The British Labour Party and Leadership Election Mandate(s) of Jeremy Corbyn:
Patterns of Opinion and Opposition within the Parliamentary Labour Party

Abstract

This paper offers the first systematic evaluation of opinion within the 2015-17 parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) towards the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. We do this by identifying whether individual parliamentarians remained supportive of Corbyn as their party leader or not, and then relating opinion on this to a series of variables that form the basis of a unique dataset on the PLP. By constructing this dataset we are able to test, via logistic regression analysis, a series of hypotheses based around (1) demographic variables – i.e., age, gender and trade union membership; (2) political variables - i.e., year of entry, constituency region, marginality, main competition, and the endorsement of their constituency Labour Party (CLP) in the leadership election of 2016, and (3) ideological variables - i.e., views on continued European Union [EU] membership, immigration, intervention in Syria and the renewal of Trident.

Introduction

This paper provides the first systematic academic evaluation of the relationship between the 2015-17 parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) and their democratically elected leader, Jeremy Corbyn. The rationale for this stems from the tumultuous events of the summer of 2016 when mass resignations from the shadow ministerial ranks (Syal, Perraudin and Slawson 2016) led to a vote of no confidence in Corbyn's leadership. Although not procedurally binding, 172 out of 230 Labour parliamentarians indicated their view that Corbyn should not continue as leader of the Labour Party (Stone 2016). His unwillingness to step aside triggered a formal leadership challenge by Owen Smith. Corbyn defeated Smith by 319,209 votes to 193,229 votes (or 61.8 to 38.2 percent), thus securing an even more impressive margin of victory than he had in his initial election to the leadership the previous September – when Corbyn secured 251,417 votes at 59.5 percent (Mason 2015, Sparrow 2016).

As Dorey and Denham have noted the original election of Corbyn 'plunged the PLP into turmoil' (Dorey and Denham 2016), and left them 'at war' not only with their leader but also with their members (Blakey 2016). The PLP concluded that Corbyn had been propelled to the leadership at the behest of an increasingly hard left membership (Bale, Webb and Poletti, 2016), but that the membership was more concerned with ideological purity and control over the party, as opposed to the compromises necessary to win power (Blakey 2016). The membership, however, supported Corbyn because they saw him as 'principled, honest and decent', who stood 'for genuinely left-wing progressive politics', as opposed to the 'establishment, careerist politicians' of the PLP (Blakey 2016). The membership came to view the PLP as 'rebels', who were attempting to subvert internal party democracy in their attempts to force Corbyn to resign, through coordinated resignations from the frontbench and via the confidence motion, and by trying to prevent Corbyn from being on the leadership ballot by arguing that he needed the support of 20 percent of the PLP before being allowed to participate (Blakey 2016)[i].

The dysfunctional relationship between Corbyn and the PLP has dominated media coverage of Labour politics since September 2015. However, to date there has been no academic research that seeks to explain opinion and opposition within the PLP towards Corbyn. This paper fills that gap. Our rationale is to establish the following: first, who supported and opposed Corbyn within the PLP; and, second, whether there are any demographic, political or ideological variables that bind together those who support or oppose Corbyn within the PLP. To address this we will construct a dataset on the PLP that identifies support or opposition to Corbyn. This can then be used to test a series of hypotheses in relation to the following: first, demographic variables, covering age, gender and trade union membership; second, political variables relating to their constituencies covering year of entry, region, marginality and main competition; and the endorsement of their CLP in the leadership election of 2016; and, third, ideological variables which will cover attitudes towards Brexit, immigration, intervention in Syria and Trident renewal.

The paper will be split into the following sections. The first section will identify how the rise of Corbyn challenges established academic assumptions about the selection of party leaders. The second section will identify and explain our demographic, political and ideological hypotheses, and how our data was collected and coded. The third section presents our research findings and demonstrates which of our demographic, political and ideological hypotheses have been supported. Our fourth section offers some analysis on what this might tell us about the relationship between Corbyn and the 2015 to 2017 PLP.

Electing Corbyn: Challenging Academic Assumptions about Leadership Selection

The election and then re-election of Corbyn defied the traditional assumptions that have been mapped out in the academic literature on leadership selection. The 'Stark criteria' are often referred to within the leadership literature on Labour Party leadership elections (see for example, Quinn 2004, 2005, 2010, 2012, 2016, Heppell 2010, Dorey and Denham 2011, 2016) and they capture the dominant strategic considerations for parties operating within parliamentary systems: first, the need to remain unified; second, their primary motivation is to win elections; and third, they seek office to implement policies (Stark 1996).

