

Parenting education in the new labor movement: a media discourse analysis

Kaitlin P Ward*

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The new labor movement in the United Kingdom (UK) was characterized by large governmental strides in family policy. One such stride was the expansion of access to parenting education, wherein parents receive information on parent-child interactions skills, discipline techniques, and general parenting advice. While prior empirical work has examined the political development of parenting education services under new labor, scant research has explored how the media discourse framed this evolution.

discourse analysis, this study examined how newspaper articles from the Guardian framed parenting education expansion to the public from 1997-2010. Archived newspaper publications (N=464) were retrieved via ProQuest and were analyzed chronologically. Findings suggest advocates of parenting education may benefit from diverting focus from child truancy and crime and focusing on the collective importance of parenthood; utilizing empowering and inclusive language surrounding parenting education; making use of multiple media sources to unite parents; and advocating for policies such as banning spanking and promoting parental leave.

Keywords: Parenting; Parent education; Parenting programs; New labour; Discourse analysis; Media

INTRODUCTION

The new labor movement in the United Kingdom (UK) brought about significant changes in the interaction between government and the family. The literature generally places the new labor movement between the years 1997 and 2010, which is when the UK was under the leadership of Prime Ministers Anthony (Tony) Blair and Gordon Brown from the center-left Labor political party [1]. One hallmark of New Labor was the placement of the family at the center of governmental reform. Whereas the UK had previously taken a *sui generis* approach to family policy viewing the family as a separate sphere and institution [2]. New labor viewed the family as being at the heart of broad social and policy objectives. Rather than the family solely serving as an economic agent, the family was now a means by which social and political goals such as social order and social integration could be achieved. This change in political approach coincided with the development of a host of parental support provisions, one of which being access to parenting education. Although new Labor oscillated between which persons were eligible to receive such education and under what circumstances such education would be provided, the general supposition was that providing access to parent education could embolden parents' sense of self-efficacy; increase the ability for families to serve as an economic agent; and halt generational cycles of crime, poverty, and social isolation.

While previous empirical work has critically examined new labor politics generally

[3]. As well as the stability and change in family policy under the new labor administration, relatively little work has examined how the media framed the family policy changes under the new labor administration. The examination of media discourse is important, as media discourse has the power to change public opinion, action, and engagement [4]. Specifically in regard to the expansion of access to parenting education, media discourse could have an effect on whether individuals take advantage of such resources or vote for political leaders who will utilize tax dollars for such causes. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the media discourse (via a prominent UK newspaper publication, the Guardian) surrounding the expansion of access to parent education between 1997 and 2010. Specifically, the author a) analyzes how the media garnered support for expansion of parent education services across time, b)

outlines themes and patterns related to media discourse on parenting education, and c) identifies areas of family policy which were most connected to parent education expansion.

METHODS

Data collection

Archival newspaper articles from The Guardian were collected via ProQuest. The Guardian was chosen for a number of reasons: 1) the publication is a broadsheet newspaper which provides formal and quality coverage of national news, 2) among the UK broadsheet publications, the Guardian maintained high circulation figures as well as the highest website traffic over the time period examined in this study [5]. Given that one of the primary research questions involved exploring how the media garnered support for new labor policies.

The Guardian's self-proclaimed center-left political orientation would likely produce enough language that garners support for new labor policies while being committed to producing high-quality, fact-based writing intended for a diverse national audience.

The following four search terms were utilized to find appropriate news articles: parenting, parent education, parenting programmer, and parenting class. Articles were retained if the writing directly referred to parenting education, meaning that parents were taught, given advice, or supported in a manner directly related to parenting.

The author sampled articles written from January 1997 to May of 2010, when the conservative leader, David Cameron, became Prime Minister (i.e., ending the new labor administration).

After filtering out irrelevant and duplicate articles, the final sample included 464 articles. Figure 1 provides a graph of the number of obtained over each year of the analytic time period.

Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, United States

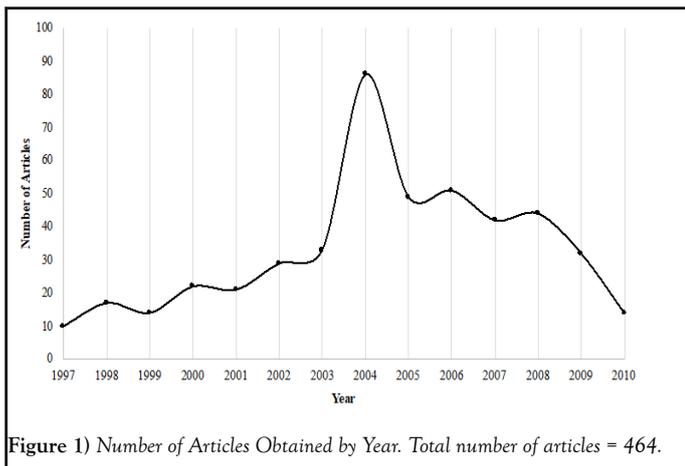
Correspondence to: Kaitlin P. Ward, Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, United States, E-mail: kaitlin.ward25@gmail.com

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Data analysis

The sampled newspaper articles were analyzed *via* media discourse analysis [6]. The full frame work for [6]. Analysis of media discourse includes 1) textual analysis, which includes an examination of discursive strategies (i.e., how media achieves a certain effect); analysis of themes; analysis of actors (i.e., persons interviewed or described); and examination of the language, grammar, and rhetoric used; and 2) contextual analysis, which can include a comparative synchronic analysis (e.g. examining diverse representations of the issue across multiple publications) and/or a historical diachronic analysis, which examines the wider social context of a given issue. Because the author only examined one newspaper publication (and thus could not conduct a comparative-synchronic analysis), the author's contextual analysis includes a chronological historical-diachronic analysis to examine which family policies were most emphasized in conjunction with the expansion of parenting education. The author analyzed the articles by year in order to elucidate themes that emerged chronologically over the sampled time period.

RESULTS

Discursive strategies for generating support for parenting education

Discursive strategy 1

Connect crime, underachievement, and truancy to parental failure. Between 1997 and 2000, the discourse surrounding parenting education in the media was largely connected to crime, underachievement, and truancy specifically, juvenile delinquency in the public sphere, and underachievement and truancy in school settings.

The crime-centered strategy involved the media framing youth crime rates as a parental failure issue that the government was adept to address. The media posited that the government needed to take a larger role in helping parents to "accept their responsibilities," and politicians needing to "crack down on crime" and be "extremely tough" in making parents responsible for their children. For example, article headlines read, "Youth crime crackdown targets parents" and, referring to the Home Secretary Jack Straw, "Straw to combat crime-breeding 'excuse culture' [7]. These headlines seem to demonstrate to the public that parents are a means through which the societal ill of crime could be reduced. In order to address such parental irresponsibility, the media quotes politicians and government officials who claim that "family centers" (centers that offer parenting education programs) would teach parents to parent more effectively, which would then reduce crime rates. For example, the principal officer of the National association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders is quoted saying,

Family centers have a key role to play in preventing youth crime. Funding more such centers would do more to cut delinquency than new ways of dealing with offenders when criminal behavior has started [7].

Interestingly, and further highlighting the link between parental failure and crime, these parenting programs were funded under a bill called the "Crime and Disorder Bill," which ordered parenting classes for mothers and fathers "whose competence in controlling their children was in doubt [44]. Notably, at this point, parenting education was only being offered once delinquency in a child had been detected.

In regard to underachievement, a similar parental failure claim is exposed in the following headlines: "Fathers blamed for boys' bad marks: Failure to read to sons and provide a role model reasons for underachievement in school and growing gender gap" and "Labour targets lazy parents [45]. Within the former article, a professor recommends that fathers spend more time helping at home, especially with reading. This suggests that a child's underachievement can be remedied by action on the part of the parent.

Within

the latter article, David Blunkett, the education and employment secretary, states, "[children underachieve] often because parents claim not to have the time, because they have disengaged from their children's education or because quite simply, they lack even the basics of parenting skills" [6]. These quotations and headlines again reiterate that parental failure is a direct predictor of underachievement, and that increasing parenting skills is needed.

