Party Change and Social Policy Development: the introduction of a national childcare policy in the UK

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Abstract:

Despite similar levels of female employment, childcare assistance for middle-income families appeared on centre-left political parties’ agendas at quite different times in the US, Australia and the UK. While the US Democrats first placed childcare on their party platform in 1971, it was not until 1983 and 1997 that childcare became an electoral issue for centre-left parties in Australia and the UK respectively. In order to explain such variation in timing, this paper seeks to identify the conditions that motivate a party to first advance the issue of childcare support for middle-income families. Focusing specifically on Britain, it applies a party competition approach to social policy development, exploring the extent to which Labour’s embrace of the childcare issue can be explained by large-scale social structural changes in the electorate and the extent to which it was driven by the changing demands of their key party-linked interest group, the trade unions.

This discussion fits into a growing body of party literature (Karol 2009, Bawn et. al 2012), which analyses whether parties are groups of autonomous political elites with free reign to develop policies that would attract new voters to their electoral coalition (as Karol’s ‘coalition group incorporation’ theory would suggest) or whether parties are largely dominated by activists and party-linked interest groups, whereby new social policy development is the direct result of an interest group’s new and/or changing demand (as Karol’s ‘coalition group maintenance’ theory would suggest). This paper tells a more nuanced story: whilst change appears to have been driven largely by a cohort young Labour Party elites who campaigned on progressive social policies as a means to attract younger, middle-income voters to their party’s declining electoral coalition, on a more micro-level, elements of coalition group maintenance were crucial: female Labour Party officials in coordination with female trade union officials developed equal representation policies that brought the young, middle-income Labour cohort into power in the first place.
Less than twenty years ago the post-war social policy framework, wherein income-related social insurance protected male breadwinners and their dependent families from the trials of injury and old age, was deemed a ‘frozen landscape’ too electorally perilous to retrench (Esping-Andersen 1996). Yet having now increasingly recognised that several types of benefits catered to “old social risks” are in fact being re-scaled, re-indexed and often, reduced across the OECD (Korpi and Palme 2003, Bonoli 2005), scholars are increasingly paying attention to one sector of the welfare state that does continues to grow: work/family reconciliation policies.

Governments in the OECD, responding to the exigencies of a post-industrial economy – whereby deindustrialization and the concomitant rise of the service sector have prompted a significant increase in not only female labour force participation but also the proportion of part-time, temporary employment (Bonoli 2005, Häusermann 2010, Fleckenstein & Seeleib-Kaiser 2011) – have, to different degrees, developed social policies that cater to a variety of “new social risks.” These include pensions that cover employees with discontinuous work patterns, paid parental leave following childbirth, etc. The availability of affordable childcare is a central component of work/family reconciliation since it fulfils a number of functions: it supports dual-earner families, allows lone-parents to enter the workforce and ensures employers are supplied with a large pool of labour.

Yet access to affordable childcare varies from country to country as governments have responded to increased demand for childcare both at different times and in different ways, often out of sync with their designated “worlds of welfare” or “variety of capitalism” (Esping-Andersen 1990, Hall and Soskice 2001). Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States – all classified as “liberal market economies” (Hall and Soskice 2001) and “liberal welfare regimes” (Esping-Andersen 1990) – illustrate this schism quite well: in 2008 childcare costs amounted to 27% of a British, dual-worker, average earning family’s net income.¹ This same family would spend 23% of their net family income on childcare in the United States and 15% in Australia (OECD 2011, 168).

Their differences on childcare assistance extend beyond policy shape: despite having quite similar levels of female employment since the 1960s, childcare assistance for middle-income families² became a contestable political issue in Australia, the UK and the US at quite different times: the US Democrats first placed universal childcare on their party platform and passed

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¹ Fees charged less tax deductions, tax credits and rebates; two earners, one working full time the second ¾ time, earning 167% of the countries average wage, with two children in full-day childcare.

² As opposed to policies that support childcare on a “welfare to work basis”, wherein childcare provision/fee assistance is means-tested, so as to push low-income parents off jobless benefits and into work.
legislation to provide universal access to subsidized childcare places during 1971 and 1972.\textsuperscript{3} Over ten years later, the Australian Labour Party (ALP) turned childcare assistance into a popular election issue when it ran the 1983 election on a platform that promised to double the country’s number of childcare places, stating childcare was a part of the “national social wage.” Yet it would be another 14 years before childcare access and affordability became a widely discussed and politically contested issue in the UK, during Labour’s 1997 general election campaign.

This paper explores why childcare assistance policies became a politically feasible issue for centre-left parties at such different times in countries that maintained broadly similar levels of social expenditure and GDP growth, comparable levels of female employment and corresponding systems of economic coordination according to the “varieties of capitalism” framework (Hall and Soskice 2001). If focuses specifically on the British case. The first section will briefly consider the extent to which oft-cited explanations for new social policy development – structural-functionalist and power resource based accounts – can explain cross-country variation in policy timing. It will then go on to evaluate the explanatory power of the party competition approach to welfare state development. Specifically, it will overview the potential impact of late 20\textsuperscript{th} century social-structural changes upon parties’ electoral coalitions, before exploring whether parties’ responses to said change will differ according to the theoretical lens from which parties are viewed: are parties actors captured by interest groups or are they groups of strategic politicians with wide autonomy, looking to develop policies that would appeal to particular voting blocs? By employing two contrasting models of party policy change – one that adopts the former view of parties (coalition maintenance) and one that adopts the latter (coalition group incorporation) (Karol 2009) – the paper’s second section will attempt to analyse the driving forces behind childcare policy introduction in Britain specifically, attempting to disentangle the possible effects of coalition group incorporation from coalition group maintenance.

I. Theoretical approaches to childcare policy introduction

a. Structuralist-functionalist approach to social policy development

A functionalist approach to social policy development, building upon Wilensky’s (1975) “logic of industrialism” framework, would suggest that childcare policy appeared on parties’ political agendas as soon as female employment rates deemed it a necessity. But although each party did introduce childcare policy within the broader context of steeply increasing female employment rates, there is no clear cross-country correlation between the timing of policy introduction and female employment: female employment rates – in both absolute and in relative growth terms – were quite similar across all three countries between the early 1970’s (when the US Democrats placed childcare on the their party program and on the legislative agenda), just as they were in

\textsuperscript{3} After initially welcoming the legislation, President Nixon took issue with an administrative change made to the bill in Conference Committee. He vetoed the final version in December 1971.
1997, when New Labour became the first British party to campaign – and comprehensively legislate on childcare). (Please see figure 1).

Figure 1

**Female labour force participation**

Although the social and economic change that has occurred over the past four decades has transformed risk structures and thus the demand for new social policies (what Fleckenstein and Seeleib-Kaiser 2011 dub “the functional underpinnings of the welfare state”), the functionalist argument appears to gloss over the potentially obstructive mediation of several variables ranging from historical legacies to political interests and electoral imperatives.