Based on these considerations, Stark argues that candidates for the party leadership are assessed in terms of their acceptability (can they unify); their electability (are they an asset or a liability in terms of gaining voter approval); and are they competent (do they possess the political skills to ensure that their policy goals can be implemented once in office) (Stark 1996). Built into the Stark criteria is the assumption that parties will regard acceptability as the first order consideration – i.e. a leader who will divide the party should be rejected on the basis that a divided party will be an unelectable party (Stark, 1996). After removing divisive candidates, electors will then move to the second order criteria – the candidate who appears the most electorally appealing; and should candidates be equally matched on this criteria, then party voters would turn to the candidate who appears to be the most competent and effective as Prime Minister (Stark 1996).

The Stark criteria of how electors should vote appears to be valid irrespective of the type of electoral system used by the Labour Party, be that the parliamentary ballots used up until 1980 or the tripartite Electoral College used between 1983 and 2010 (Quinn 2012). However, the Stark criteria appears to be invalidated by the election of Corbyn. As a habitual rebel across a range of policy issues over many decades, any attempt to demand loyalty to him from his parliamentary colleagues will look hypocritical, whilst his electability and competence have also been widely questioned (Diamond 2016).

However, the Stark criteria predate the new leadership election rules that the Labour Party created in 2014, and which aided Corbyn as an outsider candidate. The abolition of the tripartite Electoral College – built around equal weighting attached to opinion within the PLP and MEPs, the CLP, and affiliated trade unions – diluted the influence of elected representatives, and Corbyn would have been unable to win had this remained in place (Russell 2016, 20-2). The new election system

was to be based on one member, one vote for three categories of members[ii]: first, fully paid up members; second, affiliated supporters (i.e. those who were members of organisations affiliated to the Labour Party such as trade unions, but voting rights were not automatically granted via trade union membership and to participate you would need to register); and third, registered supporters (i.e. although not fully paid up members of the party, registered supporters could pay a nominal fee and declare their support of the party, Collins 2014, 23). The result of this was that a newly paid up registered supporter would have the same significance as one Labour parliamentarian, meaning that the balance of influence had shifted significantly from the PLP and the trade unions to the extra-parliamentary party (even if the PLP retained their gatekeeper role in terms of nominations for the standing for the leadership and in terms of activating a challenge to the incumbent[iii], Dorey and Denham 2016).

The development of these new leadership election rules created the opportunity for a revolt of the grassroots[iv] that was not as feasible under the previous Electoral College system (Diamond 2016, 16-7). Corbyn was also aided by the behaviour of the PLP at the nomination stage in 2015. As it was for a vacancy, candidates required nominations from 15 percent of the PLP (35 nominations) in order to participate. A number of PLP members 'lent' their support to Corbyn to ensure that the fullest and widest debate could take place (although 36 PLP members nominated Corbyn, only 14 then actually voted for him the leadership ballot, see Dorey and Denham 2016). Their calculation was that it was cost free to allow a symbolic left wing candidate to proceed as it was inconceivable that Corbyn would win (Dorey and Denham 2016). It was this miscalculation – and Margaret Beckett later admitted that she felt a 'moron' Cowburn 2016) as this created the opportunity for Corbyn to win, and created the split electoral mandate between the PLP and the extra-parliamentary party that has been so damaging.

Hypotheses and Data Collection

Our aim was to explore that dysfunctional relationship between Corbyn and the PLP in order to establish what binds together those that support or oppose him. In an effort to identify those correlations we put forward a range of demographic, political and ideological background variables that we could test.

Model 1: Demographic Hypotheses

Opinion polling data on age suggested that voters aged between 25 and 39 in the Labour leadership election of 2016 showed a stronger tendency towards voting Corbyn than Smith (by 64 to 36 percent) but that amongst the over 60s Corbyn held a smaller lead (57 to 43 percent) (YouGov 2016). On gender the appeal of Corbyn amongst female members was larger (67 to 33 percent) than it was for males (57 to 43 percent) (YouGov 2016). On the basis of these two patterns we constructed the following hypotheses:

> *[H1] On age we assume that younger Labour parliamentarians will show a stronger likelihood for supporting Corbyn than older Labour parliamentarians.*

> *[H2] On gender we assume that female Labour parliamentarians will show a stronger likelihood for supporting Corbyn than male Labour parliamentarians.*

We also included trade union membership on the basis of the strong defence of the historical link between the Labour Party and trade unionism made by Corbyn (Corbyn, 2016), and the association with looser ties with the trade unions which characterised those of a New Labour persuasion (see Coulter, 2014). On this basis we included the following hypothesis:

> *[H3] On trade union membership we assume that those who are members of a union will show a stronger likelihood for supporting Corbyn than those Labour parliamentarians who are not members.*

Model 2: Politically Based Hypotheses

Our political variables covered year of entry and constituency influences – i.e. region; marginality; main competition, and who their CLP endorsed. We included year of entry in order to assess a cohort effect – i.e. was it the case that those entering Parliament in the intakes of 1997, 2001 and 2005 were more modernising and Blairite, whilst those who entered in 2010 and 2015 (after the supposed discrediting of New Labour and their electoral decline) might tend more to the left? Region was of significance because of the repeated insinuation that Corbyn is too London-centric and part of a narrow metropolitan liberal elite (see for example, Ramesh 2015, Wilkinson 2016 and for the wider literature on link between leadership candidates and regional appeal in Labour Party

leadership contests, see Johnston, Pattie, Pemberton and Wickham-Jones 2016; and Johnston, Wickham-Jones, Pattie and Cutts 2016).

Marginality was selected on the basis that Labour parliamentarians might hold different views depending upon whether they held marginal constituencies or not (see Bale and Jeffery, 2016). Given that the vast majority of parliamentarians normally seek re-election they should be sensitive to voter opinion within their constituency, and that such sensitivity would be more significant in marginal constituencies (see Matland and Studlar 2004 and Baughman 2004). We based this on the historical precedent that the last time Labour elected a leader so widely associated with the left wing of the party – Michael Foot – it coincided with a leftwards shift in policy, and the infamous 'longest suicide note in history' manifesto for the 1983 General Election. Due to the fact that a more left wing leader, and platform, resulted in Labour losing three million votes relative to the 1979 General Election (over nine percent of the vote), and 60 seats[v], we assumed that this historical precedent would be of greatest concern to those holding more marginal constituencies, and would be less concern to those holding safer constituencies (see Miller, 1984). Not only was marginality potentially relevant to opinion towards the leadership, we also assumed that incumbents might be influenced by who their main challenger was. Our assumption was that if threatened from the right then this would act as an incentive towards the centre ground (i.e. it might inadvisable for the incumbent to show himself/herself to be a radical leftist), whereas being threatened by the Liberal Democrats, the SNP or the Greens would make this less likely. We also assumed that the CLP endorsement would constitute an issue of concern for Labour parliamentarians – i.e. if they chose to vote against Corbyn when their CLP had endorsed him it would increase the risk of deselection (Watts 2016). On the basis of the above we constructed the following political background based hypotheses:

> *[H4] On year of entry we assume that the post-New Labour parliamentary cohorts of 2010 and 2015 will show a stronger likelihood for supporting Corbyn than other cohorts of Labour parliamentarians.*

> *[H5] On region we assume that those parliamentarians from London based constituencies will show a stronger likelihood for supporting Corbyn than non-London constituency based parliamentarians.*

> *[H6] On marginality we assume that those with safer seats (i.e. larger majorities) will show a stronger likelihood for supporting Corbyn than those with smaller majorities.*

[H7] On constituency competition we assume that those whose main competition is the Conservatives or UKIP will show a weaker likelihood for supporting Corbyn than those with constituencies which do not have these parties in second place.

[H8] On constituency Labour Party endorsements we assume that Labour parliamentarians whose CLP endorse Corbyn will show a stronger likelihood for endorsing Corbyn than those with CLPs who endorsed Smith.

Model 3: Ideologically Based Hypotheses

Our ideological distinctions were EU membership, immigration, intervention in Syria and Trident renewal. The various dilemmas associated with the European question(s) had long caused problems for the Labour Party from the 1960s to the 1980s, although pro-Europeanism proved to be a key characteristic of New Labour, confirming the move towards a more positive mentality towards Europe which had begun during the Kinnock era (see Daddow 2011). Criticism of further integration within Europe and of the EU had been a frequent component part of the left for many generations – for example, Corbyn himself voted no in the 1975 Referendum (Perraudin, 2016). Although Corbyn formally campaigned for remain it was widely felt that he was a reluctant advocate. Indeed, his timid campaigning was one of the triggers for the mass shadow ministerial resignations that resulted in the confidence motion and ultimately the Smith challenge (McSmith, 2016).