In regard to truancy, responsibility continued to be placed on parents, evidenced in headlines such as, "Truancy drive puts onus on parents" and "Parents face jail for failing to stop truancy" [7]. Similar to the strategy used when connecting parenting to crime and underachievement, the media primarily quoted government officials to establish the link between parental failure and truancy. For example, a quote from the professional association of teachers states. The government must tackle the social and family problems that are often the root cause [7]. Although the linguistic tone in these articles is arguably punitive toward parents, the media is concurrently proposing government-sponsored parenting education as a viable solution to larger societal challenges.

Discursive strategies describe parenting education resources. Across all years analyzed in the study, a consistent discursive strategy of the media was to simply describe parent education resources most often, parenting classes. This typically involved the author of the publication attending a parenting course and describing the various aspects of the program. Interestingly, the actors that the media chose to highlight also remained largely consistent over time: instructors of parenting courses, directors of a program where parenting education was offered, and mothers who received parent education and had positive experiences. To gain a better sense of the scope of this strategy, the author counted the number of articles that described a parent education resource and interviewed a parent, instructor, and/or director, and found that 17.2% (n=80) of the sampled articles utilized this strategy. Even in the earliest year sampled (1997), when punitive language toward parent education was more prevalent, a mother who participated in a compulsory parenting course was quoted.

I could not have done without the classes. The two most important messages. I learned we're not to let your child wind you up and the importance of praise [8].

As in the quote above, the media primarily interviewed parents who reported positive feelings about parenting education. In fact, the author found only one article that contained an interview of a parent a father who said something negative about parenting education. Furthermore, the media interviewed parents who described parent education resources across a variety of domains: discipline courses; divorce/separation parenting courses; adoption parenting courses; residential parenting programs; father-involvement programs; parent education and advice hotlines; parenting courses for the mentally ill, and so forth. In reference to parenting courses, mothers are quoted saying, "It gives you confidence; it gives your ideas; it gives you a sounding-board [9]. I've learned that parts of [my children's] brain are rewiring. I've made a lot of changes in the way I deal with the children and it's improved my relationship with them [10]. To demonstrate the effectiveness of Parent line Plus, a 24-hour parent education hotline

that parents can call to receive parenting advice, one author called Parent line Plus herself and described how she felt afterward.

Twenty minutes later, I feel fortified. I have a new strategy that I won't allow my son to renegotiate and where I'll focus on rewards rather than punishments - obvious stuff, yet it's still comforting to talk to someone willing to analyse my situation in detail [11].

When administrative staff of parent education programs was interviewed, authors included quotations that contained information about which aspects of the programs were particularly desirable for parents. For example, a quote from the assistant director of Save the Children Scotland states parents didn't want a pre-set curriculum, or the feeling of obligation to attend. But they did want access to expertise and the chance to set their own priorities. Parents also wanted courses which reflected their problems with basic material needs, their personal problems, and the difficulties they had with their children. Save the Children found parents often thought they had a problem with their child, whereas the real problem lay with the fact they were under-informed about child development and how each stage affected behaviour and ability [12].

Clearly, a major discursive strategy used by the guardian was to elicit direct quotations from parents and program administration to establish the legitimacy and efficacy of parent education resources. With only one article quoting a parent who did not think highly of a parent education resource, it is clear that utilizing parents and administration as actors and only including positive quotations within the articles may have assisted in generating public support for parent education resources.

