

# Careerists versus Coal-Miners: Welfare Reforms and the Substantive Representation of Social Groups in the British Labour Party

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## Abstract

Many parties have seen declines in working-class legislators and increases in professional career politicians. I argue that career politicians are more likely to adopt policies for strategic political reasons, whereas working-class politicians are more likely to represent the interests of working-class voters. Changes in the representation of these occupational groups matter substantively whenever legislators' strategic concerns contradict the interests of working-class voters. Welfare reforms adopted in the 1990s and 2000s by the British Labour Party exhibit this divergence. The two types of politicians held very different policy positions, which I measure using a scaling method applied to all speeches made about welfare in the House of Commons from 1987-2007. The results carry over to voting behavior and are robust to alternative explanations, including other characteristics of both MPs and their voters. The changing representation of occupational groups has therefore had substantive policy effects, lowering the political influence of working-class voters.

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Political parties across the developed world, particularly European Social Democratic parties, once consisted of legislators drawn from a broad range of classes and occupations, including manual trades. Today, many have become dominated by middle-class professional politicians with little experience outside of politics itself. Working-class people find it increasingly difficult to enter politics. Places as diverse as Belgium, Canada, Germany, Norway, Portugal, the UK, former Communist countries in Eastern Europe, the US House, sub-national parliaments in Catalonia and Scotland, and the supra-national European Parliament all exemplify these trends (Norris and Levendusky 1995; Scarrow 1997; Best and Cotta 2000; Borchert 2003; Shabad and Slomczynski 2002; Narud and Valen 2008; Stolz 2010; Koop and Bittner 2011; Wauters 2012; MacKenzie 2015; Evans and Tilley 2017; Lamprinakou et al. 2017; Ohmura et al. 2018). Other places, such as Italy after its 1994 realignment, have seen falls in the number of career politicians due to the entry of new parties (Fiers and Secker 2007).

The numerous past studies that carefully document these trends in political recruitment are presumably motivated by a belief that they have real political consequences. Yet there is strikingly little evidence on whether they matter substantively. We know that career politicians are more likely to progress to high office once elected (Koop and Bittner 2011; Cowley 2012; Allen 2013; Goplerud 2015; Ohmura et al. 2018), that the backgrounds of government ministers responsible for welfare programs affect their behavior (Alexiadou 2015), and that legislators from different origins vote and sponsor bills very differently in the US and Latin America (Carnes 2012, 2013; Carnes and Lupu 2015). Very little previous work on European countries, though, has established that legislators from different occupational backgrounds have different ideological beliefs or exhibit distinctive legislative behaviors.<sup>1</sup>

One reason for this is that it is not necessarily clear when the preferences of these different types of legislator will diverge, particularly career politicians. Another is that in European parliamentary systems, differences in legislators' preferences are often hidden from view,

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1. Two notable recent exceptions to this rule are Hyttinen et al. (2018) and Heuwieser (2017). The former show that electing local politicians from public sector backgrounds in Finland leads to higher local public spending. The latter looks at national MPs in the UK and finds – contrary to my results – that career politicians are more rebellious than other MPs. The reasons for these divergent findings are discussed below.

given strong party control over voting. In this paper I address both of those difficulties, focusing on two important occupational groups: working-class politicians such as former coalminers, and middle-class career politicians with very little professional experience outside of politics itself, whom I term ‘careerists.’ I develop a general framework that predicts when, and for which policy areas, differences will emerge between these groups. Careerists are more likely to adopt policies for strategic political reasons because they have a greater concern for career advancement and electoral success. They respond more to the priorities of both swing voters and party leaders than other legislators. Working-class politicians, on the other hand, are more likely to represent the interests of working-class voters. Changes in the representation of these two types of legislator will have substantive effects when careerists’ greater strategic concerns are at odds with working class legislators’ stronger ideological affinity with working-class voters. Intra-party differences arising from legislators’ occupational backgrounds will emerge only in certain political contexts and for certain policies, depending on the preferences of party leaders, swing voters and working-class people.

My empirical evidence comes from a detailed case study of a situation where I expect to find such differences. I look at welfare reforms adopted by the British Labour Party under the leadership of Tony Blair, when the balance of power between working-class legislators (MPs) and careerists shifted dramatically. The former had a stronger ideological attachment to welfare provision because it benefits working-class voters, whereas the latter’s greater concerns for electoral success and career advancement pointed toward supporting welfare reforms. To overcome the limitations of voting data, I measure each MP’s policy stance from their rhetoric, applying a scaling method to an original database of all speeches made about welfare reforms in the House of Commons (the UK’s main parliamentary chamber) from 1987-2007. A variety of tests, including regressions, matching, and an examination of the impact of MPs’ deaths and retirements, show that careerist and working-class MPs diverged in their positions during the Blair era. These findings are robust to alternative explanations, including other characteristics of MPs and their districts (constituencies). Extensions to

over-time changes within MPs and to other occupational groups also support my hypotheses.

The results are reflected in legislative voting too, based on an analysis of rebellions on welfare reform bills. They indicate that in the right circumstances, changes in the representation of occupational groups can have substantive effects on legislators' policy positions and on policy outcomes. In this case, the shift from working-class MPs to careerists considerably weakened the representation of working-class voters' interests. I end the paper by discussing how these findings for the UK might generalize to other cases, as well as how they might vary over time within the UK, such as under the current Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

## **1 Changes in Representation in the British Labour Party**

I use a single-country case study to examine the broader phenomenon of political differences between legislators from different occupational backgrounds for two reasons. First, because the particular policy areas over which careerist and working-class legislators clash will differ depending on the specific political context, making cross-case analysis difficult. Second, because the British Labour party since the 1980s represents an 'extreme case' of trends that have been discussed in the literature on political recruitment. Declines in working-class representation and increases in careerism occurred more quickly and on a larger scale than in any comparable case. The UK's centralized political system also means that MPs' constituencies play a relatively limited role in determining their actions. Voters pay more attention to the stances of national parties when voting, with distinctive individual patterns of legislative behavior rarely rewarded or punished at the ballot box (Pattie, Fieldhouse, and Johnston 1994, Vivyan and Wagner 2012). That makes it easier to detect intra-party differences arising from MPs' backgrounds; confounding that could result from working-class MPs representing poorer constituencies is much less of a concern than it might be in other cases. Therefore, if changes in the balance of power between legislators from different

occupational backgrounds matter substantively anywhere, we should at least be able to observe their effects in the British Labour Party under Tony Blair.

Figure 1: Representation of Occupational Groups in the Parliamentary Labour Party, 1987-2015



**Sources:** Author’s own coding of each MP, using coding scheme and sources detailed below in Section 4

The Labour party was originally established by the Trade Union movement to fight for working-class interests. When it first achieved electoral success in the 1920s, more than 70% of its MPs were drawn from working-class occupations (Norris and Levendusky 1995). That proportion declined gradually over the twentieth century, but did so particularly rapidly from the mid-1980s onward, as shown in Figure 1. Today, just 8% of the parliamentary Labour party is drawn from the working classes, based on the latest available data from the 2010-15 parliament. This is far below the equivalent figure for the UK population. The decline in working-class representation also occurred much more rapidly than the decline in working-

class occupations in the general population, meaning that working-class people have become increasingly under-represented (Norris and Levendusky 1995, Evans and Tilley 2017). Figure 1 also shows that working-class MPs have been replaced virtually one-for-one with careerists. They were a relatively rare phenomenon up to the mid 1980s – when they made up only a tenth of the party – but are now the largest occupational group in the party. They outnumber MPs from the public and voluntary sectors (such as teachers and social workers), those from the private and financial sectors, and those with professional backgrounds (former lawyers, doctors, journalists, engineers and academics), whose representation has remained fairly constant over the past thirty years.

These patterns are the result of changes in political recruitment. Being a candidate now requires much greater resources of time, effort and money than in the past, making it more difficult for working-class people to participate. Trade unions also used to provide the main working-class route into elected politics thanks to the substantial financial and logistical support they provided to their members in standing for election, but they no longer cover as much of the workforce. Careerism has risen because until relatively recently MPs were poorly paid, and there has been a lot of growth in party organizations and professions closely related to politics such as lobbying, making political careers more viable. These new career paths also provide a more efficient route into parliament than others, because they enable prospective MPs to make contacts in the national party, which is useful in winning a seat (Norris and Levendusky 1995, Jun 2003, Cairney 2007, Cowley 2012). Once elected as an MP, careerists are now more likely than other MPs to progress to ministerial office, further increasing the incentive to enter these professions (Allen 2013, Goplerud 2015).

Studies examining the political impact of British MPs from different occupational backgrounds have typically focused on how they affect voters. The British public prefers poorer and working-class politicians to those with wealth (Campbell and Cowley 2014; Carnes and Lupu 2016). The declining representation of working-class people has increased voters' alienation from political elites, lowering turnout (Heath 2016), and has also reduced the

distinctiveness of the Labour and Conservative Parties, in turn lowering class differences in voting behavior (Evans and Tilley 2017). The one previous study examining the impact of British MPs' social backgrounds on their political preferences (Norris and Levendusky 1995) used survey-based opinions of MPs. They found that social background had little impact on opinions, but their survey items that measured MPs' opinions appear better suited to revealing inter-party rather than intra-party conflicts. They also studied a period when Labour was less internally divided over policy than in the period that this paper discusses.