We selected immigration because it was one of the most intriguing dividing lines in the post New Labour era. Some Labour parliamentarians were concerned that they had lost office in 2010 in part due to the perception that they were not listening to the concerns of traditional Labour voters about immigration (Evans and Chzhen, 2013) and to fail to respond (and adapt their tone and position) risked them losing more support to UKIP (Dennison and Goodwin, 2015). Opposing them was the open door immigration mentality that captured the mind set of Corbyn and their association of immigration with inclusivity, diversity and multiculturalism (Freedland 2016). We selected the parliamentary division on intervening in Syria as it reopened the conflicts of the New Labour era about Iraq, and although Corbyn chose to offer a free vote on this as it was clear that many Labour parliamentarians would defy being whipped to vote against intervention (Diamond 2016, 16-22). A similar rationale explained our selection of Trident renewal as the election of Corbyn and his commitment to unilateralism appeared to reopen a long dormant fissure within

the Labour Party over defence policy (Stewart, 2016; for an overview of post war Labour Party foreign and defence policy, see Vickers, 2011). Pulling the above themes together, our ideologically driven hypotheses were as follows:

[H9] On continued EU membership we assume that those that advocate Brexit will show a stronger likelihood for supporting Corbyn than those Labour parliamentarians advocating remain.

[H10] On immigration we assume that those who advocate an open door position vis-à-vis immigration will show a stronger likelihood for supporting Corbyn than those Labour parliamentarians advocating controls.

[H11] On Syria we assume that those opposing intervention will show a stronger likelihood for supporting Corbyn than those Labour parliamentarians who backed the Conservatives and advocated intervening.

[H12] On Trident we assume that those opposing renewal will show a stronger likelihood for supporting Corbyn than those Labour parliamentarians who backed the Conservatives and advocated renewal.

We could only test our hypotheses if we could determine who was supportive of Corbyn and who was not. We had a number of different votes to consider – i.e. nominating or voting in the 2015 leadership election, the confidence motion vote; or nominating (for Smith only as Corbyn was automatically on the ballot) in the 2016 leadership election. As our aim was to assess the dysfunctionality of the leader-PLP relationship – as evidenced by the mass resignations of late June 2016 – we focused our attention on establishing voting behaviour in the confidence motion, also of late June 2016.

For each individual Labour parliamentarian we positioned them as pro-Corbyn or anti-Corbyn based on declarations of support/opposition to Corbyn prior to the confidence motion[vi] – these were identified from declarations that they made through either their personal websites or via mainstream media. We cross referenced these findings by checking them against declared lists that were compiled by various media organisations. Through this process we identified all 40 pro-Corbyn Labour parliamentarians who voted for Corbyn in the confidence motion, and those who refused to support Corbyn – the 172 who voted against, and the 18 who abstained – those who were non Corbyn supporters.

In terms of our demographic variables differentiating according gender requires no explanation, whilst age was presented as a continuous variable, ranging from 30 to 87. On trade union membership we relied on public declarations by Labour parliamentarians, identifiable by exhaustive research of personal websites, social media and articles or interviews made in the mainstream media.

For our political variables we differentiated in the following way for year of entry into Parliament: those who entered before the 1997 General election, those who entered during the New Labour era (the 1997, 2001, and 2005 general elections) and those who entered as a result of, or after, the 2010 general election. With respect to region we differentiated between those representing a London constituency and those who were outside of London. For marginality, we used the size of each majority as a continuous variable, which ranged from 93 to 34655 votes. For our second placed party variable we created a straightforward dichotomy between constituencies in which the main challenger was from the right – i.e. the Conservatives or UKIP – and constituencies where the main challenger was anyone but the Conservatives or UKIP.

With respect to our demographic and political variables we acquired data that enabled us to categorise and code on age, year of entry, region, marginality and main competition, by examining through the parliamentary profiles of each Labour parliamentarian as listed in the Parliament website – see http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/. We were able to code the position of CLPs as their endorsements were publicly declared and lists were made available on LabourList – see http://labourlist.org/2016/07/which-constituencies-have-had-confidence-votes-in-jeremy-corbyns-leadership/.