Discursive strategy 2

Provide parenting education across media sources. Another way in which support was garnered for parent education was by directly providing parenting education (i.e., parenting skills, tips, etc.) in the newspaper and by reporting on parenting education that was being offered through other types of media, such as television and radio. The method of providing parent education directly within The Guardian existed across most of the years examined in the study (for example, beginning in 1997 with one article that contained a section that read "Tips for building your child's self-confidence [36]. And increased substantially in the 2000. For a quantitative representation, the author counted the number of articles that offered parent education, advice, or tips across portions of time: between 1997 and 1999, n=1; between 2000 and 2003, n=17; between 2004 and 2006, n=18; between 2007 and May 2010, n=16. The topics of the parenting advice ranged from breastfeeding, "nappies" (diapers), and language development, to how best navigate visiting your child's prospective school. The media also allowed parents to write to the newspaper anonymously and solicit parenting advice from parents within the guardian readership. Once other parents had responded to the inquiry. The responses were published. This appeared to serve as a space where parents could anonymously vent about their in laws, stepfamily, or child's behaviors and receive sympathy, support, and encouragement from other parents. Some articles contained interviews with psychology professors or parent educators who provided tips on parental discipline and child emotional development. Starting in 2004, articles were published that discussed parent education within other media outlets. For example, some of the guardian's "Radio Pick of the Day" began including radio conversations about parenting education. The first such instance involved a life coach saying that "children don't come with an instruction manual [37]. Discussed how some parents are paying hundreds of pounds for one-on-one parental coaching. Radio highlights also included discussions on attachment theory and parental discipline techniques. Other articles discussed how parenting education becoming increasingly popular on UK television, with shows such as Super nanny and Blame the Parents making the guardian's "Watch This" page multiple times between 2004 and 2010. These types of discourse may have served to universalize the need for parent education and lessen the stigma associated with seeking out parenting help.

Discursive strategy 3

Increasingly empowering language across time. While the first four years of the articles analyzed primarily contained punitive and condemning language, the author found a distinct evolution of language over time, such

that language became more empowering and inclusive. While earlier articles used the words "blamed" and "targets" to refer to parents, and "reluctant fathers" to refer to parents attending a parenting education class, by the year 2001, the language surrounding parenting classes was much less stigmatized. For example, one author stated.

Parenting courses are to the naughtiest what therapy was to the nineties: we're all flocking for our fix. Anywhere parents are to be found, from dinner parties to playgrounds, you will encounter the evangelists who say their lives have been changed forever by seven evening spent listening to a guru. Possibly not since the 1930s has adult education [9].

This language greatly differs from the language presented in 1997. To place this language evolution in context, beginning in 1998, 250 Sure Start Programs were opened in targeted areas of the UK, which were essentially one-stop shops for parents where they could receive parent education, participate in parent support groups, place their children in nurseries, and obtain other family resources. It is possible that the introduction of Sure Start made parenting courses more commonplace throughout the UK; however, based solely on the data at hand, it is unclear how such a change in language perhaps a change in culture was brought about. Earlier publications may give insights into how the rhetoric around parenting classes began to change. In 1998, one headline read. "Mother of all courses: Bringing up children is not as simple as it was" [38]. This headline, rather than focusing on parental responsibility and accountability, seems to suggest that parenting is difficult for everyone not just parents of children who are criminals or underachieving. Another 1998 article headline reads, "Nationwide network planned for lessons in child rearing, which should not be seen as admission of failure [39]. Although the majority of the earlier publications still utilized punitive language, these articles may provide insight into how the stigma against receiving parent education began to crack.

In the year 2000, empowering language was more frequently utilized in reference to parenting education. For example, articles were written on how parents can instill self-esteem in their children [40]. And how parents can protect their children from bullying [41]. Importantly, these articles did not blame parents for children having low self-esteem or for being bullied; rather, these articles seemed to approach the subjects utilizing empowerment language. For example, in the self-esteem article, the author writes, "Parents can help. First, they can listen, key into what the child says, and accept her own statements parents can ease anxiety about performance by showing the child that she does have power to extend her skills and knowledge [40]. This language focuses on what the parent may be able to do in order to produce desirable outcomes in their children, rather than focusing on taking responsibility for their children's poor behavior.