I focus on the later era of Tony Blair, who led Labour from 1994 and was Prime Minister from 1997-2007. He moved Labour from the left to the center, re-branding it as 'New Labour', a centrist catch-all party. Section 3 explains why his adoption of welfare reforms for strategic political reasons divided working-class and careerist politicians. First, I outline a more general framework for understanding legislators' behavior.

## 2 Why Legislators' Occupational Backgrounds Matter

Working-class and careerist legislators are two distinct *types* of politician. The former come from manual or unskilled professions, whereas the latter have a middle-class background in politics and closely related fields, lacking other professional experience.<sup>2</sup> Because they are defined using their occupation before elected politics, 'working-class' and 'careerist' are mutually exclusive categories. My arguments can be summarised upfront as follows: working-class legislators have a higher ideological preference for policies that favor working-class voters compared to careerist legislators. Careerists are more concerned than working-class legislators with advancing their own political career. They are more willing to take policy positions for strategic political reasons (such as gaining the favor of certain sections of the

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2. Precise coding rules are defined below. There is, of course, a debate about how exactly 'class' should be defined. One advantage of using occupational background is that it correlates very strongly with voters' self-described class identity (Hout 2008), and it has been widely employed as a marker of social class both in studies of class-based voting and of individual legislators, because it more accurately captures politically salient aspects of social background than other potential measures, such as education, which is a much less consistent predictor of political ideology (Evans 1999, Carnes 2013).

electorate) or to help advance their political career, and they are more instinctively loyal to the party leadership. Hence careerists have lower relative ideological support for left-wing policies, and their ideologies are less important in determining their stances in the first place. In terms of classic models of party behavior, working-class legislators are more policy-seeking, whereas careerists are more office-seeking and vote-seeking (Strom 1990).

These arguments are not about *absolute* behavior. Working-class politicians are not immune from any tendency for electoral or career concerns to determine their policy positions, nor do careerists completely oppose left-wing policies or entirely ignore their ideologies. I make predictions about each group's behavior *relative* to the other. Variations between individuals from the same backgrounds are entirely consistent with my arguments. The two groups of legislators behave differently for three reasons, which I now discuss in turn:<sup>3</sup>

1. *Occupational Socialization*: the tendency of occupations to directly shape people's ideologies and priorities.
2. *Differential Recruitment*: the tendency of people with certain traits and characteristics to enter particular professions to begin with.
3. *Different Career Incentives* faced by the two groups.

Occupational socialization matters, first, because occupations help shape legislators' ideologies by affecting their material interests. Blue-collar workers are more likely to have had low incomes and insecure employment, particularly in recent years when many have lived through de-industrialization. They tend to rely more on redistributive social policies, increasing their backing for them. Social class, occupation, income and unemployment risk are all very strong predictors of support for social policy amongst voters (Iversen and Soskice 2001, Svallfors 2006, Rehm 2009, Kitschelt and Rehm 2014). Working-class legislators, therefore, are just like working-class voters (Carnes 2012). Careerist legislators, on the other hand,

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3. These mechanisms mirror the discussion in Adolph (2013), Ch.1



have by definition only ever worked in middle-class white-collar professions. Like middle-class voters, they are less likely to have needed to rely on redistributive social policies, lowering their relative ideological support for left-wing policies.

Occupational socialization also helps determine which groups of people legislators instinctively empathize with. Working class legislators' roots in blue-collar workplaces have long-lasting effects. Class-based attitudes crystallize and strengthen through repeated interaction with people that share similar backgrounds and material interests, as well as through membership in institutions rooted in workplaces such as trade unions. The same process leads to sympathy for, and affinity with, the types of people working in blue-collar professions (Weeden and Grusky 2005, Manza and Brooks 2008). This means that legislators who are former manual workers will form a long-lasting altruistic identification with other working-class people, raising their ideological support for policies that help them.

Careerist legislators lack these socialization experiences. Instead, they go through different socialization processes in their jobs. Having begun their working careers around campaigners, pollsters, party staff and others who are invested in electoral success, they will come to view winning elections as an important goal in its own right, and an intrinsic part of their job. Having worked closely with the party leadership, loyalty will become more ingrained for them. And having been surrounded by people who are invested in politics as a career, they too will start to see it as a career with a structured trajectory like any other white-collar profession, and will strive to reach high office. The second mechanism listed above, differential recruitment, also has the same ultimate implications for careerists' behavior. In addition to occupations directly shaping preferences, particular types of people may be more likely to enter these professions to begin with (Weeden and Grusky 2005, Kitschelt and Rehm 2014). Intuitively, people who are more intrinsically politically ambitious are more likely to enter careerist occupations (Goplerud 2015). As a result of both occupational socialization and differential recruitment, careerists will be more office-seeking, invested in electoral success and loyal to the party leadership than working-class legislators.

Third, their choice of career changes the subsequent incentives faced by careerists. Narrowing down their options at a young age heightens the importance of career progression for them, since they have not already achieved professional distinction in any other field. In the UK, “through politics they earn their money, achieve their status in society and maintain their social security. Their career at Westminster is the professional center of their lives” (Jun 2003, p. 173). They will attach particular importance to their own electoral success and that of their party, because winning elections is necessary for them to reach ministerial office. That makes them more likely to take stances that help win elections and help their own career prospects, including responding strongly to the (perceived) preferences of electorally crucial voters, even when this clashes with their own ideological preferences. Once career progression becomes a priority, loyalty to the party leadership also becomes more important in parliamentary systems, because leaders control access to ministerial jobs (Benedetto and Hix 2007). Moreover, parties that appear united rather than divided are more popular with voters (Cox and McCubbins 2007), meaning that legislators who value re-election will be more willing to invest in the party brand through acquiescence with the leadership.

This means that careerists’ support for traditionally left-wing policies depends more on whether such support is consistent with electoral success and career advancement than is the case for working-class legislators. The policy stances that they take will be more contingent on the specific features of a given policy and on the political context in which they are making decisions. For any given policy, the extent of divergence between legislators from different backgrounds depends on the interplay between three influences: their ideological beliefs, the perceived preferences of swing voters, and the stance of party leaders.

### **3 The Case of Welfare Reforms under New Labour**

Welfare reforms adopted by Tony Blair’s ‘New Labour’ Party after his accession to the party leadership in 1994 provide a very clear example where the three competing influences should

have caused working-class and careerist MPs to diverge. Reforms to welfare provision were one of Tony Blair’s most bitterly contested policy changes.<sup>4</sup> The generosity of welfare was substantially reduced, with payments becoming more temporary and means-tested and made subject to greater conditions, including actively seeking work when unemployed (Clasen 2005; Lupton et al. 2013; Pallage, Scruggs, and Zimmerman 2013). Within the party, these reforms were highly controversial because they seemed to run counter to its traditional commitment to improving the lives of the poorest citizens. The welfare state had long been seen in the party not merely as a safety net, but as a means of redistribution to working-class voters. As a result, working-class MPs should have been relatively more supportive of traditional welfare provision and more opposed to reforms. Indeed, some direct evidence for one of the mechanisms discussed above – occupational socialization – comes from the floor speeches that are used in this paper to measure MPs’ policy positions. One example comes from Eric Clarke MP, a former coal miner. Here, he is talking on February 25th 1997 about cuts (‘claw backs’) to welfare payments made to disabled former miners and their families:

“Coming from a background of industry, especially the mining industry. . . I spent 26 years underground - I do not consider people concerned with the Bill to be numbers. They are colleagues, friends, and even relations. Many have passed away. When such people come to my surgeries, the disgust and anger expressed – especially by friends and loved ones – about the clawback makes me very angry, too.”

(HC Deb 25th February 1997, vol. 291, col. 177.)

Instead, Blair and his allies in the party saw welfare reform as a way to demonstrate an affinity with swing voters. Long-term social changes were eroding the electoral base of left-wing parties in the 1990s. They needed to woo middle-class voters who were seen as increasingly individualistic, suspicious of large-scale government intervention in the economy,

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4. ‘Welfare’, in this paper, refers to policies that are aimed at alleviating poverty, and replacing incomes for people unable to earn. This includes areas such as unemployment benefits, disability benefits, and welfare payments to boost the incomes of the poor.

and more skeptical of welfare provision for poorer citizens (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001; Evans and Tilley 2012; Gingrich and Hauserman 2015). Labour had spent fifteen years in opposition when Blair won the party leadership in 1994, and as a result he placed a strong priority on winning back middle-class voters who were perceived as having abandoned the party. He believed that middle-class voters would respond favorably to welfare reforms (Hay 1999; Wood 2001). This means that two of the three influences on legislators' policy preferences outlined earlier – the stance of party leaders and the perceived preferences of swing voters – pointed to supporting welfare reform, while the third (ideological preferences) pointed against. Because careerists prioritize the former two whereas working-class MPs prioritize the third, their stances on welfare reform are predicted to diverge strongly.<sup>5</sup>

I also make predictions about the 'middle' MPs, who are neither careerist nor working-class, and were shown in Figure 1 divided into three categories: professionals (doctors, lawyers, journalists, etc.), public sector workers, and private-sector workers. Like careerists, all three groups lack the occupational socialization experiences of working-class MPs, lowering their relative ideological support for welfare. However, they also lack the socialization experiences, intrinsic characteristics and career incentives of careerists, lowering their relative concern for electoral success, career progression, and loyalty to the leadership. Therefore, their support for welfare reform is predicted to fall between working-class and careerist MPs.