**b. Power resources approach to social policy development**

The “power resources” approach, largely characterized by Walter Korpi’s *Democratic Class Struggle* (1983) contends that the welfare state evolved through a series of distributive conflicts and that current cross-country variation in social spending reflects, to a large extent, historical conflict between capital and labour. According to this approach “party matters”: the strength of a. left parties and b. trade unions, relative to business organizations and centre-right parties can explain both cross-time and cross-country variation in welfare state development. The partisan-based thesis has engendered wide support through various large-n quantitative analyses of welfare state variation (Huber, Ragin and Stephens 1993, Hicks and Swank 1992). One example of a gendered-approach to the power resources model is Huber and Stephens (2000), who examine whether gender-related variables (an interaction of female employment and left-party power) have an impact on welfare state growth in aggregate. The authors suggest a mutually reinforcing relationship between socio-structural change and power resources:
"Increasing women’s labour force participation is expected to generate demands for a greater public role in care giving and thus pressures for an expansion of welfare state services. Where such demands and pressures are supported by powerful political allies, they tend to result in policies that facilitate the combination of paid work and family-care obligations, such as the provision of public day care and elderly care and parental leave insurance.” (Huber and Stephens 2000, 327).

But while the authors assert that high rates of female labour participation, when coupled with a powerful political ally, will result in the development of work/family reconciliation policies, it is somewhat unclear whether powerful political allies (i.e. parties or unions) have a compelling incentive to partner themselves with the interests of the female labour force, particularly if doing so would risk alienating another core element of their coalition. For example, Rosenbluth, Salmond and Thies (2006) point out that “both social democratic and liberal parties are somewhat constrained by their core constituencies from issuing pure policy-based appeals to working women” (167). Social Democratic parties are constrained to the extent that male-dominated labour unions fear the entrance of female labour (which often implies temporary career breaks) will cause employers to lower wage and benefit packages. Liberal party supporters, on the other hand, would reject increased public expenditure and/or the prospect of additional taxes and mandates on employers that would be required to fund work/family reconciliation policies (Rosenbluth, Salmond and Thies 2006, 168).

In all three countries under scrutiny it was indeed centre-left parties that first adopted the issue of childcare. Yet the “parties matter” thesis is not entirely conclusive: whilst Democrats led on the childcare issue, they were not without support from Republicans (including Nixon); just as Australia’s Liberal-National (centre-right) Coalition supported federal childcare assistance during campaigns in the 1980s, albeit to a lesser extent than the ALP. Nor does trade union strength, another key component of the power resources approach, clearly explain why the three parties at hand adopted the childcare issue at such different periods in time: US trade unions underwent a decline in membership approximately 20 years before their counterparts in the UK and Australia, yet relative levels of decline do not seem to correlate with childcare policy introduction (please see Figure 2).

Figure 2
Trade union density
Moreover, as with female labour force participation, female trade union membership (women as a per cent of total trade union membership) remained at fairly similar levels in both absolute and in relative growth terms from 1960 to the mid-1990s across all three countries (please see Figure 3).

Figure 3
*Female Trade Union Membership*

Source: Visser 2011

However, one of way of measuring the aggregate strength of organised female labour might be to interact trade union density with female trade union membership, thereby providing a rough indicator of the strength and density of organized female labour at a given time. A cursory glance at Figure 4 indicates that when the product of trade union density and female trade union membership reached its peak in each country, childcare support policies were introduced. Indeed, this is the case for the US, Australia and, quite clearly the UK.

Figure 4
*Organised female labour mobilization*
c. Party competition approach to social policy development

While the power resources approach sheds light on the size and influence of particular interest groups, factors related to party competition – namely, the structure and (in)stability of parties’ key interest groups, electoral cleavages and various spatial patterns of party competition – may provide insight as to when it is and is not electorally feasible for centre left parties to develop new social policies, particularly those which are not aimed at rewarding its traditional base (male, working class voters). According to this field of research, a party's incentive to develop childcare assistance policies may be contingent upon a. their core constituency's policy preference, b. the stability of their electoral coalition, and c. whether they can use new social policies to poach voters from another party's electoral coalition without disrupting their own balance of supporters.

This section will first outline how social-structural change has transformed left parties’ traditional electoral coalitions. It will then discuss competing theories of party policy development, exploring how parties have reacted to social structural change: have party elites autonomously developed certain policies in order to lure new voters, or have the changing demands of interest groups forced parties’ hands on these certain issues, leading them to adopt policies that they might have previously opposed? Building from that discussion, this section will finally consider two different models of party policy change and outline a hybrid between the two, which might explain why these three parties embraced the childcare issue at such different times.

1. Party Competition: Deindustrialization, social-structural change and partisan alignments

Several authors have discussed the manner by which deindustrialization has shifted traditional class-cleavage voter alignments throughout the OECD, weakening the ties between blue-collar
workers and left political parties, for example Häusermann (2006), Kitschelt (1994) and Oesch (2006). Häusermann (2010) explains that three trends, “tertiarization, the feminization of the workforce and the expansion of higher education have deeply transformed the class structure in post-industrial economies” as they render “old class categories” such as blue vs. white collar, manual vs. non-manual, somewhat irrelevant: these are no longer “homogenous risk categories” (p.57). Instead, a post-industrial class schema – more horizontally structured than its industrial-era predecessor – draws distinctions between five summarized class groups: “capital accumulators, mixed service functionaries, low service functionaries, blue-collar workers, and socio-cultural professionals” (p.58). We might then expect that parties, and for the interests of this paper, centre-left parties, have found themselves torn between appeasing to their traditional constituencies, (declining) blue-collar workers and the need to shore up this declining support by appealing to new, growing constituencies, such as socio-cultural professionals. This socio-structurally driven change in class schema and by extension, its (possible) impact on political alliances is thereby argued to increase the dimensionality of redistributive conflict (see for example Häusermann 2006).

Indeed, building upon Kitschelt’s (1994) new “communitarian” value dimension, wherein voters differentiate parties according to libertarian and authoritarian values, both Häusermann (2006, 2011) and Fleckenstein (2010, 2011) suggest that conflict over welfare state reform in general – and work/family policies in particular – is bidimensional in the sense that voters and political actors not only disagree with each other over the socio-economic ‘distributional’ conflict” but also the ‘libertarian-traditionalist’ value dimension (Häusermann 2006, 8). As such, the political feasibility of childcare policy introduction may well be contingent upon both the incentives and risks a party runs by placing itself within a particular quadrant of this bidimensional sphere of conflict.

2. Party competition: intra-party dynamics and the drivers of party policy development

Whilst there has been a fair amount of disagreement related to the measurement of both class voting and class-party links, most accounts admit an element of destabilization amongst parties’ – and in particular centre left parties’ – traditional electoral coalitions since the 1960s and 70s (Mair 1999). With regard to the three cases at hand, most accounts emphasize the fact that centre-left parties made a decidedly emphatic attempt at centre-left party modernization; in other words, that they embraced strategies to extend their electoral coalitions beyond male, working class voters and towards female, urban, middle-income voters. 

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However, if one were to argue that childcare policy introduction was the result of parties' attempts to "modernize" in the face of broad electoral coalitional change, one should first set out a theory of parties themselves: are parties' policy proposals structured by autonomous party elites who take a particular stance on issues so as to target specific sets of voters? Or are they designed by the preferences of party-linked interests/activists who can easily force policymakers' hands?