Our approach was different with regard to our ideological variables. On continued EU membership we differentiated between Labour parliamentarians who campaigned for remain and leave in the June 2016 referendum, with an added category of undeclared included for those who kept their opinion private. This data was relatively easy to construct as the vast majority of PLP members stated whether they were leavers or remain advocates on their constituency websites (also a high proportion of them were publicly aligned to one of the following groups – Labour Leave (www.labourleave.org) and Labour in for Britain (www.labourinforbritain.org.uk)). On immigration we identified and coded Labour parliamentarians as either advocating for 'open door immigration', or not – i.e. advocated for controls or did not have a public position on the issue. We determined the views of Labour parliamentarians by examining statements posted on each of

them on their constituency webpages. We selected the issue of air strikes against so called Islamic State – on which the House of Commons voted in favour of in December 2015 – as Labour parliamentarians were granted a free vote and a significant proportion of them voted with the government or abstained, rather than vote against as Corbyn did. We thereby coded PLP members as voting with the government, abstaining or voting with Corbyn, with that data obtained from the division lists published by Hansard online (HC Deb, 2 December 2015). Finally, we selected the issue of the renewal of Trident from the parliamentary debate and division of July 2016, where once again the PLP was split down the middle. Here we coded according to those PLP members who voted with the government – for renewal – and those who did not – i.e. voted against or abstained. Again we used the published division lists from Hansard (HC Deb, 16 July 2016).

Research Findings

Table one reports, at the basic level of descriptive statistics, the pattern of support for Corbyn in the confidence motion in relation to the variables that we were considering (categorical variables only). Table two reports the output of four logistic regression models, showing the effect of each variable on support for Corbyn in the confidence motion, when holding all other variables in the model constant. Model one represents the demographic factors, model two the political factors, whilst model three represents the ideological factors we posit may have influenced MPs' support for Corbyn. Model four is the full model.

Table One: Opinion and Opposition in the PLP Confidence Motion of 2016: Demographic, Political and Ideological Determinants (Categorical Variables Only)

Variable	Did not support	Support	Total
	190 (82.6%)	40 (17.4%)	230 (100%)
Demographic			
Gender			
Male	109 (83.9%)	21 (16.2%)	130 (100%)
Female	81 (81.0%)	19 (19.0%)	100 (100%)
Member of a Trade Union			
Member	168 (83.2%)	34 (16.8%)	202 (100%)
Non-member	22 (78.6%)	6 (21.4%)	28 (100%)
Political			

Entered Parliament			
2010 onwards	92 (77.3%)	27 (22.7%)	119 (100%)
1997-2009	71 (93.4%)	5 (6.6%)	76 (100%)
Before 1997	27 (77.1%)	8 (22.9%)	35 (100%)
Region			
London	35 (77.8%)	10 (22.2%)	45 (100%)
Not London	155 (83.8%)	30 (16.2%)	185 (100%)
Second Place Party			
On the right	174 (82.7%)	36 (17.1%)	210 (100%)
On the left	16 (80.0%)	4 (20.0%)	20 (100%)
CLP Endorsement			
Corbyn	52 (68.4%)	24 (31.6%)	76 (100%)
Smith/No Endorsement	138 (89.6%)	16 (10.4%)	154 (100%)
Ideological			
EU Referendum Vote			
Remain	181 (83.4%)	36 (16.6%)	217 (100%)
Not Remain	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	13 (100%)
Immigration			
Open Door	135 (79.9%)	34 (20.1%)	169 (100%)
Not Open Door	55 (90.2%)	6 (9.8%)	61 (100%)
Syria*			
Against	123 (75.5%)	40 (24.5%)	163 (100%)
For	66 (100%)	0 (0%)	66 (100%)
Abstain	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)
Trident			
For	162 (89.0%)	20 (11.0%)	182 (100%)
Not For	28 (58.3%)	20 (41.7%)	48 (100%)

*Due to the fact that there were no Labour parliamentarians who voted for Corbyn in the confidence vote and for intervention in Syria, this variable has not been included in the regression analysis.

Table Two - Logistic Regression Model for Support for Jeremy Corbyn

(0 = Voted for Owen Smith, 1 = Voted for Jeremy Corbyn)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
N	230			230			230			230		
Prob > chi2	0.523			0.000			0.000			0.000		
Psuedo R2	0.011			0.129			0.110			0.248		
Log likelihood	-105.145			-92.594			-94.618			-79.954		
	Coef.		SE	Coef.		SE	Coef.			Coef.		SE
Age	0.019		(0.015)							0.045	*	(0.023)
Gender	0.276		(0.359)							-0.021		(0.442)
Not a Trade Union Member	0.264		(0.502)							1.248	*	(0.602)
Entry cohort (relative to 2010 onwards)												
New Labour				-1.482	**	(0.528)				-1.985	**	(0.654)
Pre-New Labour				0.193		(0.501)				-1.141		(0.733)
Non-London Constituency				-0.238		(0.454)				0.129		(0.527)
Majority size				0.000		(0.000)				0.000		(0.000)
Left-wing candidate second place (relative to right wing challenger)				0.326		(0.620)				-0.515		(0.714)
Non Pro-Corbyn CLP				-1.450	***	(0.383)				-1.573	***	(0.436)
Did not support remain							0.433		(0.730)	-0.065		(0.924)
Oppose open door immigration							-0.671		(0.506)	-0.500		(0.564)
Did not vote to renew Trident							1.630	***	(0.393)	1.890	***	(0.497)
Constant	-3.313	**	(1.206)	0.958		(1.258)	-3.332	***	(0.986)	-4.005		(2.257)
***p<0.001 **0.001 ≤ p ≤ 0.01 *0.01 < p ≤ 0.05												