The key hypotheses for testing are that relative to the middle category of white-collar professional MPs, working-class legislators were more likely to defend the traditional system of benefits whereas careerists were more likely to emphasize the need for welfare reform, and that careerists were more likely to shift their position toward welfare reform after Tony

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5. My emphasis on context also helps explain the divergence in results between this study and that of Heuwieser (2017), who looks at the period 2005-2015, finding that career politicians are apparently *more* rebellious than other politicians on votes across all political issues. This includes many policy issues where my theoretical framework could make different predictions, depending on the interplay of the three influences discussed in this section. 2005-15 also overlaps with the period studied in this paper by only two years. During most of that time, Labour was led by more left-wing leaders in Gordon Brown and particularly Ed Miliband, whose stances were not as much at odds with working-class MPs' ideologies as was the case under Blair. Analysis of extensions to my data confirms that differences between careerist and working-class MPs on welfare reform were indeed very small in the 2007-15 period. Those results are available on request.

Blair became the Labour leader. In addition, there are also likely to be differences *between* the professional, public-sector and private-sector MPs, with former public-sector workers the least supportive of welfare reforms and private-sector workers most in favor. Public-sector workers typically earn less, and they tend to benefit a lot from the welfare state, not least because they are often employed in administering it. This should raise their support for welfare provision from a self-interested perspective (Gingrich and Hauserman 2015). Private sector employees, on the other hand, earn more and tend to be more economically conservative (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014). Thus former private sector employees are likely to be most supportive of welfare reforms among the three middle groups of MPs.

## 4 Data

I measure MPs' policy positions from their speeches. These come from an original collection of every speech made about welfare reforms in the House of Commons from 1987-2007. I use speeches to measure MPs' positions because party discipline with voting is very high, and rebellious voting behavior among MPs is rare (Cowley 2002). This makes it impossible to measure MPs' general policy stances with their voting records.<sup>6</sup> However, the House of Commons is a good place to use speech data to do so, because British MPs enjoy very substantial autonomy to speak as they choose. Party leaders lack formal mechanisms to prevent particular MPs from speaking or to determine what they say (Proksch and Slapin 2012). MPs use speeches to dissent from the party leadership, or express reservations about their leaders' policies, even when they vote with the party line (Cowley 2002), meaning that their speeches provide a lot of insight into MPs' beliefs and priorities that could not be gained from an analysis of voting. Past theoretical and empirical work shows that legislative

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6. Other papers look at 'free votes' where parties do not issue voting instructions, but such occasions are very rare and usually occur only for so-called 'issues of conscience' such as gay rights. Even then, party cohesion remains high (Hibbing and Marsh 1987, Cowley and Stuart 1997, Cowley 2002). Kellerman (2012) uses scales based on signatures of 'early day motions', a form of non-binding statement that MPs circulate and sign. However, they are often about esoteric policy measures. They are also rarely signed by government ministers, making it impossible to compare them to back-benchers.

speech is primarily used to advance policy positions that legislators personally support either for ideological reasons or for electoral expediency, and that speeches are often used to curry favour with party leaders (Austen-Smith 1990, Maltzman and Sigelman 1996, Proksch and Slapin 2012). This makes speeches an ideal means of revealing differences between careerist and working-class politicians, who differ in the priority they place on electoral and career concerns, versus their own ideology.

The speeches were divided into two periods. The first runs from the 1987 election up to the death of John Smith, Tony Blair's predecessor as leader, in June 1994, when Labour largely remained a traditional social democratic party. The second runs from June 1994 up to June 2007, when Blair was leader. Splitting the speeches in this way helps provide a direct test of the hypotheses, because we can observe which MPs shifted toward welfare reform between the periods. Full details of the data collection are provided in the Supplementary Information. MPs are represented as up to two documents, each consisting of all speeches they made about welfare from 1987-June 1994 and/or June 1994-June 1997. MPs appearing in both periods feature as two separate documents, although many only feature in one period, depending on when they were in office or when they spoke about welfare. This resulted in a total of 324 documents: 123 for the period 1987-1994, and 201 for the 1994-2007. 67 MPs appear in both periods. This means that I observe a sample of all of the MPs who were in office, because not all of them spoke on welfare issues. The composition of this sample closely mirrors that of Labour MPs as a whole, shown in Figure 1.

I coded each MP as working-class, careerist or neither using their occupation before entering politics.<sup>7</sup> Data on MPs' prior professions come primarily from a database of information about every British MP and election candidate since 1945 that is being developed by Jennifer vanHeerde-Hudson and Rosie Campbell (vanHeerde-Hudson and Campbell 2015). Where gaps existed in their data, it was supplemented with publicly available biographies from the *Almanacs of British Politics* (e.g. Waller and Criddle 1999) as well as newspaper

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7. The occupation used is the occupation immediately before the person entered any form of electoral politics (including elected positions in local or regional government, known as Councillors).

obituaries. An MP was coded as working-class if:

1. They were a manual or manufacturing worker before entering politics, including occupations such as factory workers, electricians, railway workers or coal miners; *or*
2. They worked in another unskilled, non-graduate profession, such as a call-center worker, typist, clerk, care worker or waitress; *or*
3. They worked full-time for a trade union representing manual trades.<sup>8</sup>

Careerist MPs come from what Cairney (2007) terms “instrumental” or “stepping-stone” occupations that represent the beginning of a political career in all but name, enabling prospective MPs to gain contacts as well as political skills. An MP was coded as careerist if:

1. Immediately before entering politics they worked for the Labour party, or as a political adviser to MPs and Ministers, as a campaigner in an NGO or pressure group where their work involved regular contact with government, as a researcher at a think tank, as a lobbyist or PR executive linked to politics, or in a purely political role at a trade union with which the MP had no professional connection; *and*
2. They had no more than five years’ experience in another profession, in their twenties.<sup>9</sup>

## 5 Measuring MPs’ Support for Welfare Reform

This section discusses the construction of the dependent variable, based on MPs’ discourse. I systematically captured policy differences between MPs by placing each document on a scale.

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8. This captures MPs who worked for many years in manual trades before moving to a union role representing their trade, such as Dennis Skinner. This is another point of contrast between my approach and that of Heuwieser (2017), who includes all former trade unionists as career politicians. I make a distinction between those who worked for Trade Unions as a continuation of their manual trade and those who worked for Trade Unions only in a political capacity, classifying the latter as careerists. Notably, his results are stronger for former trade unionists compared to MPs who worked as special advisers or for their party.

9. The second condition applies to only a small handful of cases. One example is Douglas Alexander, who worked as a researcher and speechwriter for Gordon Brown after graduating, and then worked as a lawyer for three years (during which he first attempted to become an MP, contesting and losing a by-election), then becoming an MP at the age of 29 on his second attempt. While his profession immediately preceding political office was a lawyer, he was clearly pursuing high political office right from the time of graduation.

One end represents documents that most strongly supported traditional welfare provision, while the other represents those that instead emphasized welfare reform and problems with the system. Both periods of data were scaled together, meaning that MPs who featured in both periods appear twice. I used the Wordscores procedure to produce a scale (Laver, Benoit, and Garry 2003; Lowe 2008). It compares a set of texts whose positions are unknown ('virgin texts'), to texts whose positions on a scale are assumed to be uncontroversially known to the analyst ('reference texts'), and can therefore be assigned a score in advance. Virgin documents are scored according to their similarity to these reference texts in terms of word usage, looking at the number of times different words are used.

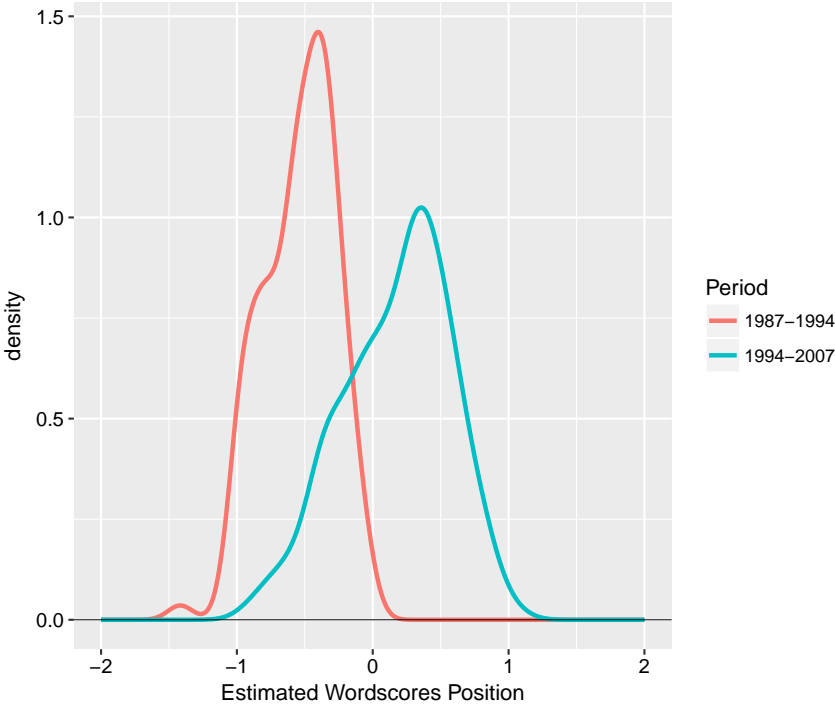
To represent the extreme pro-welfare position, I constructed a reference document consisting of all speeches made by members of the 'Socialist Campaign Group' of Labour MPs in the first of the two periods (1987-1994), when the party as a whole had a more pro-welfare stance. The Campaign Group is an organized faction in the House of Commons who advocate highly left-wing positions (Cowley 2002). It contains several famous figures that any expert on British politics would confidently identify as being on the left fringe of the party. A total of twenty-three Campaign Group members featured in the first period. Anchoring the other end of the spectrum is a document consisting of speeches made by the five Cabinet ministers in charge of welfare policy during the Blair governments of 1997-2007. They were responsible for running government departments that enacted welfare reforms, close to the party leadership, and heavily involved in moving the party from the left to the center.

