.5)	—	—
Expressive incentives	—	0.06*** (4.5)	—	0.04*** (2.9)
$R^2$	0.11	0.35	0.20	0.24
$\chi^2$	33.4***(5 df)	1.3(2 df)	86.2***(6 df)	—

\* $p < 0.10$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

perceptions of personal influence appear to play a less important role in explaining high-intensity participation in these models for Conservatives than they do for Labour. Selective incentives clearly play a very important role in explaining participation in both parties, as do expressive incentives. The major difference between the two parties relates to the goodness of fit of the social psychological model, which is much higher for Conservatives than it is for Labour. In particular, expected benefits are

**TABLE 3.17. Rival Models of High-Intensity Participation for Conservative Party Members**

	Civic Voluntarism	Social Psychological	Rational Choice	General Incentives
Personal influence	0.28*** (15.5)	0.10*** (7.0)	0.03 (1.5)	0.01 (0.6)
Full-time employment	-0.14 (0.7)	—	—	—
Household income	-0.01 (0.5)	—	—	—
Social class	-0.02 (0.9)	—	—	—
Educational attainment	0.10*** (4.3)	—	—	—
Recruitment to party	-0.02 (0.9)	—	—	—
Group influence	—	—	—	0.02 (1.0)
Collective benefits	—	—	0.24*** (8.2)	0.16*** (5.6)
Costs	—	—	-0.02 (1.1)	-0.01 (0.4)
Outcome incentives	—	—	0.38*** (13.6)	0.38*** (14.0)
Process incentives	—	—	0.29*** (9.1)	0.21*** (7.7)
Ideology	—	—	-0.01 (0.3)	-0.12*** (5.2)
Expected benefits	—	0.54*** (26.4)	—	—
Social norms	—	-0.18*** (2.6)	—	—
Expressive incentives	—	0.27*** (14.2)	—	0.27*** (26.0)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.11	0.48	0.36	0.42
χ <sup>2</sup>	32.9***(5 df)	303.5(2 df)	206.4***(6 df)	—

\* $p < 0.10$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

significantly more important for explaining Conservative high-intensity participation than they are for Labour.

Once again we can see that the general incentives model encompasses the rational choice model. But none of the other models encompasses each other, suggesting that some hybrid model is best for explaining high-intensity participation in the Conservative party. The goodness of fit of the civic voluntarism model is slightly smaller for the Conservatives than it is for Labour, largely because only educational attainment and personal influence are significant predictors. It appears that social class, income, time, and the mode of recruitment to the party are irrelevant as factors that explain Conservative participation. These findings suggests that the civic voluntarism model is a rather weak explanation of participation, although the chi-square test indicates that the other models do not encompass it. The results also indicate that the mobilization model is not relevant for explaining high-intensity participation among Conservatives.

## Discussion



We have seen that the models are rather similar for both parties, although there are important differences between them, particularly in relation to the civic voluntarism model. It is also the case that some of the rival models encompass others; the mobilization model is encompassed by the civic voluntarism model, and the rational choice model is encompassed by the general incentives model. However, there is no clear optimal model that encompasses all the others, so it appears that different variables from the civic voluntarism, social psychological, and general incentives models are needed to define such an optimal model.

These results show that, when data confront theory in empirical tests that do not privilege one theory at the expense of others, no clear winner is found. One could only prefer a rational choice account of participation by ignoring empirical evidence that supports social psychological accounts. By the same token one could only prefer social psychological models by ignoring the evidence that rational calculations play an important role in influencing participation. A similar point can be made about the civic voluntarism model, which is incomplete on its own, but it nonetheless contains important insights into participation that are not adequately captured by its rivals. Having said this, it is important to rec-

ognize that the general incentives theory receives stronger empirical support than do its rivals, even if it does not wholly encompass them.

If the testing up to this point does not identify a clear winner, what is the next step? In the earlier discussion of encompassing methodology we pointed out the importance of carrying out exogeneity tests to identify an optimal model. This issue has not been addressed up to this point because such tests cannot be effectively carried out with cross-sectional data. Clearly, before trying to identify an overall optimal model it is important to examine the issue of causal sequence using the panel surveys of Labour and Conservative party members. This issue is addressed in chapter 4.