As the first three models are nested within the fourth model, we can use the McFadden pseudo-r2 values to compare the goodness of fit between the three models vis-à-vis the full model (Gordon, 2012: 580). In terms of the demographic model, the chi-squared value of 0.523 shows that it is not statistically significant vis-à-vis explaining how Labour parliamentarians voted in the confidence motion. Both model 2, the constituency model, and model 3, the ideology model, are statistically significant – i.e. they provide a better model than we would get by chance - although the slightly higher pseudo r-squared value for the second model (0.129) compared to the third model (0.110) shows that the electoral/constituency model has a slightly greater explanatory power. Model 4 reports a pseudo r-squared of 0.248, roughly double the individual values of the constituency and ideology model. It is worth noting that McFadden pseudo-r2 values 'between 0.2 and 0.4 are considered to be indicative of extremely good model fits' (Louviere, Hensher and Swait, 2000: 54).

Interestingly, we see that variables from each of the three nested model are statistically significant in the whole model, which are not in the individual models. Firstly, both age and trade union membership are statistically significant, despite not being so in the demographic model, with older Labour parliamentarians and those who were not in a trade union more likely to support Corbyn, when controlling for the other variables. This second finding is counterintuitive, as we would expect Labour parliamentarians to be further to the left than non-members of trade unions. However, it could be the case that those Labour parliamentarians who were more likely to be in unions were overwhelmingly in moderate unions closer to the centre or right-wing of the party, rather than on the left of the labour movement. Hence, we find evidence to support hypotheses one, but evidence against hypothesis three. We find no support for hypothesis two: there is no statistically significant relationship between the gender of an MP and how they voted in the leadership election in either the demographic model or the full model.

Moving to our political variables, there is clear evidence of a cohort effect, with Labour parliamentarians first elected during the New Labour period less likely to support Corbyn relative to newer members elected from 2010 onwards, supporting both hypothesis four and the idea that there has been a left-ward drift within the PLP. We also see that a CLP's position on Corbyn was a statistically significant factor: those with non-pro-Corbyn CLPs were less likely to support Corbyn than those with CLPs who had formally backed the leader, supporting hypothesis eight. We do not, however, find any evidence to support the idea that those in MPs with constituencies

in the capital, or are less marginal, are more likely to support Corbyn, nor that those who face parties on the right of the political spectrum are less likely to support Corbyn, when controlling for all other factors.

Finally, in terms of ideology, we see that those who voted against the renewal of Trident were more likely to support Corbyn relative to those who voted to renew it, supporting hypothesis twelve. We do not, however, find any other ideological variable to be statistically significant in either the ideological model or the full model.

Analysis

Overall, our findings provide evidence in terms of demographic, political and ideological patterns of support for Corbyn among the PLP. Corbyn's parliamentary support comes from older parliamentarians, who have been in Parliament since before 2010, and are anti-Trident.

However, what is perhaps more interesting, and relevant, is the factors which are shown to *not* be statistically significant: despite accusations of Corbyn being London-centric he does not have a higher of support amongst Labour's representatives in London constituencies, nor does Corbyn's supposed unelectability translate into lower support from those Labour MPs in more marginal seats.

The accusation made by Corbyn backers is that Labour parliamentarians who have opposed him are motivated by self-interest – i.e. their personal career interests are best served by his removal and replacement by a more ideological sympathetic leader of the party (see Seymour, 2016). That critique suggests that an essentially centrist PLP could not accept that the more leftist membership had chosen a leader that the PLP did not ideologically approve of. However, on this consider the following from our descriptive statistics. First, on Trident a total of 48 PLP members of the PLP opposed its renewal – i.e. agreed with Corbyn – and yet 28 of them used the confidence motion to express their view that Corbyn should step aside, and only 20 backed him. Second, 169 members of the PLP favoured the position of Corbyn vis-à-vis open door immigration and only 43 have explicitly spoken of the need to impose controls, and yet Corbyn can only secure the backing of 40 members of the PLP. Third, on militarily intervening in Syria a total of 163 members of the PLP voted against this (and against the government, and agreed with Corbyn), but of those 40