Most contemporary scholarship on political parties falls into the former category: it argues that policy is designed by autonomous party elites in search of new groups of voters. For example, Carmines and Stimson (1989) take an 'office-holder' view of political parties, suggesting that party leaders 'test' out different issues on the electorate in the hopes of bringing new blocs of voters to their side. For example, the authors suggest that Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater embraced racial issues in the 1964 Presidential election on largely strategic, voter-targeting justifications – a realignment wherein African-Americans began to support Democrats and White Southerners shifted towards the Republicans.

By contrast, Bawn et. al. (2012) fall in the latter category: they develop a theory of parties as “coalitions of interest groups and activists seeking to capture and use government for their particular goals, which range from material self-interest to high-minded idealism.” This “group-centric” view consists of particular “policy-demanding groups” who, working from a common policy agenda, manage the nomination – and work for the election – of candidates they deem acceptable. As such, the authors reason that “parties are no great friends of popular sovereignty”: “[e]lectoral competition does constrain group-centric parties to be somewhat responsive to citizen preferences, but they cede as little to voters as possible” (Bawn et al 2012, 571).

Both views seem to conform to the empirical accounts their respective authors render, however it might be difficult to envisage childcare policy introduction as lying wholly in one camp or another. Whilst it’s entirely plausible that, for example, Britain’s New Labour would have increased the salience of childcare in the mid 1990s as a means of shedding their male, 'cloth-cap' trade union image and attracting female and middle-income voters, it seems unlikely that the promotion of female-focused active labour market policies, such as childcare and parental leave, would have featured so prominently in the party’s 1992 and 1997’s manifestos were their party-linked funders and activists – such as trade unions – starkly opposed.

3. Party competition: Models of policy change

David Karol (2009) provides a link between the two aforementioned competing theories of party behaviour: he explores six key issues in US political history and, by addressing the power of

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5 Trade, abortion, gun control, race, defence and fiscal policy
both electorally driven political elites and powerful policy demanders, he develops three models of party policy change: coalition group maintenance, coalition group incorporation and coalition expansion, (the first two will be discussed in this paper). Each of these models attributes different weight to the influence of party elites who are after voters’ policy preferences and to party-linked policy demanders.

The first model, coalition group incorporation, seems to have more resonance with Carmines and Stimson: here party elites design policy positions so as to attract a specific bloc of voters. Party elites will have a great deal of autonomy whilst targeting voters with new positions on a popular political issue. The process of policy change is quite gradual, akin to V.O. Key’s concept of “secular realignment” (1959) since the requisite wooing of new groups suggests party incumbents would have to weaken ties to traditional interests and reformulate new ones with quite different types of interest groups. As such, elite turnover plays a significant role in this model, wherein new party elites with new ties begin to replace old elites tied to older interests.

The second model, in line with Bawn et. al, is dubbed “coalition maintenance,” whereby parties quickly respond to new and/or changing demands “by groups already ensconced within their party coalition” (Karol 2009, 19). Party elites have little autonomy in this process: their actions are driven by policy demanders and the role of party elite turnover (i.e. the idea that policy change occurs in accordance with the churning of political incumbents) plays a minor role, largely due to the fact that party elites (i.e. incumbents) will already be tied to the policy demander (interest group) at hand. As such, there is no need for elite replacement; party elites will simply be “converted” to a new position demanded by their core interest group. The speed of policy change is quite quick – “because it does not require politicians to foster new ties to new groups, or voters to alter their loyalties” – and the new position should remain relatively stable, so long as the policy demander’s preferences remain so.

Christina Wolbrecht’s (2002) analysis of party policy reversal on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) attributes causality to elements of both coalition maintenance and coalition group incorporation: whilst the Democrats were gradually embracing increased social liberalism in general and feminist issues in particular, the trade unions – a key Democratic constituency - dropped their opposition to the ERA after a supreme court ruling struck down certain provisions of protective employment legislation. The party, which had previously been ambivalent if not averse to adopting a pro-ERA policy stance, quickly reversed its position and embraced the ERA (a

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6 Though Karol points out: the longer these new groups are incorporated into a specific party’s electoral coalitions, the more said groups become powerful policy demanders that “gain leverage over the party’s elected officials, leading them to increasingly reflect the group’s preferences rather than overall sentiment in a state or district” (2009, 19)
process of incumbent “conversion” initially brought on by a. the slower process of party modernization and b. hastened by the changed demands of the party’s key ‘policy demander.’).

4. Party position change: cross-country comparisons
Carmines and Stimson (1981), Karol (2009), Bawn et. al (2012) and Wolbrecht (2002), each developed and tested their theories in the context of US political institutions and amongst US political parties. The question remains whether these models have any relevance in other advanced democracies. However, applying the aforementioned models - coalition group incorporation and coalition group maintenance – to a more international context poses two issues, one theoretical and one methodological.

Whilst Karol, etc. have identified different mechanisms that tend to spur position change amongst US political parties, the impact of interest group demands or indeed a search for new voters may be felt differently by parties that have quite dissimilar structures of internal organisation, let alone operate in different types of legislative institutions. Presidential systems are likely to require far less party discipline than would a parliamentary system – due to the fact that a government will not be dissolved in the event of a ruling party rebellion. This fact, in turn, produces a methodological challenge: whilst Karol (2012) and Carmines and Stimson (1981) tested their theories surrounding legislator conversion and replacement using data from roll-call votes in the US Congress, votes in Parliament have traditionally implied far less legislator autonomy; a legislator may implored to vote the party line by a three-line party whip and/or internal party pressure (Haggard and McCubbins, 2001).

This is not to say that studies of party position change have not been undertaken outside of the US. Johnston et. al. (1993) apply elements of Carmines and Stimson’s issue evolution theory when analysing a reversal in Canadian parties’ trade policies, and do in fact, validate the author’s thesis with regard to the powerful autonomy of party leaders. Moreover, a large body of literature has examined the factors that induce parties to respond to events and compete with each other in quite different ways (see for example Adams et. al., 2006; Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009). These large-n cross country comparisons, whilst incredibly insightful in noting the odds of a party moving in a particular direction contingent on a particular environmental factor, do not consistently identify causal mechanisms that drive parties to respond in that particular manner, as Carmines and Stimson (2009), Karol (2009), Bawn et al (2012) and Wolbrecht (2002) attempt to do. Nor do they tend to explain whether/why one party may respond differently than other when they are met with the same environmental factor.

Schumacher, Vries and Vis (2013) employ a large-n dataset that measures party position against
public opinion whilst also applying a key distinction between parties' internal organisations that may help explain whether and why certain parties respond to particular environmental factors: whether parties are characterised as ‘leadership-dominated’ or ‘activist-dominated.’ The authors use two cross-national survey questions from Laver and Hunt (1992) that ask party members whether “party leaders are influential in setting party policy, and “whether party activists are influential in setting party policy” (Schumacher et. al. 2013). Leadership dominated parties “are characterized by an absence of internal veto players” and thus the party leadership that “controls the policy agenda” whilst “decision-making power in activist-dominated parties is divided across a large set of internal veto players” (474). Analysing ten European countries between 1977 and 2003 the authors find “that leadership-dominated parties respond to shifts in the mean voter position and to office exclusion, while activist-dominated parties respond to party voter changes.”