Starting in 2002, more inclusive language that conveyed the universal need for parent education was utilized. Instead of solely discussing parenting classes in the context of parents of truants or criminals, headlines such as "Open to advice: Charities demand more home visits in support of parents [18]. And "NHS may fund parenting lessons [19]. Were published, conveying that parent education may be beneficial for a variety of parents. In fact, by 2005, an article stated that the government called for "all parents to be given a legal right to advice from before birth until secondary school. Families should no longer be left on their own to cope with the problems children's upbringing [6]. The language shift here not only conveys a sense of universalism, but also begins to shift some responsibility back onto the government. More specifically, in the 1990, punitive language alluded to parental responsibility and accountability; then, in the 2000, empowerment and universal language shifted some responsibility back to the government in order to provide parent education services to all.

Objects: themes and patterns

Care or social control? Across the time period analyzed, the author found a persistent tension between whether parent education was portrayed as a form of care or social control the term "care" referring to the government providing supportive services to parents in a socially just manner, and "social control" referring to compulsory services that control the behavior of its societal members. To note, this tension was not necessarily reflecting a

discursive strategy, as most articles conveyed support for parent education expansion generally; rather, this tension is more related to how the media framed the government's objective behind parenting education expansion. Chronologically speaking, 1997 was a year where consistent themes of social control arose: parent education was framed by the media as a means by which crime could be reduced and social order could be achieved. Beginning in 1998, however, when Sure Start programs were introduced, language that conveyed care (e.g. "Straw hopes that parenting classes will be seen as a natural part of preparing for parenthood not an admission of failure [42]. Began being interspersed with social control language (e.g. we need the earliest intervention to ensure that youngsters causing mayhem don't disrupt the education of other children [20].

The theme of parent education expansion having an objective of "care" became more prevalent across the time period analyzed in conjunction with more inclusive and empowering language. However, the tension of social control was present each year, and was most often associated with the government attempting to socially control the poor *via* parenting education. For example, in the year 2000, one headline read, "Education drive to focus on the poor," with the article explaining that with the support of the chancellor, Gordon Brown, every child under age 4 in deprived areas would receive parenting advice [21]. Then, in 2003, within an article that discussed antisocial behavior among youth, the Home Office minister was quoted saying that "poor parents need[ed] to be encouraged to become involved in [parenting] courses voluntarily [22]. The latter quotation is a prime example of the tension between care and control: the term "voluntarily" alludes to the idea that parents should be able to choose for themselves what services they participate in; yet, a government official signaled a need to encourage only the poor, bringing up the theme of socially controlling the poor under the guise of voluntary participation in services. Again, in 2004, the headline "The state's increasing preoccupation with how we raise our children risks penalizing the poorest parents [23]. Within the article, the author describes the increased access to parent education by utilizing social control language; for example.

The state will exert its authority and attempt to reshape society - penetrating deep into one of the hitherto most private aspects of people's lives: how to parent. The state has a new role as it prescribes what to feed your children, how to deal with toddler tantrums, how to play with your children, how to read with them, how to deal with rebellious teenagers. Some of these programmes are voluntary (Sure Start), some compulsory (such as parenting orders). Together, they amount to an ambitious attempt to reform how some sections of society raise their children (17).

The article goes on to posit that that, instead of accusing poor parents of not knowing how the parent, government officials should admit that social issues are a result of economic failure. Indeed, in a 2004 article, the Policy Research Bureau surveyed more than 1,700 parents and found that parenting education resources were described as "rushed, dismissive, patronizing and perceived as an agent of social control, rather than help" [24].

Similarly, another headline in 2005 reads, "Stop blaming the poor," explaining that poor parents are feeling blamed and targeted for anti-social behavior, school attendance, and bad parenting [25]. Yet, within the same year, government officials stated that parents should be given the legal right to parenting advice [6]. These references show the media oscillating between presenting parent education as a means of governmental responsibility for caring for parents, and the government attempting to socially control parents specifically, poor parents. Besides the media's discursive strategy of describing parent education programs and quoting parents who benefitted from parent education resources, the theme of "care" was primarily conveyed *via* quotes of government officials, rather than polls from parents or quotes from parents stating that such services were needed. This brings to question whether the government's reported objective of care was legitimate, or whether social control motives were persisting.