indicated their wish that Corbyn remained leader, and 123 expressed their feeling that they no longer had confidence in his continued leadership. It is also worth noting that the number of Labour parliamentarians in agreement with Corbyn across all three issues – i.e. against Trident renewal, opposing intervention in Syria and advocating an open door mentality vis-à-vis immigration – was 39. The diametric opposite of Corbyn across all three issues – advocating Trident renewal, making the case for intervention in Syria and arguing for immigration controls – is only 19. The evidence of a *cohesive* block of anti-Corbyn Labour parliamentarians in ideological terms is limited, and such findings imply caution when claiming that an ideological plot was the driver of the attempts within the PLP to unseat Corbyn.

This was a particularly significant research finding as it created a doubt about the idea of clearly defined, and ideologically motivated factions within the PLP. On the basis of this we thought it would be interesting to compare our findings with the leaked loyalty list – this was relatively easy to do as the full listings were printed in the *Guardian* (Asthana and Stewart, 2016). The loyalty list was compiled by members of the Corbyn inner circle, and it positioned every member of the PLP as being either loyal (part of the 'core group' or the 'core group plus' - n=74), neutral (n=68), or hostile (listed as 'core group hostile' or just 'hostile' - n=79), with an additional nine MPs not listed. Our findings are presented in table three.

Table 3: Patterns of Opinion and Opposition to Corbyn within the PLP: Voting according to the Loyalty List in relation to Ideological Considerations

Loyalty List Position	N=	Immigration			Syrian Intervention			Trident Renewal			Confidence	
		Open Door	Neutral	Controls	Oppose	Neutral	Support	Oppose	Neutral	Support	No	Yes
Loyal	74	65	3	6	68	0	6	24	0	50	44	30
Neutral	68	48	5	15	57	0	11	14	0	54	61	7
Hostile	79	48	9	22	32	1	46	8	0	71	78	1
Not placed	9	8	1	0	6	0	3	2	0	7	7	2
N=	230	169	18	43	163	1	66	48	0	182	170	40

When we look at those who are hostile to Corbyn on the loyalty list we acknowledge that only one from 79 of them voted for Corbyn to remain in office. Moreover, when we break it down we see that of those in the hostile group 71 advocated Trident renewal, 46 of them opposed intervention

in Syria, but only 22 of them advocated controls in terms of immigration. Meanwhile, of those supposedly loyal to Corbyn on the list (n=74) a total of 65 did agree with him on immigration (i.e. open door) and 68 agreed with him on Syrian intervention, but only 24 agreed with him on Trident renewal. The variance of opinion across the three ideological variables did not show clear evidence of clearly defined factions, rather it shows a myriad or zig zagging of opinions within the PLP. When we put together the findings in table three, linking ideological disposition across the three variables of immigration, Syrian intervention and Trident renewal, it does show a willingness for those disagreeing with Corbyn to vote against him. However, it also shows that over half of those who were supposedly in the loyal grouping voted against him (44 against to 30 for).

Conclusion

This paper makes an original and distinctive contribution to the academic literature on the Labour Party and the selection(s) of Corbyn to the leadership of the Labour Party. Accounts do exist on how Corbyn was initially elected to the party leadership (Dorey and Denham, 2016, and Quinn, 2016). Both imply that Corbyn's success challenged the Stark criteria on party leadership elections – i.e. select the candidate who is the most ideological acceptable, most electable and most competent (Stark, 1996). Rather, Corbyn's election seemed to be more consistent with May's 'law of curvilinear disparity' which assumes that party activists would be more ideologically extreme (i.e. radical) than the more ideological moderate (i.e. pragmatic) parliamentarians, who prioritise electability over ideological purity (see May, 1973). That was a significant development, as May's theory that has been questioned within the academic literature on the election of the leader of the Labour party in the era of the Electoral College (Quinn, 2010).

Upon acquiring the party leadership, assessments on Corbyn's performance and prospects as party leader have been overwhelmingly critical (see Crines, 2015, Richards, 2016, Diamond, 2016, Bale, 2016), although academic assessment will now be adjusted to reflect the stronger than expected performance in the 2017 General Election, when the Labour vote increased from 9.3 to 12.8 million (30.4 to 40 percent) and they gained seats (229 to 262), despite still winning fewer seats than the Conservatives. However, what has been absent from the academic literature to date is a detailed exploration of the relationship between Corbyn – elected at the behest of the membership – and the PLP. By constructing a detailed dataset which identifies opinion within the PLP to Corbyn continuing as leader of the Labour Party, and relating this to a series of demographic, political and ideological variables, we have been able to test the assumptions that have underpinned

the critical accounts on Corbyn identified above, (as well as a myriad of journalistic accounts), on the Corbyn-PLP relationship.