All documents were then placed on a scale using WordScores; further details are available in the Supplementary Information. Before using such a scale in subsequent analysis, it is important to validate the results. There are no formal statistical tests of how well a particular piece of text analysis has performed (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). Three validation procedures were used. First, I checked that the placement of MPs appeared sensible based on prior knowledge of Labour's politicians. Second, I made formal statistical comparisons between estimated positions for different groups of MPs who should, in theory, diverge on



welfare reform. Third, I examined the language associated with each end of the estimated scale to verify that it picks up genuine differences in position on welfare policies. All three validations are shown in the Supplementary Information and demonstrate that the scale has very high validity. Figure 2 displays patterns in the resulting scale by splitting it in two, showing distributions of estimated positions for MPs in each period. The left end contains MPs who were most supportive of the traditional system of welfare, while the right end contains MPs who most favored reform. The average MP was more pro-reform in the second period compared to the first, reflecting Labour's shift over time, but there were a substantial number of MPs in the second period who took stances that were typical of the first period.

Figure 2: **Distributions of Estimated Positions on Welfare Reform for Labour MPs, 1987-1994 and 1994-2007**



## 6 Empirical Results

Now, I investigate whether MPs' backgrounds affected their positions on the scale. There are a number of other variables that could be correlated with MPs' former occupations and their positions on welfare reform, including other personal characteristics and the type of constituency that they represent. The ideal experiment would randomly assign different social backgrounds to a set of Labour MPs and then observe their behavior. This is impossible in reality. Instead, I use a variety of tests to rule out the influence of other features. In this section I look at the 1994-2007 period, when Labour shifted in favour of reform. The next section looks at changes over time, and at a wider set of occupational groups.

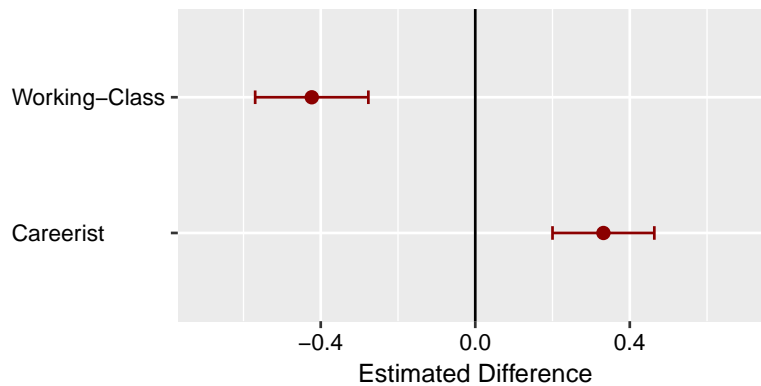
### 6.1 Bivariate Relationships

Figure 3 shows differences in means between each group of MPs and all other MPs, with 95% confidence intervals. The estimated relationships between being working-class or careerist, and MPs' positions, are in the expected directions (-0.42 for working-class, 0.33 for careerist). These are large: the range of estimated positions in the period is 1.89: being working-class is associated with being one-quarter more toward the pro-welfare end of the scale, while being careerist is associated with being more than one-sixth further toward the anti-welfare end. Notably, the omitted group of MPs in these estimates - the white-collar non-careerist MPs - clearly fall between the two groups in their support for welfare reform. This, again, is in line with theoretical expectations.

### 6.2 Other Personal Characteristics of MPs

Working-class and careerist MPs may be distinctive in other ways that also affect their position on welfare reform. It was possible to measure four key background variables for all MPs in the sample: age (measured by year of birth), sex, race, and whether or not the MP received a university education. Again, most of the data come from vanHeerde-Hudson

Figure 3: **Estimated Relationships between Occupational Background and Labour MPs' Positions on Welfare Reform, 1994-2007**



**Note:** Charts show differences in means between the relevant group and all other MPs, with associated 95% confidence intervals

and Campbell (2015), supplemented with biographical information from the Almanacs of British Politics. Older people, women and ethnic minorities tend to be more supportive of welfare programs, in part because they are more likely to be beneficiaries (Iversen and Rosenbluth 2006, Busemeyer, Goerres, and Weschle 2009). Low education may lead to stronger preferences for welfare programs because it lowers lifetime earnings. Alternatively, higher-educated people tend to be more socially liberal and pro-immigration, which can also affect support for social policy (Hakhverdian 2015). These variables capture the main observable differences between Labour MPs, who are remarkably similar to each other in most other ways. Working-class MPs were older, much more likely to be male, and much less likely to have attended university (the small number of working-class MPs who attended university did so later in life, usually while working). Careerist MPs were much younger than other MPs, more likely to be female, and were almost all university-educated. Only two MPs in my data were black. Full balance tables are shown in the Supplementary Information.

The analysis employs both regressions and matching procedures. The first column of Table 1 displays regression results for the estimated impacts of occupational background, controlling for year of birth, sex, education and race. As an additional check, the first

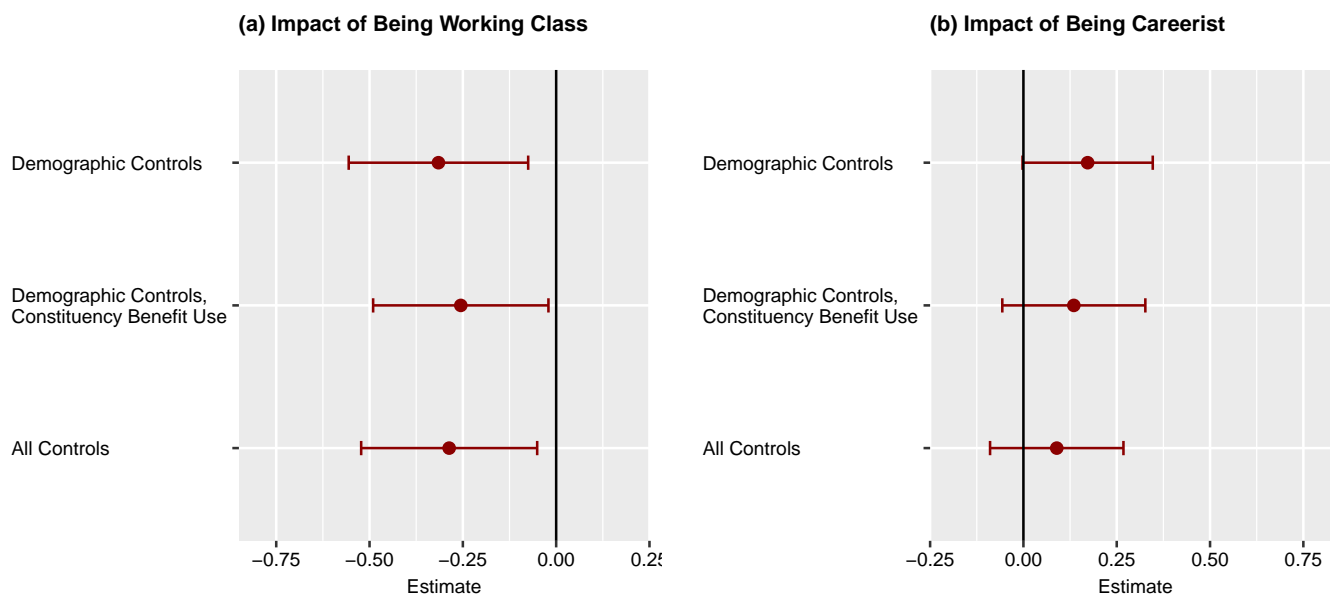
row of Figure 4 displays estimates from matching on the four covariates, which does not make any assumptions about functional form and should ensure common support between treated and untreated MPs; Near-perfect balance was in fact achieved. The results confirm that occupational background is strongly correlated with rhetoric. Legislators’ occupational backgrounds continue to matter here because, with the exception of age, the other characteristics are not in fact strongly correlated with MPs’ positions (Table 1). In the results for the second period, being born 10 years later, approximately one standard deviation of the year-of-birth variable, is associated with the MP being more anti-welfare to about the same degree as the impact of being a careerist, but otherwise, the relationships are weak.