Targeted or universal? Across the time period analyzed, the author found a persistent debate between whether parenting education services should be targeted to specific communities or be universally available. Early years of the study (i.e., 1997-998) contained articles on parent education that were explicitly target-based, with only parents of juvenile delinquents and parents

of children who were misbehaving, truant, or underachieving in school being given access to parent education. The Sure Start program was likewise target-based, with programs only being implemented in low-income areas. Articles explicitly articulated that these target-based programs could be stigmatizing; for example, an assistant director of a program that ran parenting courses stated, "We found parents were acutely aware of the way classes could be stigmatizing [12]. One year after Sure Start programs were implemented, in 1999, Parent line Plus was launched, which was a universal parent education resource that the media stated could serve to "counter the stigma [of asking for help] through a mass-media campaign advertising the service and by the very act of offering advice [13]. These references display the tension of the media reporting on the launch of a universal program aimed at alleviating the very stigma that appeared to stem from the targeted program.

Language surrounding the need for universal parent education programs within the sample began in 2002, when an article reported that three children's charities called for an increase in home visiting, which would form the basis of a universal parent education program for parents with children of all ages [14]. Next, in 2004, an article was published that explained the long-term plans of Sure Start by stating, "The ultimate goal is to make the Sure Start approach universal: early years education, childcare, health, parenting support and other services from speech therapy to toy libraries would be brought together for families under one roof [14]. Interestingly, in the first article [within the sample] about Sure Start that was 1998, there was no mention of universal services; then, six years later, the aforementioned article was the first article that mentioned universal services stemming from Sure Start. This signals a change in politics or culture that occurred in a movement from targeted parent education services to the need for universal services. Based on the data at hand, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact causes of this change; however, language surrounding the stigmatization of targeted services may have prompted a change in political strategy toward implementing universal parent education services.

Preventative or harm reduction? An additional object, or theme, that arose from the data was the debate between preventative and harm-reduction services. Interestingly, beginning in 1997, the words "prevent" and "preventative" was used frequently in association with compulsory parenting courses for parents of criminals and delinquents stating that parenting classes would prevent crime from occurring and get at the "root" of the cause of crime. However, it may be argued that these types of targeted services are not inherently preventative in the literal sense of the word and was closer to a harm-reduction service, as these services were provided only after child abuse, juvenile delinquency, or child underachievement had occurred. Then, in 1998, the Sure Start program was framed in the media as a "prevention program" that helps parents breaks cycles of undesirable behavior [6]. While this version Sure Start may have been a closer representation of prevention in the true sense of the word, it was still a targeted service only available to individuals living in low-income communities. Here, we see the interaction of prevention, harm reduction, targeted, and universal approaches.

By 2005, language surrounding the need for non-targeted universal services began to increase. In a headline that read, "It is time for Labor to make child poverty and social exclusion a priority," a children's services representative stated, "At a local level, there needs to be a children's center in every community, providing parenting groups, support for language development, health services and advice, as well as job training and skills development for the parent. The cost of such universal provision would be significant, but let's look at the cost of failure to intervene [16]. Within the same year, another article stated, "All parents of teenagers should be offered help under an adolescent equivalent of the expanded Sure Start programmer for young children. The call for universal parenting education is among recommendations in a pamphlet published at a Fabian Society conference today [17]. Then, in 2006, when the government planned to fund more parenting education services for parents living in the bottom 2% of the income distribution, articles were written (by journalists as well as members of the community) that were pushing back against this idea, stating that parent education should be universal [18]. This demonstrates both a journalistic and a public change in view, specifically that parent

education services should be both preventative and universal. This shift in viewpoint may have contributed to why the UK implemented universal parenting education by 2010.

Context

Family policy connected to parent education

Spanking Beginning in 1998, the subject of spanking typically referred to as “smacking” in the context of The Guardian was mentioned in conjunction with parenting education. In 1998, the European court of human rights in stasbourg ruled that spanking qualifies as “torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,” which appeared to stimulate the UK conversation on whether spanking should be banned [27]. Throughout the time period analyzed, the media garnered support for a ban on spanking by publishing articles about other countries that have passed similar bans [26]. Quoting celebrities and government officials who supported corporal punishment bans [13]. Quoting the Commission on Families, who called for a spanking ban along with universal parenting education services [6]? Interestingly, despite the relatively positive media framing toward banning spanking, the UK never passed a complete spanking ban. In fact, some articles overtly discussed the paradox of the new labor party providing parenting education services but not banning spanking, with headlines such as, “new labor is the children’s party so why is they so afraid of championing the smacking ban? [27]. Another article conveyed a similar sentiment by stating.