From this a more complex pattern emerges in terms of opinion and opposition to Corbyn within the PLP. In terms of those who voted for his removal our research found only limited evidence that there were significant demographic, political or ideological patterns at play. The fear of deselection or the fear of electoral defeat did not motivate Labour parliamentarians to remain loyal to Corbyn, and nor was it the case that the PLP has evolved into clearly defined and cohesive factional blocks consistent with the classic distinctions on factions and tendencies advanced by Rose (1964: 38). Our findings show that the mapping of immigration onto military intervention and nuclear capability creates a myriad of positions amongst the PLP, rather than clearly defined factional groupings. Moreover, our research suggests that the motivation to unseat Corbyn by the PLP should be seen as a reassertion of the aforementioned Stark criteria – i.e. the PLP concluded that the members had been mistaken in their choice. Corbyn was too divisive, too unelectable, and his competence was too widely questioned, to make him a credible candidate to be Prime Minister. Our research demonstrates that it was a crisis of leadership as much as it was an ideological plot: why else would so many of the supposedly loyalist Corbyn faction have voted for his removal? Moreover, our findings regarding CLP influence upon voting in the confidence motion provides academics with a further line of research inquiry – why did the fear of deselection not act as a stronger motivation for remaining loyal to Corbyn?

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[i] The rules suggested challengers needed 20 percent PLP support and that for vacancies all candidates needed 15 percent PLP support, but it was left unclear as to whether an incumbent needed nominations to participate.

[ii] The election of Corbyn also challenged traditional academic assumptions about membership levels. Over recent decades the Labour Party has experienced a decline in membership levels – from 405,238 when they entered power in 1997 to only 156,205 as they approached the 2010 General Election (Pemberton and Wickham-Jones 2013). That decline in membership has not been specific to the Labour Party as decline has also been the trend across most European polities (Seyd and Whiteley 2004, 356; see also Scarrow and Gezgor 2010; van Biezen, Mair and Poguntke 2012). However, after oscillating at around 190,000 during the 2010 to 2015 Parliament, Labour Party membership increased dramatically parallel to the respective leadership elections and the rise of Corbyn, reaching around 515,000 members at the onset of the Corbyn-Smith contest (Keen and Audickas 2016).

[iii] The Collins Report concluded that Labour parliamentarians who decide to stand for the Labour leadership would need nominations from 15 percent of the PLP as opposed to former threshold of 12.5 percent (Collins 2014, 27).

[iv] The election of Corbyn challenged established assumption about the distribution of power within the Labour Party. This had been shaped by the organisational transformation initiated by under Blair, and how increasing centralisation led to a top down, command and control style of leadership in which members were subordinated. For New Labour modernisers the need to bypass the views of constituency Labour Party (CLP) members, and trade unions, was felt to be necessary as their views were deemed to be too left and out of sync with the views of the electorate and thus impediments to acquiring and remaining in office (for a strident critique of these assumptions, see Minkin 2014). This shift away from the grassroots and towards elite centralisation and the 'party in office' has been a trend across social democratic European parties, and was said to be reflective of the classical 'cartel party' thesis (Katz and Mair 1994).

[v] Although Labour 'lost' 60 seats at the 1983 General Election it is important to note that some of those were seats held by members who defected to the Social and Democratic Party in 1981. In total they lost 51 seats and were 60 seats down from 1979 due to defections.

[vi] The Corbyn supporting 40 were Andy McDonald, Angela Rayner, Barry Gardiner, Bill Esterson, Carolyn Harris, Cat Smith, Catherine West, Clive Lewis, Dave Anderson, Debbie Abrahams, Dennis Skinner, Diane Abbot, Emily Thornberry, Gerald Kaufman, Gill Furniss, Graham Morris, Ian Lavery, Ian Mearns, Imran Hussain, Jeremy Corbyn, Jo Stevens, John McDonnell, Jon Trickett, Jonathan Ashworth, Kate Hoey, Kate Osamor, Kelvin Hopkins, Margaret Greenwood, Pat Glass, Paul Flynn, Peter Dowd, Rachael Maskell, Rebecca Long Bailey, Richard Burgon, Ronnie Campbell, Rosena Allin Khan, Steve Rotheram, Tulip Siddiq, Yasmin Qureshi and Liz McInnes.