Table 1: **Regression Results for MPs’ Rhetorical Positions**

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Working-Class	−0.245*** (0.079)	−0.231*** (0.077)	−0.245*** (0.078)
Careerist	0.120* (0.065)	0.149** (0.065)	0.139** (0.065)
Year of Birth	0.016*** (0.003)	0.015*** (0.003)	0.016*** (0.003)
Female	0.053 (0.054)	0.052 (0.053)	0.062 (0.054)
University-Educated	−0.012 (0.066)	−0.023 (0.065)	−0.031 (0.065)
Black	0.096 (0.233)	0.165 (0.230)	0.111 (0.232)
Constituency Benefit Usage (%)		−0.0117*** (0.0042)	−0.0179*** (0.0057)
Electoral Majority (%)			0.0038* (0.0023)
Constant	−31.796*** (5.263)	−28.801*** (5.288)	−30.260*** (5.342)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.340	0.365	0.374

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Figure 4: Matching Estimates of Impact of Occupational Background on Word-scores Positions of Labour MPs, with different Sets of Controls



**Note:** Charts show estimates and associated 95% confidence intervals

### 6.3 Economic Characteristics of MPs' Constituencies

Different MPs could also simply represent different types of voters, and use their parliamentary speeches to represent their constituents. That would confound the results if there is also non-random selection into constituencies; for instance, if working-class MPs are more likely to be elected in poorer areas. I test this using data on the proportion of working-age adults who received working-age benefits in each constituency. Each MP was assigned the average proportion of their constituents receiving benefits for the period they were in office.<sup>10</sup> This

10. Data on the number of benefit recipients in each constituency come from the UK Office for National Statistics Labor Market statistics division, and are available from 1999 onward. Data on the working-age population of each constituency in England and Wales come from Pippa Norris' dataset of UK parliamentary constituency characteristics. For Scotland, additional data come from the Scottish Records Office. The rates are extremely stable for constituencies across time, but in case changes over time matter, each constituency in each parliamentary term (1997-2001, 2001-2005, 2005-2010) was represented by the average benefit use rate in the middle year. MPs are then represented by the average across all of the terms that they were in office (a handful served stood down in 1997 and are assigned the score for 2000). For Scottish MPs, there is no data on the number of benefit recipients after 2005: they were assigned the nearest relevant years. Finally, some English and Welsh constituencies saw minor boundary changes over the period. In these cases, an average of the seat's predecessor constituency or constituencies was used.

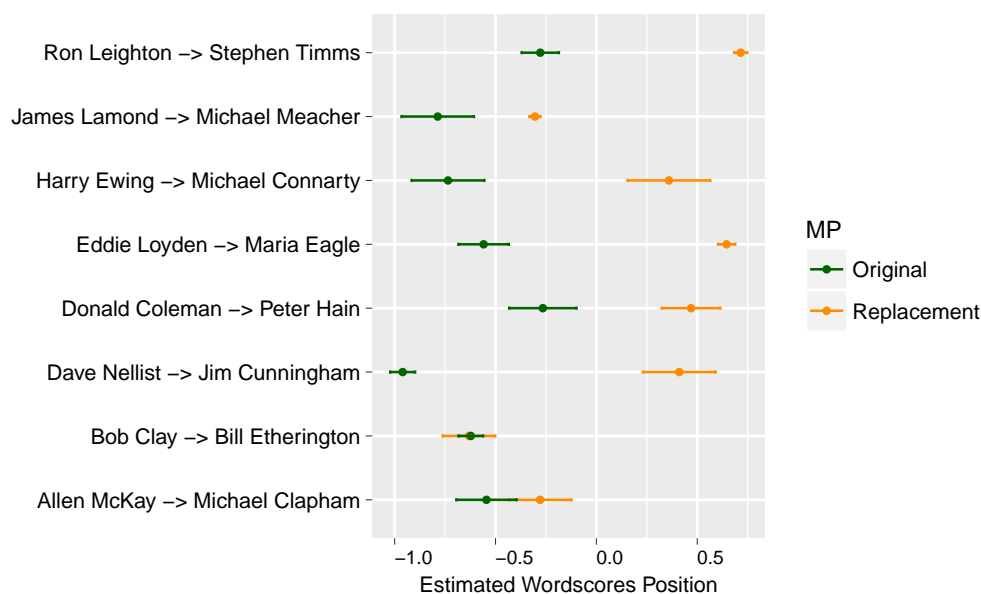
measure aims to capture the constituency’s demand for traditional welfare policies. If the previous results were simply explained by representation, then MPs whose constituents more heavily use benefits should support welfare provision to curry favor with their voters. In fact, the regression results for the second period are essentially unchanged when the benefit use rate of each MP’s constituency is added, as shown in the second column of Table 1, where the results are in the expected directions and remain significant. It also provides evidence of limited dyadic representation: a one standard-deviation fall in the use of benefits (5.5 percentage points) is associated with being a little less supportive of welfare.

This is consistent with other recent studies that demonstrate some dyadic representation in Westminster in terms of public opinion (Hanretty, Lauderdale, and Vivyan 2017). The main results are not affected, however, because MPs’ social backgrounds actually correlate very poorly with the type of seat they represent. Both a t-test for equality of means and a kolmogorov-smirnof test of equality of distributions failed to reject the null hypothesis of no difference between the seats of working-class and careerist MPs ( $p=0.34$  and  $p=0.81$  respectively). This is because opportunities for prospective British MPs to select into a seat that ‘fits’ their characteristics are limited. Many represent places close to where they grew up or lived as an adult, which may or may not happen to align with their own background. Most careerists will tend to apply to stand in any available seat, no matter where it is. During the Blair era, careerist MPs with strong connections to the central party were also frequently ‘parachuted’ into an impoverished constituency when the previous MP retired or died. Overall, where MPs end up representing is something of a random process.

Matching estimates in the second row of Figure 4 broadly support these conclusions. The estimate for careerists narrowly misses significance at the 10% level, but the procedure achieved relatively low balance between treated and untreated units on year of birth, which is strongly correlated with MPs’ positions. Because of this, two further exercises directly investigate whether constituencies’ usage of benefits can explain away the impact of MPs’ social backgrounds. First, I examined constituencies where working-class MPs died or retired

during the period covered by the data, although there were only eight such instances. If representation were the main influence on MPs' positions, then when an MP dies or retires, the new MP in the same constituency should take roughly the same position; presumably, a stance that constituents support.<sup>11</sup> Figure 5 shows the estimated positions of both old and new MPs in each of the places where working-class MPs were replaced. There is little evidence that the constituency exerts a strong effect. In two of the eight cases, the new MP used similar rhetoric to the old MP, but in all other cases, the new MP was substantially more anti-welfare than the working-class MP they replaced.

Figure 5: **Change in Position for Constituencies where MP Died or Retired**



**Note:** Charts show estimates and associated 95% confidence intervals associated with a particular constituency that changed hands during the data period, due to the original MP dying or retiring

Second, a matching procedure was used to directly compare as many careerist MPs as possible to a working-class MP who represented an almost identical seat, in terms of its use of benefits.<sup>12</sup> If MPs simply do what their constituents want regardless of their own

11. Strictly, this is only true if each constituency did not change much over time, leading it to be 'out of line' with the MP who retired or died. While changes in unobservable characteristics cannot be ruled out, none of the eight constituencies changed materially in the use rate of benefits over the period studied.

12. Each working-class MP could be used as a match at most once (a procedure where they could be a

preferences, each pairing should be virtually indistinguishable. Figure 6 shows that this is not the case, plotting the matched pairs in order of the use of benefits in their constituencies. Working-class MPs were systematically more pro-welfare than their careerist counterparts, even in the wealthiest seats. This implies that if we took a working-class MP in a poor constituency and transplanted them to a rich one, they would behave in much the same way.