What is causing such hesitation when the principles of childcare and the understanding of child development have been so transformed? The answer is a combination of Britain's outdated approach to parenting and Labor’s.

Fear of being stuck with the "nanny state" label. Surely if there is one area above all others where ‘nanny’ should be intervening, it is in the field of child protection. Ten states have already banned smacking. Are we going to be the last? [28].

This quote reinforces the tension between social control and care between fears of the UK being viewed as a “nanny state” and providing needed governmental protection for children. The author found 15 articles between 1998 and 2007 that centered on spanking; therefore, although the topic of spanking did not permeate throughout the entire New Labor time period (i.e., through 2010), the topic was prevalent enough to serve as a consistent contextual factor on family policies that were being debated during the same time period as parenting education expansion. Considering that the New Labor movement was redefining how the family related to the government and how the government interacted (or interfered) with the family, it seems appropriate that a policy such as a spanking ban would be highlighted in the media in conjunction with parenting education.

Parental leave the most prominent family policy discussed in conjunction with parenting education expansion was parental leave. Between 1998 and 2010, the author found 28 articles that centered on parental leave. Unlike the topic of the spanking ban which featured debates, but no significant change in policy parental leave underwent significant changes during the New Labor movement. For example, the first article that mentioned parental leave, which was written in 1998 with the headline “Supporting parents to provide best environment for children,” discussed that New Labor proposals aimed to extend paid maternity leave from 14 to 18 weeks [29]. However, fathers were still only granted three months of unpaid maternity leave, which only 2% of fathers could afford to utilize. This sentiment was captured in the headline, “Daddy’s home but he’s stony broke [30]. By 2001, mothers were able to take up to a year of unpaid maternity leave, which was part of a package to improve maternity rights and expand parent education by 2003, fathers were given paid paternity leave; yet, the media stated that fathers still were not taking leave, due to the low pay level [31]. Then, in 2009, the media began publishing articles on whether men and women should have the same parental leave entitlement rights [32]. Using much more universal and inclusive language on the matter.

Many of these articles centered on parents being able to spend time with their children; providing a healthy environment for children; and mothers

and fathers playing an active role in parenting. Much of the language surrounding parental leave was more empowering and inclusive, rather than punitive and condemning. For example, articles stated that, “ many fathers want and expect to be involved with their children far more than their own fathers were, a process that makes for happier children as well as parents” [33].

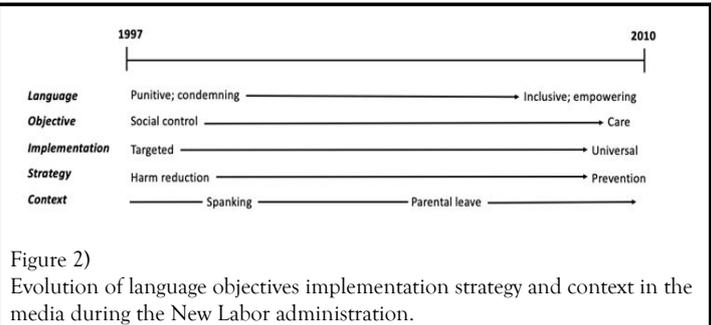
The limited amount of parenting leave currently available for fathers deprives both children and fathers of the possibility to spend important time together - time that may prove crucial in child development. Fathers' roles as careers need to be supported and strengthened through the right incentives [34].