This is a useful distinction, quite related to the broader theoretical debates in Bawn et. al (2012) and Karol (2009), which could perhaps explain why, despite facing similar social-structural change, centre-left parties in Australia, the US and the UK responded to childcare at such different times – their tendency to respond to social structural change was mediated by their party type. However, Schumacher et. al’s central independent variable (whether a party is leadership or activist dominated) is treated as static and thus dismisses the possibility that a barrage of exogenous shocks in the post-industrial era, may have spurred change in left parties’ internal functioning and, as a result, cause them to shift from being activist to leader oriented, or even vice-versa.

II. Britain’s New Labour and Childcare Policy Introduction
The following sections analyse New Labour’s embrace of childcare as an electoral issue in the 1997 election. Based upon Karol’s (2009) two concepts of party position change, “coalition group maintenance” and “coalition group incorporation,” it first traces the history of childcare as a political issue in Britain. It then places the childcare issue in the context of shifting electoral coalitions and Labour Party modernisation and next, considers the impact that trade unions, the Labour Party’s core ‘policy demander’ (interest group) played in spurring Labour to actively campaign (and legislate) on childcare. Then, using data gleaned from Parliamentary speeches and Shadow Cabinet demographics, it attempts to disentangle the processes of coalition group maintenance (policy ‘conversion’ amongst legislators at the will of interest groups) from coalition group incorporation (where party elites are ‘replaced’ with predecessors who develop particular policies a a means to seek votes from new potential voting blocs). This is done in order determine the extent to which Labour’s eventual embrace of childcare was driveb by a change in demands from their traditional interest group, the unions, and the degree to which it was driven by autonomous party elites in search of a new electoral coalition.
**New Labour and the National Childcare Strategy**

Nearly dormant until New Labour’s ascension to power in 1997, British childcare policy – from the end of World War II until the 1990s – was means-tested, heavily decentralized, poorly regulated and quite minimally funded (Randall 2000). By the early 1990s, childcare provision in both the public and private sector was scant: 94% of mothers requiring childcare relied on their family for help (Hakim et al, 2008) as there was only one childcare place per nine children\(^7\) (Waldfogel and Garnham 2008). Despite a continual rise in maternal employment and repeated calls for a comprehensive policy on childcare from trade unions, employer organizations and early year’s pressure groups, consecutive governments had done all but nothing\(^8\) (Fleckenstein 2010, Randall 2000). In 1984 – when the Australian government ramped up childcare expenditure to record levels and the US Congress oversaw a continual rise in childcare tax credits – Margaret Thatcher’s government hit parents who utilized workplace childcare centres with a back-tax, stating that they should have been paying it all along (Randall 1996, 183). Finally in 1997, Labour’s campaign manifesto touted a “National Childcare Strategy” which would “plan provision to match the requirements of the modern labor market and help parents, especially women, to balance family and working life” (Labour Party 1997). Their election strategy heavily targeted middle-income women, concentrating on issues the strategists deemed key: parental leave, childcare, health and education.

And indeed, once in Government the party pushed through its five-year plan: a large, if slightly jumbled series of initiatives with an aim to ensure “good quality, affordable childcare for children aged 0 to 14 in every neighbourhood” (DFEE 1998, 7). Specifics included childcare tax credits for low-income working families, an increase in the universal child benefit, start-up funds for public-private childcare centres, integrated health, nursery and educational centres available to all but built in low-income neighbourhoods, 12.5 hours per week of free pre-school for all three-four year olds, public-private partnerships that provided capital grants to new childcare centres, etc. (Lewis and Campbell 2007; Lloyd 2008; Seely 2011). Between 1997/1998 and 2007/2008 New Labour tripled spending on early years education and care, from £2 billion to over £7 billion making it “probably the fastest-growing major area of public spending” (Sefton 2009, 3).

### III. New labour and childcare in context: electoral coalitions and ‘policy demanders’

#### a. British childcare in the electoral context

Like its fellow centre-left parties in Australia and the United States, Labour had since the 1960s experienced a shift in the socio-economic profile of its electoral coalition, whereby according to

\(^7\) For each child under the age of 8.

\(^8\) Apart from 1990 when John Major, acting as Chancellor, deemed workplace nursery costs tax-exempt.
Perrigo its “traditional working class membership” was slowly joined, if not in part replaced by better educated professionals employed in the public sector, often referred to as the “new middle class” (Perrigo 1996, 119-120). Indeed Britain’s Alford index\(^9\), at just above 40 in 1966, dropped steeply to under 30 by 1977 and whilst it increased slightly in the 1979 election, it never again rose above 30 (Clarke et. al. 2004, 43-44). Moreover, the traditional gender vote gap – which had favoured the Conservatives – began a gradual decline from the 1970 general election, although it was not completely eclipsed until 1997.

Margaret Thatcher’s 1979 Conservative victory threw Labour into a period of internal disarray, whereby party leaders, “militant” left-wing factions, right-wing trade unions and the more moderate Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) were engaged in a series of quarrels and power struggles. From that election onwards, centrist Labour Party officers began to attribute the repeated drubbings at the polls to their image as an old-fashioned, blue-collar, male dominated party and the public’s perception of Labour priorities as one that centred upon unilateral nuclear disarmament and wide-scale nationalisation (Gould 1998, 66). Things fared little better in the 1983 election: despite the Thatcher government’s deep unpopularity, it was a disastrous result for Labour as they polled three million less votes than they had in 1979, making it the party’s worst performance since 1918. The 1983 result, coming on top of a successive string of electoral defeats and declining party membership, is argued to have spurred a process of party modernization (Perrigo 1996, 116-17).

Labour’s chief pollster, Bob Worcester, described the party in the mid 1980s as “organisational madness,” noting “In my experience I have had conflicting instructions from the head of press and publicity, the Prime Minister [Jim Callahan] and the General Secretary, all of whom told me to do something different. There are no clear lines of authority and responsibility” (Gould 1998, 45). During 1983, incoming Labour leader Neil Kinnock responded to the organisational dysfunction by attempting to recentralize internal party power over disobedient factions through tactics such as containment and side-lining (disavowing militant factions, i.e. those the tabloids labelled “the loony left”), as well as attempting to reduce the power of the union’s bloc vote, an intra-party decision-making mechanism that prevented each union member an independent vote and thus often skewed intra-party elections towards trade union leaders’ preferences (Perrigo 1996, Lovenduski and Randall 1993, Bashevkin 2000). The transition, which continued even beyond Kinnock’s tenure, was difficult: Labour strategist Philip Gould recalled a not so veiled threat from the assisant to the party’s then General Secretary (Larry Whitty): if Larry was ‘against’ Kinnock’s proposal for a new communications wing, it was going to be “extremely hard” for Kinnock to make any progress on it (Gould 1998, 49).