## 6.4 Electoral Competitiveness of MPs' Constituencies

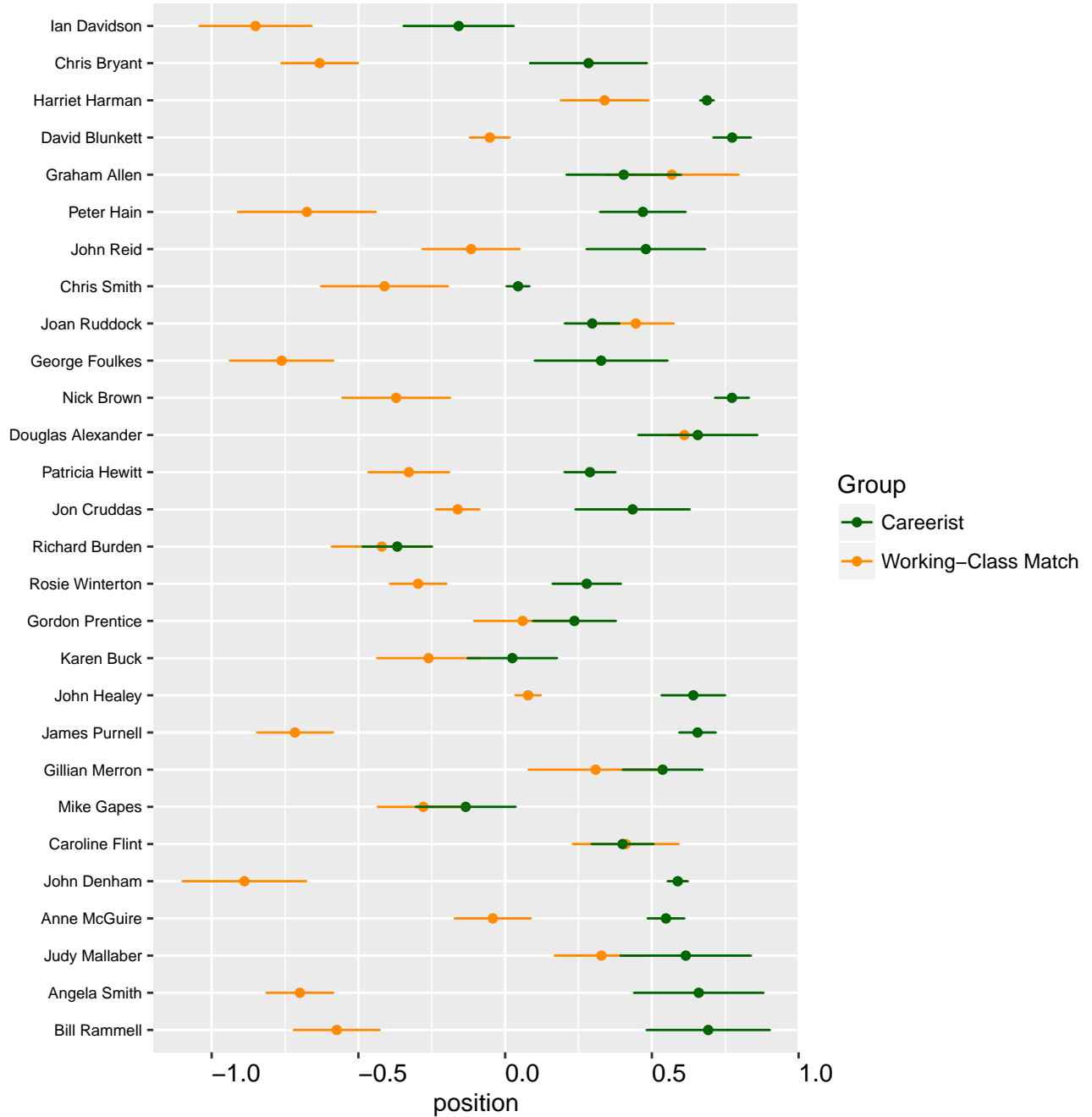
The two groups could also differ in terms of how competitive their constituencies are. Parties may select careerists for less winnable seats if they are perceived as superior in appealing to middle-class swing voters, either due to their moderate ideologies or because their experience in politics makes them better at winning difficult elections (Buttice and Milazzo 2011). I have argued that careerists care *intrinsically* more than working-class MPs about winning elections. But if instead, MPs in marginal seats simply need to oppose welfare provision in order to woo centrist voters, then the results will be confounded if careerists also have smaller majorities. I captured the marginality of a seat using the percentage point difference between the election winner and nearest challenger.<sup>13</sup> Working-class MPs did in fact have larger majorities on average, while careerists were much more likely to represent very marginal constituencies, and the differences were significant. However, when I add this variable to the previous analysis, the results are unaffected, as shown in the third column of Table 1. The reason is that the size of MPs' majorities simply isn't very predictive of their position. Although statistically significant at the 10% level, the partial effect is estimated to be very small, and in the opposite direction to what we would expect.

Matching estimates in the bottom row of Figure 4 show the same pattern as before. The match more than once resulted in only a handful of working-class MPs being used, but yielded very similar results). Because there were more careerists than working-class MPs, the order in which matching occurred matters, so the procedure was repeated 1000 times, re-shuffling the order in each simulation, and the outcome with the highest p-value for a t-test of differences in the profiles of the two groups' constituencies was selected.

13. Data again come from Pippa Norris' dataset of UK parliamentary constituency characteristics. MPs are assigned the average majority for the elections in which they participated from 1997 onward, with the exception of the small number of MPs appearing only prior to 1997, who are assigned the value for 1992's election, and Scottish MPs, who do not include 2005, which saw very substantial boundary changes.

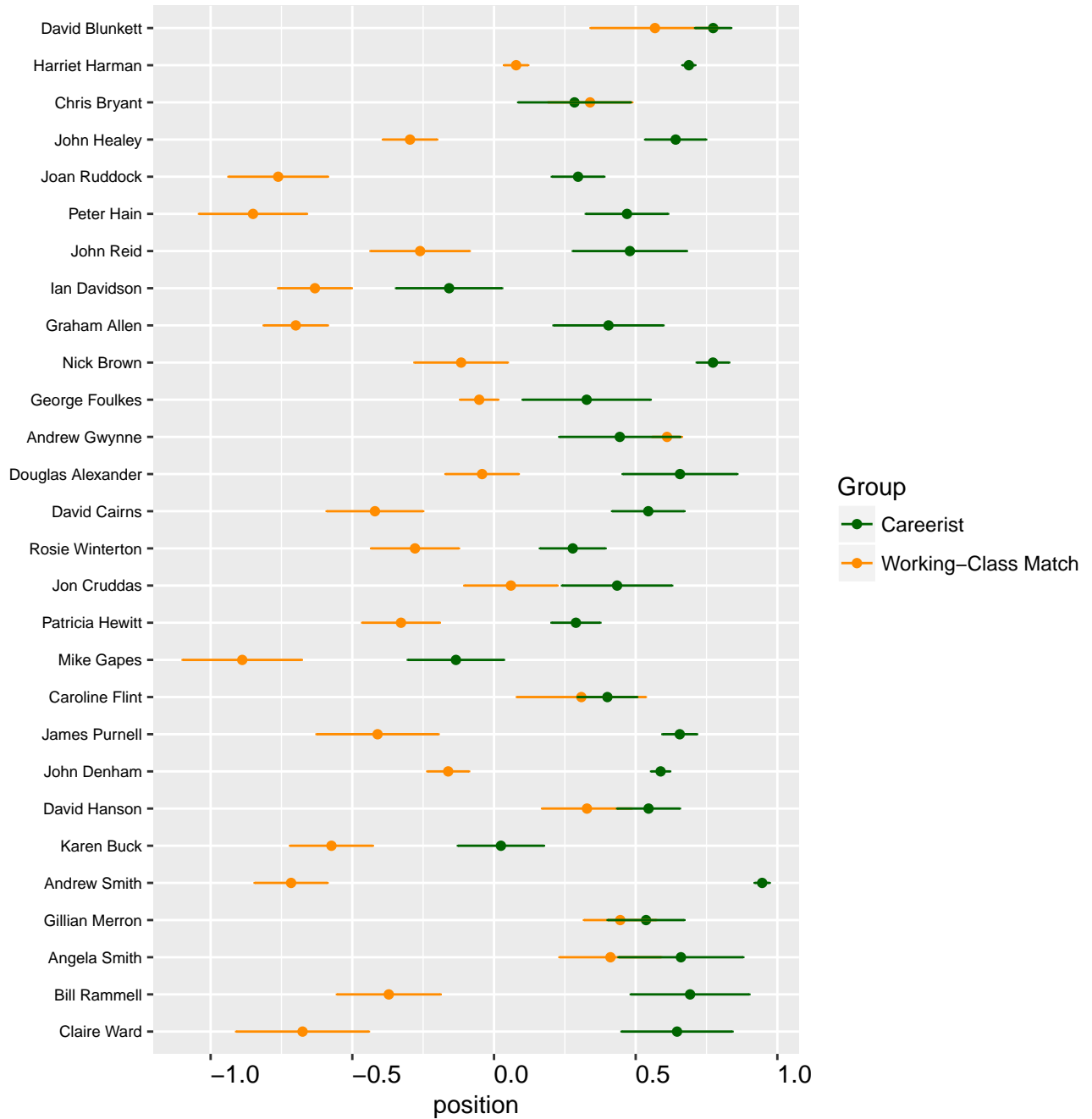


Figure 6: Comparison of positions of careerist MPs and working-class MP with most similar use of working-age benefits in their Constituency, second period, ranked from highest to lowest usage



**Note:** Chart shows estimates and associated 95% confidence intervals for careerist MPs, compared with the working-class MP who represented the most similar constituency measured in terms of proportion receiving working-age benefits.

Figure 7: Comparison of positions of careerist MPs and working-class MP with most similar electoral majorities, second period, ranked from highest to lowest



**Note:** Chart shows estimates and associated 95% confidence intervals for careerist MPs, compared with the working-class MP who had the most similar majority in their constituency.

results for working-class MPs are fully consistent with the regressions, while the estimate for careerists narrowly misses significance at the 10% level, but balance between the two groups was relatively low for year of birth. Again, to probe further, an additional direct comparison was carried out between working-class and careerist MPs who had similar majorities, in the same way as Figure 6. Each careerist MP was matched to a working-class MP with a nearly identical majority. The procedure again achieved good balance between the two groups. If the marginality of seat determines how MPs behave, working-class and careerist MPs with similar majorities should take very similar positions. The results are shown in Figure 7, and look familiar: careerists are systematically more opposed to benefits than working-class MPs with almost identical majorities, implying that if we took a careerist from a marginal seat and put them in a safe seat, they would take the same position on welfare reform.