Instead of the media framing parental leave as a social control mechanism (e.g. preventing crime and delinquency), articles primarily focused on the mental health benefits parental leave can bring to parents, and the developmental benefits it may bring to children. Furthermore, parental leave was frequently mentioned in conjunction with the expansion of parenting education services. For example, articles that discussed the expansion of Sure Start centers also discussed the need for an expansion of parental leave [35]. Throughout the New Labor movement, the media conveyed that access to parenting education and paid parental leave go hand-in-hand.

DISCUSSION

The new labor movement fundamentally shifted how the government interacted with the family in the UK. The new labor movement can be viewed as a synthesis between socialism and capitalism: an attempt to achieve social organization through the vast distribution of basic services to the family, yet continuing the tradition of private and public partnerships for service delivery, and sustaining the view of the family as an economic agent. The expansion of parent education was an integral part of the New Labor movement, as government officials viewed parent education as both a preventative and harm-reduction mechanism whereby social order and desirable social outcomes could be achieved. Yet, scant empirical work examines how this expansion unfolded over time; and, as far as the author is aware, no study to date has examined how the media framed this evolution. The purpose of this study was to examine how the media garnered public support for the expansion of parent education during the new labor administration.

Using media discourse analysis, the author found that the guardian used four primary discursive strategies to convey support for parent education programs to the public: framing parent education as a way to stop crime, delinquency, and truancy; describing parent education resources and including quotations from parents (primarily mothers) who found the parenting resources helpful; providing actual parenting education (e.g. parenting tips) across multiple media sources; and evolving the language surrounding parenting education from punitive and condemning to inclusive and empowering. The author also found multiple objects, or themes, that permeated the New Labor movement in the media, which emerged as three primary tensions: social control vs. care, targeted vs. universal parent education, and harm reduction vs. preventative services. Across time, the articles moved from social control language to care language; from primarily discussing targeted parent education interventions to discussing the need for universal access to parent education; and framing parent education as a harm-reduction service toward a fully preventative service (see Figure 2). Additionally, the author found two family policies that were strongly connected to the expansion of parent education within the media: the banning of spanking and promotion of parental leave.



LIMITATIONS

The findings of this study should be interpreted within the context of its limitations. Only one media source, The Guardian, was utilized for the analysis in this study. It is possible that analyses of other media sources or a combination of media sources would elicit different results; therefore, study interpretations should not be generalized across sources. Additionally, The Guardian is known for its center-left political orientation and likely contained more articles in support of new labor policies, including the expansion of parent education. Future research may benefit from analyzing newspaper sources with alternative political orientations over the same time period to examine the framing of parent education expansion. Further, the author was the sole analyzer of these data; data were not coded for reliability or shared with any other researcher, making the conclusions drawn by the author susceptible to personal bias. While the time period analyzed was larger than traditional discourse analyses, potentially important themes and evolutions may have not been analyzed due to not sampling articles from the years prior and subsequent to the new labor administration.

Implications and future directions

This study provides a number of implications for researchers and practitioners domestically and internationally. While the social sciences aim to enhance human wellbeing and meet the needs of all people, some fields of social science, such as social work and psychology, are framed as a profession that is primarily concerned with social control, rather than a profession that genuinely cares for others. Within this media analysis, the author found that social control language lessened as conversations surrounding universal services increased. Therefore, future studies should examine whether social services are viewed as more helpful (or caring) when services are less targeted. Additionally, this analysis found that the media approach of parent education serving as crime-, delinquency, and truancy-reducing mechanisms did not withstand the test of time: when framed in such a manner, parenting education was viewed as stigmatizing and punitive. Discussion surrounding and participation in parenting education seemed to flourish when inclusive and empowering language was utilized in the media [46-53]. Finally, this analysis provides insight into how one media publication was able to garner support for the expansion of parenting services. Should other countries particularly economically and socially similar countries, such as the United States desire to garner support for the expansion of parenting education, some of The Guardian's discursive strategies may be adopted or built upon [54-57]. For example, speaking directly to parents about the effectiveness of parenting services was frequently utilized and well regarded within the media, and this strategy may also be effective in other locations. However, future studies should examine other media sources (with varying political orientations) in order to gain a more comprehensive view of the discursive strategies utilized surrounding parent education expansion.

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