\(^9\) A measure of class voting
And indeed, beyond internal restructuring, a communications overhaul was the central tenet of Kinnock’s modernisation strategy: he recruited a media-friendly press secretary (future MP Patricia Hewitt) and communications directors (Peter Mandelson) along with a team of pro-bono advertising professionals, dubbed the Shadow Communications Agency (SCA), all of which caused detractors to argue that “policy was increasingly subordinated to strategic considerations” (Bashevkin 2000, 410-411). Reviewing the factors behind Labour’s 1987 loss, the SCA indicated that the party’s old-fashioned male image remained an electoral obstacle. Moreover, a 1989 strategy document written by Patricia Hewitt and Deborah Mattison, co-founder of the SCA entitled, “Women’s Votes: the key to winning” emphasized Labour’s need to campaign on work-family issues such as childcare. The strategy document cited the Australian Labor Party’s success with closing the gender gap in 1983 as “the most important factor” in their electoral victory. Extrapolating from the ALP’s success with “middle-Australia” the authors underlined the importance of attracting younger, middle-income women operating on a post-materialist vision of politics as opposed to the traditional left-right distributive divide. Claiming, “the 25-50 age group must be Labour’s first priority.” they went on to argue: “A key target audience for Labour is women in their 30s and 40s, the ‘post-war baby boom’ teenagers of the 1960s. For them, combining employment and family is an urgent priority, which Labour’s policies must address” (Hewitt and Mattinson 1989).

But even Kinnock’s Shadow Cabinet, let alone rank and file party members, were not easily convinced: Deborah Mattinson notes that when presenting them with the findings from “Women’s Votes” at an away day in 1989:

“Patricia [Hewitt] and I had struggled to convey [the fact that to women, Labour’s image “as male, old fashioned, and somewhat aggressive was profoundly off-putting”] this to our male colleagues. Once again it was an all-male audience, with the exception of Jo Richardson, the women’s minister. The men were not noisy but some read papers as we spoke. We had expected this and decided that an appeal to self-interest was the only thing that would work. We had to persuade politicians that their own futures depended on persuading women voters” (Mattinson 2010).

Whilst Labour’s 1992 campaign did eventually increase its focus on policies that would appeal to middle-income women, the traditional gender-vote gap that had begun to close in 1987 re-opened slightly in the 1992 election. The political imperative for gender equality issues was, according to Fleckenstein, “reinforced” as “[s]ubsequently, childcare remained on the agenda of the Labour Party” (Fleckenstein 2010, 802). This was bolstered by the fact that the Shadow Communications
Agency data revealed that Labour would have won the 1992 General election had women voted Labour in the same proportion as men (Perrigo 1996, 126).

Taking over as Labour leader following the death of John Smith in 1994, Tony Blair continued with his predecessors’ strategies on both the organisational and image fronts (Bashevkin 2000, 413). Hayes and McAllister note that under Blair, the party closely monitored the policy preferences of “Worcester woman” a straw woman invented by polling firms to represent a typical working woman from Middle England. And indeed, as a former senior Labour strategist noted middle class – C1 and C210 – women formed the key demographic that Labour needed to gain ground with, as strategists recommended that the party shift their tone and image as well as campaign on specific issues that tested positively amongst middle-class women (such as health, education, childcare, maternity pay) (Author interview, May 2013).

As a result, Labour’s 1997 platform was heavily reliant on social issues like health and education, with childcare playing a significant role. Whilst the Conservative’s manifesto was absent any childcare-related policies bar a proposal to “assist [lone parents] with childcare in work” (Conservative Party Manifesto, 1997), Labour pronounced a national childcare strategy that “will plan provision to match the requirements of the modern labor market and help parents, especially women, to balance family and working life” (Labour Party Manifesto, 1997). Labour received an increase in female support during the 1997 election that was regarded as critical to their landslide victory (Peake 1997). Not only did Labour erase the traditional gender vote gap, but for the first time, it added middle and upper-income women to their electoral coalition (BES General Election Study 1997).

b. Childcare policy demanders and New Labour
1. Peak-level trade unions and the response to work/family policies

Even the Labour Party’s name bares tribute to the historical ties between itself and the trade unions: the party was founded, largely financed, and according to David Marquand, “controlled by a highly decentralised trade union movement” which “in a sense is not true of its social democratic counterparts on mainland Europe” (Gould 1998, 25). Apart from the fact that during the 1980s fees from affiliated trade union members accounted for 90% of total Labour Party income11 (Terry 2001), affiliated unions also historically had bloc votes in constituency

10 These represent “NSR social grades” where by an “A” represents a person who is managerial, professional or administrate; “B,” denotes “Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional”; C1: “Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, C2: “Skilled manual workers”; D: “Semi and unskilled manual workers” and E: State pensioners, casual or lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only (Ipsos Media CT, 2009)

11 This figure dropped to 50% by 1995.
candidate selections, for the Labour Party leaders and, crucially, had reserved more than half the seats on the Party's chief administrative body, the National Executive Committee (NEC), which until Blair's tenure had a decisive role in policymaking, acting as a “counterweight to the power of the parliamentary party” (Garner and Kelly 1998, 134). Coalition maintenance theory would predict that, had the affiliated unions put forth a strong call for action on childcare policy, the PLP would have quickly heeded their demands, both during election campaigns and in Parliament.

Whether the unions put forth such a claim is unclear: From 1963 the Trade Unions Congress (TUC) had adopted the position that the government should provide childcare for working mothers; in 1978 it issued a “Charter for Under 5’s,” calling for flexible working hours and comprehensive childcare, and in 1979, a “Charter for Equality,” calling for mandatory female presence on key decision making boards, in addition to full-time childcare (Randall 2000, 70-71; Gelb 1989, 40-41 and 76). However, British labor unions had a lengthy history of promoting the concept of a ‘family wage’ and were more than hesitant to embrace the idea of female trade union leadership or even key feminist issues such as maternity/parental leave until the late 1980s and, in some cases, the 1990s (Gelb 1989).

Despite the TUC’s charters on childcare, it is quite unclear how high childcare – and women’s employment issues in general – ranked on their list of priorities. Measures of feminist agency within labor unions remain unclear: Kirton and Healy (2010), note that female trade union leadership was quite low up until the late 1990s and that even still, women are under-represented in trade union leadership positions. Anecdotally, Deborah Mattinson notes that when making a presentation to the Trade Union Congress (TUC) General Council in 1988 that used demographic data, polling and focus group work in order to highlight “how crucial women would be to the movement in the future”:

“The council members at the meeting, all men bar one, sat back in their chairs in the oak-panelled board room and guffawed noisily at each other’s jokes as I ran through the data. At the end, the TUC President moved the agenda on, dismissing me with a wave of his hand. There was no discussion about what I had presented at all, no action points, no follow-up” (Mattinson 2010).

Indeed a senior Labour Party strategist recalled that even though declining male membership numbers meant the union movement needed to open its doors to women as a matter of “survivial,”

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12 The concept of which was antithetical to wives working
13 Examples of female trade union leadership in predominantly female unions include: Women were 79% COHSE membership but just 39% of its national executive; GMB: 34% membership, 29% of executive; NUPE: 75% membership, 46% executive (Brookes, Eagle and Short, 1989)
the unions “didn’t act on the need to modernise/feminist themselves” (Author interview, May 2012).