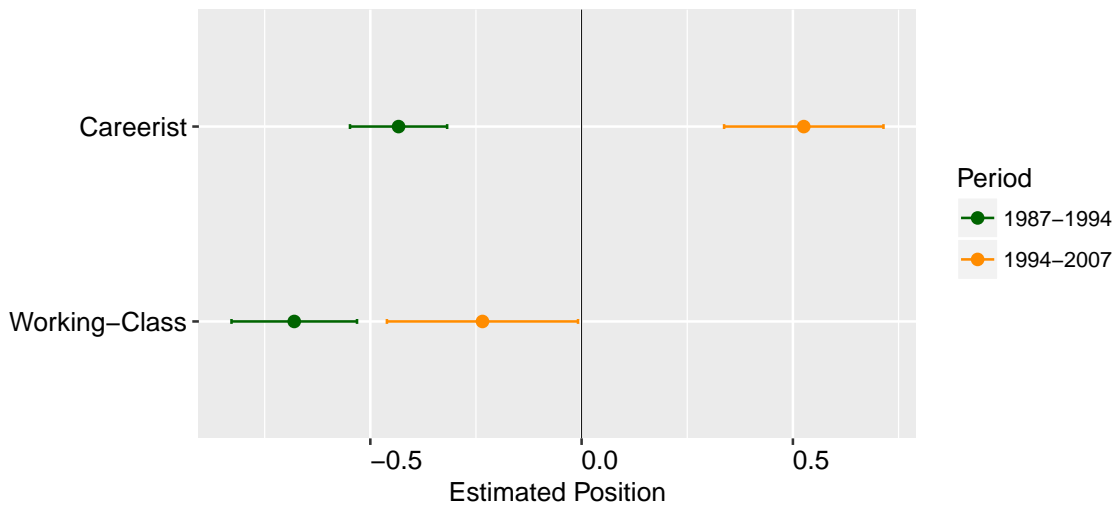
The explanation for these results lies in the centralized ‘responsible national party’ system of British government. MPs’ electoral fortunes tend to rise or fall based on the public’s opinion of the national parties. Voters rarely reward or punish distinctive individual patterns of voting (Pattie, Fieldhouse, and Johnston 1994, Vivyan and Wagner 2012), and the incumbency advantage enjoyed by British MPs is very low by international standards, implying that what MPs do once in office has little effect on voting decisions (Smith 2013). There is not much incentive for MPs to strongly cater what they say in parliament to their constituents, making the UK a good setting for uncovering the influence of legislators’ backgrounds.

## 7 Extensions of the Analysis

I have shown that in the second of the two periods in my data, when major welfare reforms were enacted, careerists were much more supportive of reforms than working-class MPs. Now, I add two further tests of my theoretical expectations by looking at changes between the first and second periods, and at a wider set of occupational groups. Beginning with the first of these, the key question is whether careerists were more likely than working-class

MPs to turn against welfare over time. This is a particularly useful test because if correct, it would show direct evidence that careerists moved toward the position of the party leadership, whose position also changed at the same time. My theoretical expectation is that careerists had stronger party loyalty, as well as a stronger desire to please party leaders, which should have made them more responsive to changes in the leadership’s position.

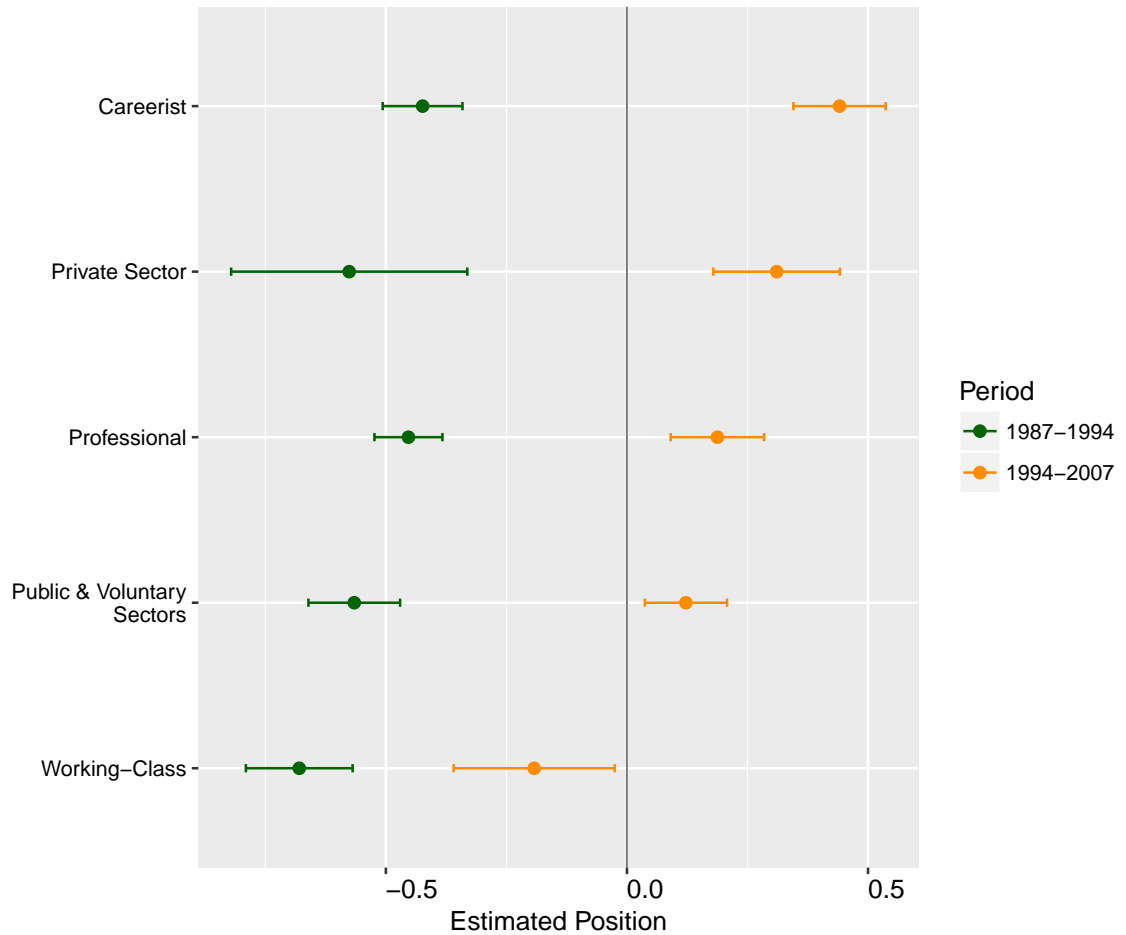
**Figure 8: Change in Mean Position over Time, Careerist and Working-Class MPs who appear in Both Periods**



Sixty-seven individual MPs feature in both the pre- and post-Blair periods of the data, and so I focus on them in Figure 8. Examining within-MP changes rather than comparing all MPs in both periods avoids conflating genuine changes in position with changes in the composition of each group, as new MPs were elected. The results show that in the pre-Blair era, differences between careerist and working-class MPs were modest. But during the Blair era, they polarized from each other, because careerist MPs shifted much more toward Blair’s position over time. While working-class MPs did move slightly in favor of welfare reform, it was much more pronounced among careerists. This means that most working-class MPs were consistent over time, taking almost the same position regardless of the political context. Careerist MPs were the opposite: much more likely to blow with the political winds.

Second, I also analyzed a wider set of occupational groups. Figure 1 showed that working-

Figure 9: Change in Mean Position over Time, all Occupational Groups



class MPs were replaced nearly one-for-one by careerists, whereas changes in the representation of other groups – from the public sector, the private and financial sectors, and the professions such as law and medicine – were much more modest. However, the other groups provide another useful test of my hypotheses. The previous section demonstrated that as a whole, their position clearly fell between working-class and careerist MPs. This is consistent with the idea that, although they lack some of the experiences and characteristics of careerists that cause the latter to more strongly value electoral success and career advancement, they share with them a middle-class background. This made them more supportive of welfare reforms than working-class MPs, but less supportive than careerists. Now, Figure 9 shows that there were also interesting differences between the three ‘middle’ groups. Former public

and voluntary sector workers were more opposed to welfare reforms than professionals or private-sector workers. During the second period, the latter group took a position that was quite close to that of careerists, although careerists remained the most extreme group. This makes sense from a theoretical perspective. MPs with a business background are likely to be more economically conservative than professionals or public sector workers. Conversely, public sector workers are often direct employees of the welfare state, and tend to be more economically left-wing. Thus Figure 9 provides further confirmation of my hypotheses.