2. Trade unions at the mico-level: coordination between female union and Labour Party officials
The behaviour of peak-level trade union officers and even the information gleaned from female union leadership statistics may, to a certain extent, downplay the impact of micro-level coordination between female trade union officers and female Labour Party officials. This coordination between female trade union officers and senior female Labour Party officers – what Russell calls a “progressive bureaucracy” (Russell 2005, 124) – pushed for internal Labour party quotas, which sought to ensure that women were better represented on constituency General Committees, in the Shadow Cabinet, amongst conference delegates and on the NEC (Russell 2005, 104-05).

The party’s factional disputes created an opportunity structure for the progressive bureaucracy to play one group against another, in order to shore up both union and party support for their measures. Meg Russell writes that the progressive bureaucracy “at times acted covertly to avoid opposition from senior men” and would then go to persuade unions and the party leadership at a broader level by framing their demands in the electoral context: ‘winning women’s votes’ and attracting new union members. The proposals, Russell concludes, were “radical in their effects” (Russell 2005, 124).

Specific policy successes included “one woman on a [constituency selection] shortlist” and eventually, all women shortlists, which took hold before the 1997 election. They were aided by female-dominated unions: at the 1986 and 1989 GMB APEX sponsored resolutions that called for increased representation of women on all Labour Party bodies, including the NEC, and demanded that trade unions send enough female delegates to Labour Party conferences so as to represent the proportion of their membership that is female, that by 1990 four out of the trade unions’ twelve NEC seats were held by women and that by 2001 50% of the Parliamentary Labour Party (i.e. 50% of Labour MPs) were female (Russell 2005, 102-108).

It appears that the level of close coordination between the trade unions and the Labour Party resulted in an increasingly feminised Party leadership and indeed, many of the senior Labour Party politicians went on to take up seats on the NEC, one in particular became a leading Labour

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14 For example at the 1993 conference, the motion on all-women’s shortlists was tied to one mandating one member one vote (OMOV) in constituency-level and Labour leadership elections (thus invalidating the trade union bloc vote). Whilst the constituencies favoured this (since it put individual constituency level party members and activists a fairer level with the unions), they opposed all-women shortlists, since they viewed it as an incidence of central party interference in local party affairs. The unions, by contrast naturally opposed OMOV and, due to the persuasion of female members (in addition to a number of heavily unions that were predominantly female) and perhaps more so their battle with the constituency leaders, favoured all-women shortlists. Both measures, tied to the same resolution, narrowly passed (Russell 2005, 112-115).
However, the (increasingly feminised) trade unions’ direct impact on policy is less clear: Lovecy suggests that while a handful of unions helped female political representation, they moved little on developing actual family policy, as at least until the mid to late 1990s: “the party’s evolving opportunity structures had less of a direct impact on how feminist activists sought to extend the party’s policy commitments to women from the late 1970s through until the early 1990s, indeed until as late as 1994” (Lovecy 2007, 87).

IV. Coalition maintenance or coalition group incorporation: how does the British case fit into Karol’s theories of party position change?

The Labour Party’s relatively slow embrace of childcare policy as an electoral issue may reflect a hybrid case of party position change: coalition group incorporation intertwined with coalition group maintenance. Whilst issues related to childcare and work/family balance were gradually gaining currency amongst younger, ‘urban left’ party members during the arduous process of party modernisation that began in the mid 1980s, the Labour leadership hastened its step on the issue in the mid 1990s, once their traditional ‘policy demander’ (trade unions) became increasingly feminised and reached its peak of organised female labour mobilisation (please see Figure one).

Pure coalition group maintenance theory would suggest that that individual Labour MPs, previously ambivalent if not antagonistic towards women’s issues such as parental leave, childcare and equal opportunities, abruptly shift their stance on these subjects due to the changing demands of their most traditional ally: trade unions. Their response would be relatively quick, the party would not need to forge new ties with this interest group in order to convince its members of the group’s political importance. As such we might expect to see Labour MPs shifting their position and/or suddenly adopting the issue of childcare. We would expect to see legislators who had been incumbent for quite some time begin to ask questions, debate or perhaps develop legislation on the issue, particularly near to 1997, when organised female labour mobilisation peaked (and thus where we expect trade unions stepped up pressure on their traditional allies in the Parliamentary Labour Party).

From the lens of coalition incorporation, we would expect to see – amidst broad social change and a loosening of traditional party-voter linkages – a fresh, rising party elite in search of new

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15 Among the female trade union officers working within their parties - and alongside Labour - for quotas were Angela Eagle (COHSE), Maureen Rooney (AEEU), Bernadette Hilton (USDAW), Maureen O’Mara (NUPE), Anne Gibson (MSF) and Margaret Prosser (TGWU). These women went on to achieve increasingly powerful positions in the Labour Party: as Russell explains, “when the NEC women’s committee was reformed in 1989 to include six trade union women elected at the women’s conference, these women took up the seats” (Russell 2005, 127).

16 As compared to its Anglophone counterparts
voters. These young MPs and party members, working to attract a cohort of educated sociocultural professionals to the party’s electoral coalition (as opposed to the party’s traditional blue collar constituency), would likely be new to the arena. Specific signs would include a. the shifting, or at least, loosening of traditional class/gender voting patterns (as outlined above and) and b. on a micro-level, a replacement of Labour MPs that brought forth a stark change in the Parliamentary Labour Party’s generational, gender and educational characteristics.

a. Coalition group maintenance: parliamentary debate and evidence of policy demanders ‘converting’ legislators

Beyond examining interview-based and secondary source material for evidence of coalition group maintenance and/or incorporation, I employ data from parliamentary debates and questions, as well as the make-up of Cabinets and Shadow Cabinets from Wilson to Blair (1974-97) in order to try and distendangle the processes of maintenance from those of incorporation. As discussed earlier, this method is less straightforward than that employed by Karol (who uses roll-call data to identify instances of legislator ‘conversion’ to a a particular issue, thus drawing a clear distinction between the two processes) because the traditional prevalance of party discipline in parliamentary systems (relative to presidential systems) might mask legislator’s true policy stances.

In order to make up for the lack of an effective roll-call measurement in Westminster, I have analysed parliamentary debates on Hansard between 1970 to 1998, to examine a. general trends over time in the discussion surrounding childcare, b. possible party divide over the issue, and c. most importantly, potential instances of legislators reversing themselves on said policies.

Recognising that childcare was not a leading issue (or indeed an electoral one) during most of the time period, I also note how long a legislator has been in Parliament before they discuss childcare in order to assess whether they have spoken on the issue from the beginning of their incumbency or whether, near the peak of organised female labour mobilisation (1997), they suddenly became an advocate (i.e. they were ‘converted,’ as coalition group maintenance would predict).

Using Hansard’s Millbank system17 I search for the words “childcare,” “child care,” “day care,” “daycare,” “nurseries” and “early years” in Commons sittings, written answers and written statements between 1970 and 1997.18 Responses are coded in five ways:

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17 http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/
18 Whilst I note each time a written question was submitted to the government on childcare I do not count each written response the government in power gives, since the minister involved is required to answer such queries and is not choosing raise the issue on their own accord. If, however, a question is asked to a minister in a Commons sitting and the minister responds with a party-positional statement (take Edwina Currie, as Under Secretary of State for Health, stating that the government feels women who work shouldn’t expect financial assistance from the state) then I do note – and code – that response.
1. Positive, which suggests support for expanding childcare provision/cuttings costs, encouraging childcare as a means of equal opportunity for women and children, or increasing regulation, etc.

2. Negative, which suggests opposition to the aforementioned policies; it can be economically or culturally/normatively driven (e.g. opposing the concept of women leaving the home to work).

3. A question that is not overtly suggestive of a stance on the issue (e.g. “how many daycare places in Lambeth currently receive state funding?”)

4. Related only to issues of childcare that surround lone parents

5. Statements on the issue that are not questions but even accounting for the context of the debate, are not easily characterised as positive or negative.

There were 408 relevant instances over the 27 years, 25% of which were brought up by the Conservatives, 65% by Labour and 4% by the Liberals/Liberal Democrats. Statements on childcare that characterise it solely as an issue for lone parents are heavily concentrated in the earlier years under review; Labour MPs tended to raise the issue at a higher rate (relative to their average shares of seats over the time period) than did the Liberals and lastly, the Conservatives (see Chart 1). Finally, an examination of the response categories displays a general trend of Conservative negativity, relative to Labour and Liberal positivity (please see Chart 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 1</th>
<th>Proportion of total Statements (%)</th>
<th>Average share of seats (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Con</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 This distinction is important because my project seeks to examine why political parties adopted the issue of childcare as a public good for all families – low, middle and high income. Social and economic conservatives have traditionally been softer on the issue of lone mothers returning to work so as to support their families (and thus decrease overall welfare spending), whilst the issue of childcare for middle-income women has been more disputed (see for example Morgan, 2005).

20 Including SDP-Liberal alliance members – if they spoke of the issue after they had defected from Labour.

21 45 of the 49 statements coded as “Lone Parents” took place during the 1970s.
Testing for the presence of legislator ‘conversion’ (and by extension, coalition group maintenance) yields results that are somewhat muddling: few MPs mention the issue towards the later years of their incumbency (i.e. more than ten years after entering the Commons) and if they do, it does not immediately appear to be the result of a new political offensive for childcare on their behalf: with rare exception, the few legislators who discussed the issue in the Commons several years after their initial entry to the legislature only brought the issue up once. Whilst several Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet members (who presumably would be the target of policy demanders such as trade unions, and who hold more sway over the party’s agenda than do rank and file MPs) raised the issue of childcare in the Commons, many seem to have done so from the beginning of their terms in Parliament, suggesting an absence of interest-group inspired policy conversion (please see Chart 3).

Chart 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wilson</th>
<th>Statements/Questions</th>
<th>Years into office statement occurred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbara Castle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29, 30, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley Williams</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callaghan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert Booth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9 (though this occurred under Wilson, when he wasn’t a Cabinet member).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Callaghan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33 (all 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Millan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22 ‘Sociocultural’ denotes the MPs normative stance on the issue of a childcare as a means for mothers to work.
For example, Gordon Brown mentioned the issue three times during his first two years of Parliament, then dropped the issue until the late 1990s, a pattern seemingly out of step with a legislator being 'converted' to a particular policy stance. MPs such as Harriet Harman, Joan Lestor and Jo Richardson do not appear to have been 'converted' to the issue during their
incumbency, rather have been committed to the issue throughout their careers in parliament, including well before and during their time in the Shadow Cabinet.

B. Coalition group incorporation: electoral volatility and party elite 'replacement'

1. Electoral coalitional shifts
If party elites are to target a new social constituency, they will only be likely to do so if they see evidence of an actual opportunity. Therefore shifts in class-party linkages and an overall decline in strong party identification may come to symbolise such an opportunity. Noted above, the traditional gender vote gap – which had long implied that women favoured Conservatives over Labour – had been in decline since 1987. Moreover, as a senior Labour strategist (2013) noted, Labour saw middle-income women voters as a distinct, strategic target. Whilst she noted that they specifically targeted C1 and C2 women, it is clear that there was an opportunity structure opening up within younger AB women as well.

Data from the British Election Study (BES) depict – in Figures 5-10 in appendix – a general weakening in the percentage of AB, C1 and C2 women (age 18 to 24 and 24-35) who voted Conservative, concomitant with an increase in the proportion of women, in each of the aforementioned social categories voting Labour. Younger (25-34) AB women’s Conservative voting peaked in 1979 at about 45%, shifted downward from 1987, approached just over 30% in 1992 and finally dropped far below that of Labour, at 15% in 1997. Similarly, Conservative support amongst 25-34 year C1s had peaked in 1987, but dropped nearly 10% at the next election to just a nudge above Labour, at 40%. These general trends suggest an opportunity that Labour strategists confirmed: middle-income women would be key to Labour’s electoral victory. And indeed as a senior Labour strategist noted, following the 1992 election, the Labour Shadow Cabinet was more amenable to campaign strategies directed specifically as middle-class women “partly because they could see that they were beginning to succeed” (Author interview 2013).

2. Party elite replacement
If coalition group incorporation helps explain Labour’s eventual adoption of childcare as an electoral issue then, in addition to electoral coalitional shifts, we would expect to see a distinct change in the party membership and, in particular, the most influential members of the party: those who hold the most decision making power on policy priorities, campaign platforms, etc. Specifically, we would expect to see socially conservative, influential men in Labour leadership positions replaced with progressive, educated and middle-income men and women. Comparing NEC election ballots (in which candidates write a short manifesto) with NEC election outcomes would be an excellent measure of replacement; for example one could compare Harriet Harman’s
1994 manifesto, which focuses heavily on work-family policies such as childcare against that of a socially conservative centre-right Labourite focused perhaps solely on prices and inflation, which would certainly help detect when and to what extent the more ‘modernised’ candidates begin to dominate the NEC. Unfortunately, NEC ballots prior 1994 are not publicly available and 1994 is too late to be able to track processes of party elite replacement.

A proxy for this (social characteristics and social policy leanings of Labour officials) might be to compare the characteristics of Shadow Cabinet members over time, since these members have been, from 1981 to 2011\(^{23}\), elected by the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). Key variables include a member’s age at the time of entry into the Cabinet, their gender and their level of education (i.e. whether or not they attended university). Chart 4 summarises the change in characteristics between each Shadow Cabinet, displaying quite an apparent shift by the time John Smith became Labour Leader in 1992:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 4</th>
<th>Total Members</th>
<th>Female Members</th>
<th>Non-university educated</th>
<th>Average age of Cabinet entry</th>
<th>Replacement Rate (members who were not in previous Cabinet) (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wilson’s Cabinet: 1974-76</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callaghan’s Cabinet: 1976-79</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>9 (31%)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot’s Shadow Cabinet: 1979-83</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>12 (38%)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinnock’s Shadow Cabinet: 1983-92</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>15 (38%)</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith’s Shadow Cabinet: 1992-94</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blair’s Shadow Cabinet: 1994-97</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blair’s Cabinet: 1997-01</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7 (21%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blair’s Cabinet: 2001-05</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9 (29%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the sake of comparison Wilson and Callaghan’s Cabinet have been included, as well as Blair’s two Cabinets, which is largely similar to his Shadow Cabinet. Whilst in contrast to the

\(^{23}\) These were scrapped in 2011 (BBC 2011).
Shadow Cabinet, Cabinet positions are not up for election in the PLP, one might assume that the party as a whole would not be opposed to the Cabinet choices of a Leader that they voted for.

Although the average age of entry into the Cabinet remains largely stable, hovering between 50 to 53 from 1974 and 2001, gender and education strongly reverse themselves: under Wilson (1974-1976) there were just two (8%) females in the Shadow Cabinet; that figure jumped to seven (23%) in Smith’s Shadow Cabinet and finally to 9 (29%) in Blair’s second government. In fact there has been a nearly inversely proportional shift between female and non-university educated members: Kinnock’s Shadow Cabinet included just 2 (5%) female member and 15 (38%) non-university educated members24. Yet the proportion of non-university educated males continued to decline, just as the proportion of female members continued to rise: the proportions were equal in Smith’s Shadow Cabinet but by the time of Blair’s first government there 7 (21%) female members and just 2 (6%) non-university educated members, further, by 2001 there over four times as many female members as there non-university educated members.

The variation in replacement rates is also worth noting: this figure indicates the proportion of members from one Shadow Cabinet/Cabinet who were not included in the previous one. The high level of volatility between the make-up of Foot, Kinnock and Smith’s Shadow Cabinets seems reflective of the factional battles occurring within Labour at the time (see above and also, Russell 2005). These high replacement rates seem to have brought in a more educated, feminised and perhaps more ‘progressive’ cohort of members.

V. Labour and childcare policy: coalition group maintenance, incorporation, or both?

Despite the neat correlation between organised female labour mobilisation and New Labour’s embrace of childcare as a contestable political issue, the evidence from parliamentary debates, in addition to qualitative evidence discussed earlier does cast doubt on the idea that Labour were driven to act on childcare once their key ‘policy demander’ forced them to.

Although the debate analysis portrays muddled – and perhaps null – evidence with regards to legislator conversion, a senior Labour strategist’s disagreement with the idea that unions spurred Labour to act on childcare on is quite sharp: when asked “is it fair to say that one body acted first in terms of accepting the need to adopt gender-balanced representation and female-friendly policies? (i.e. in this regard, did the unions, or at least some of the larger unions tend to move

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24 It may seem curious that Neil Kinnock, the apparent ‘moderniser’ of New Labour presided over a series of shadow Cabinets that was less well educated and less feminine than Harold Wilson’s Cabinet almost twenty years earlier. One point worth noting is that Kinnock’s tenure was so long that he had 39 members in and out of his Shadow Cabinet, moreover, many of those Shadow Cabinet members elected during the early years of his tenure as leader were chosen in an era of factional battles, when Kinnock hadn’t yet passed through a series of institutional reforms that would have restrained ‘militant’ and the trade union influence in favour of a more middle-class, feminine and university-educated cohort. 
earlier and faster than the Labour Party, or perhaps vice-versa?"), the strategist unreservedly said "Labour." Further, when asked whether the Blair Shadow Cabinet's response to a presentation on winning women's votes was far warmer than that of Kinnock's coalition because "The Shadow Cabinet were pressured (or at least, encouraged) to do so by particular trade unions, such as the GMB and TGWU, which were increasingly feminised?" the strategist replied, "No, not at all" (Author interview, 2013).

On the other hand, the evidence behind replacement seems slightly more convincing: Shadow Cabinets became more educated and feminised in broad correlation with the timing of Labour's childcare policy embrace. This seems to gel with the Labour strategist's account: she felt that the older, male members were the most difficult to 'get on board' with women's issues and campaigns directed to women, stating: "Older men – age and gender more of an issue than politics." And indeed, when discussing why Blair's Shadow Cabinet was more receptive to the issue than was Kinnock's she noted the effects of "different leadership" and also pointed out that many of the younger men had begun to see that their strategy of courting women voters was "beginning to succeed." According to the strategist, Blair's Shadow Cabinet was more likely to embrace childcare both because "by 1996 the party had finally accepted the writing on the wall (i.e. Labour realised that it needed to modernise, and that adopting strategies to attract middle-class female voters was part in parcel of modernisation)" and because "The members of Blair's Shadow Cabinet were younger and perhaps a bit more 'modern' than Kinnock's" (Author interview, May 2013).

However one might be overzealous in suggesting that UK childcare policy emerged entirely via elite replacement, with no prompting from organised labour. In fact, the progressive bureaucracy of female union members, in coordination with female Labour Party members, was able to exploit intra-party factions and help put into place the type of mechanisms that allowed party elite replacement in the first place, such as demanding more female members on the NEC, demanding the Shadow Cabinet includes a certain proportion of women and removing the union's hold on constituency level candidate selection, etc.

VI. Conclusion
Labour's childcare policy change has been less direct than what we've envisaged from Karol's model, however at a micro-level, female trade unionists, in the ascendancy of their own organisations, were able to work with Labour women in emerging leadership positions in order to lay the groundwork for a party leadership that would be more amenable to women's and work-family balance issues. The process is subtler and indeed different from Karol's coalition maintenance theory; whilst in his case policy demanders would force incumbents' hands in
adopting their newly preferred policy position, in this case, policy demanders (females in trade unions in collusion with rising Female Labour MPs) were able to facilitate conditions that led to a replacement of older, less educated, male members with a more ‘progressive’ cohort that were, in turn, amenable to their policy demands. So in a sense, both processes (coalition group incorporation and coalition group maintenance) were at work, though the process of coalition group maintenance is far subtler than expected and indeed far less powerful than the process of elite replacement that is inherent in Karol’s theory of coalition group incorporation.

This tends to suggest that Labour – arguably once an ‘activist-dominated party’ in the terms used by Schumacher et. al. (2013) – became a more leadership-dominated party in part by the work of both male and female modernisers. Interestingly, Schumacher et. al. (2013) would code Labour as an activist-dominated party because their data (Laver and Hunt surveys), comes from 1992 - the point at which Labour was only beginning to emerge from a period of stark transition, and perhaps moving from a mass party to an electoral professional one (Katz and Mair, 1995; Panebianco, 1988). In that light, it would be interesting to hypothesise: had the issue of childcare been taken up by the public and media earlier in time, or had it been truly prioritised by the unions in the 1970s and early 80s (before Labour lost its activist-dominated structure), then perhaps we would have seen far more evidence of legislators’ policy conversion to the issue (coalition group maintenance), or at least, a rather abrupt (but then continued) attention to the issue on the part of previously socially conservative Labour Party members and MPs.
Appendix

Figure 5: AB women voting patterns, 18-24

Source: BES, author calculations

Figure 6: AB women voting patterns, 25-34

Source: BES, author calculations

Figure 7: C1 women voting patterns, 18-24
Source: BES, author calculations

Figure 8: C1 women voting patterns, 25-34

Source: BES, author calculations

Figure 9: C2 Women voting patterns, 18-24
Figure 10: C2 Women voting patterns, 25-34

Source: BES, author calculations
References