## 8 Legislative Behavior

An obvious question is whether these expressed positions carried over into legislative behavior. Recent work has shown that the leaders of governing legislative parties use their control of the legislative agenda to enhance the party's reputation and electoral prospects by preventing legislation from reaching the floor that would fail to command a majority within the party (Cox and McCubbins 2005). As a result, the balance of opinion within parties is crucial in determining which measures are actually voted on. More generally, modern theories of parties argue - and show empirically - that the policies that parties adopt depend on who wins in struggles for factional dominance (Budge, Ezrow, and McDonald 2010, Marx and Schumacher 2013). Together, this suggests that even though there is strong party control over voting in the House of Commons, if there had been more working-class MPs (who opposed reforms) and fewer careerists (who supported them), internal bargaining would probably have led to different legislative outcomes. Consistent with this view, anonymous interviews with Labour MPs over the early period of Blair's government revealed that very substantial bargaining over policy went on behind closed doors, and that ministers materially watered down proposed welfare reforms in order to placate concerned MPs (Cowley 2002).

However, much of this activity is inevitably hidden from the analyst, not least because it occurred a decade or more ago. Here, I focus instead on the final step in this bargaining

process: voting. Despite strong party control, large rebellions still occur in the House of Commons occasionally. As evidence that MPs from different backgrounds behaved differently, I analyze rebellions by Labour MPs against two major welfare reforms that took place between 1997 and 1999, during Tony Blair’s first term as Prime Minister: the Social Security Bill of 1997 and the Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill of 1999. In both cases, rebels objected to measures that reduced the generosity of disability and lone-parent benefits or subjected them to greater means testing. Both rebellions were amongst the largest ever experienced by Blair’s governments. They also included the resignations of several junior ministers, a very rare occurrence which underscores the controversial nature of the reforms (Cowley 2002).

Figure 10: **Rates of Rebellion by type of MP in key votes on welfare reform, 1997-99**

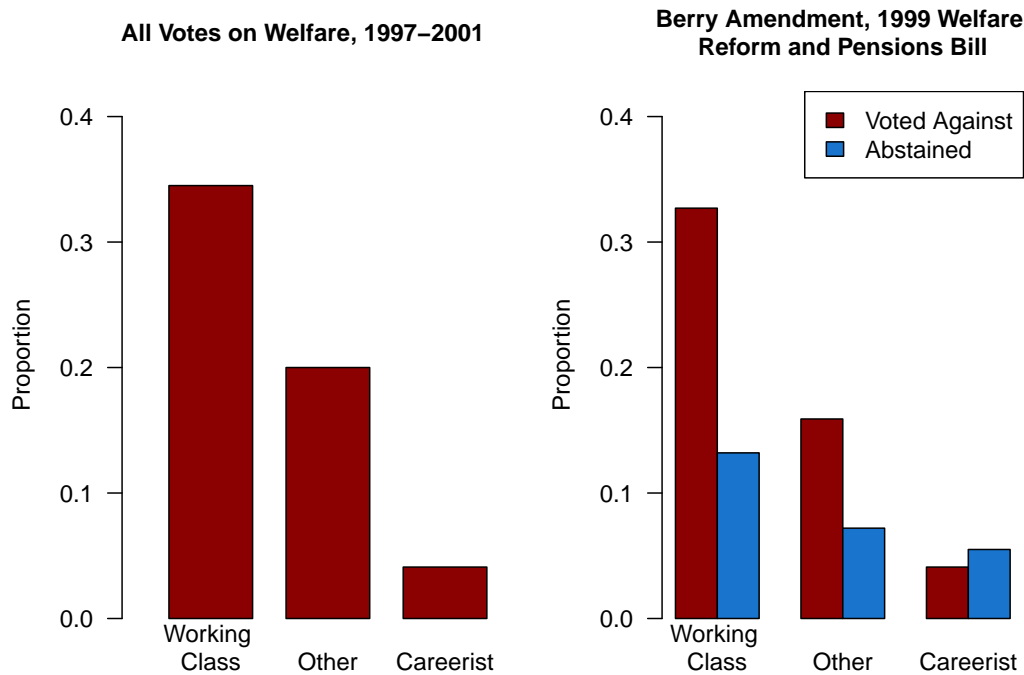


Figure 10 shows that working-class MPs were much more likely to rebel on these bills than careerists. The left panel displays the proportion of each group who rebelled at least once on one of the measures; there were many divisions on each. The right panel looks

specifically at the largest rebellion in Blair’s first term, in May 1999, when Roger Berry (a backbencher) tabled an amendment to drop the introduction of means-testing for disability benefits. In the latter case, I also include abstentions to facilitate later analysis.<sup>14</sup> The Figure shows that about 35% of all working-class MPs rebelled on welfare measures at least once, and almost half of them either rebelled or abstained on the Berry Amendment. These rates are remarkably high given the rarity of rebellions in the British system. They rebelled at about twice the rate of other non-careerist MPs, while only a handful of careerists rebelled at any point. These results are fully consistent with the results on MPs’ policy positions: expressed policy preferences carry over into voting. They are also consistent with the idea that careerists are more loyal to the party leadership than other MPs. Both bills did eventually pass the House of Commons, albeit with substantially reduced majorities. These results imply that Blair and his allies would have had an even harder time passing welfare reforms in the House of Commons, had the party’s composition not changed so much over time. A calculation indicates that if working-class and careerist MPs had instead been represented at the same rates as they were in the 1980s, and patterns of voting and abstention remained the same, the leadership would have lost the vote on the Berry Amendment by around five votes. Of course, much else would no doubt have been different had this been the case. This calculation is only intended to be indicative, but it does suggest that changes in the representation of different occupational groups potentially affected policy outcomes.

## 9 Discussion

This paper has demonstrated that declines in working-class representation and the increasing professionalization of elected politics matter substantively as well as descriptively, because

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14. Abstentions in the House of Commons are often a lesser form of rebellion, allowing the MP to avoid voting with the opposition while still avoiding voting for an issue she opposes. I excluded government ministers who failed to vote from the list of abstentions, on the assumption that they were missing on official business. For the rest, the evidence strongly suggests that their absences were a deliberate form of protest. First, many of them are well-known ‘serial rebels’ who rebelled on other key pieces of welfare reform. And among those who did not rebel on other welfare bills, many were also signatories on an earlier Early Day Motion (*Number 375*) put forward by Roger Berry that expressed serious reservations about the 1999 Bill.



career politicians and working-class legislators are shaped differently by their backgrounds. In the British Labour Party from 1987-2007, working-class legislators favored traditional welfare programs for ideological reasons. Careerists were the opposite. They were more inclined to seek re-election, further their own careers and remain loyal to party leaders, leading them to advocate welfare reforms. A variety of empirical tests showed that the two groups took different policy stances, which carried over into legislative behavior. The findings suggest that the large shift from working-class MPs to career politicians in the British Labour Party considerably weakened the representation of working-class voters' interests.

Future research should try to uncover the extent to which these findings generalise to other time periods, policies or settings. Previous studies in the US have used roll-call votes to show that working-class politicians take more left-wing economic stances (Carnes 2012, 2013), but such methods cannot be applied in a setting with strong party-line voting like the UK. Partly due to this methodological difficulty, studies examining the substantive effects of legislators' occupational and social backgrounds are virtually non-existent. A key contribution of this study is to show that outside the US, legislative speeches may offer a promising way to uncover intra-party differences arising from legislators' backgrounds. I have emphasized that the existence or extent of such differences will depend heavily on context. In doing so, I highlighted the usefulness of thinking about the interplay of legislators' own preferences, those of party leaders and those of electorally crucial voters.

Starting first with how the findings might generalise within the UK, my framework would make different predictions about intra-party differences under the leadership of the current Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. The Blair years may have been special because the stance of party leaders and the perceived preferences of swing voters pointed in the same direction. The three influences on legislators' behaviour have played out differently under Corbyn, whose policies are more favorable to traditional working-class interests but are seen by some Labour MPs as too extreme to win elections. As a result, rebellious behaviour in the Labour party is now more likely to occur amongst centrist MPs than left-wingers (Slapin et al. 2018).

Careerist MPs under Corbyn face a potential dilemma between supporting the leadership to further their own careers inside the party and opposing the leadership if its policies are likely to lose elections, whereas both motives pointed in the same direction under Blair. Anecdotally, there has been heterogeneity in their responses to Corbyn, with some choosing to join his front-bench team and others opposing his leadership. Meanwhile, the few remaining traditional working-class MPs have been largely supportive of his leadership, and senior positions in the party are dominated by MPs from the left.

Another notable feature of the case studied in this paper was that working-class people and electorally crucial swing voters seemed to be opposed on the issue of welfare reform. Today the British benefits system has become much less popular, including amongst lower-income voters. Their views are probably more aligned with the median voter than in the past. That removes one potential source of conflict between middle-class MPs and MPs from lower-income backgrounds. MPs drawn today from unskilled non-graduate professions would probably not be as ideologically keen on benefits as the working-class MPs that featured in this paper. For some other policies, intra-party differences arising from legislators' backgrounds would now be more intense than in the past. On immigration, MPs from unskilled non-graduate professions today would be in ideological conflict with middle-class MPs, whose cosmopolitan backgrounds are likely to make them more pro-immigration than the median voter. Careerist MPs in the Labour Party are now torn between pro-immigration ideologies shaped by their backgrounds and voters' preferences for curbs on immigration.

What about other parties and countries? Although working-class politicians are a rarity in center-right parties, they too have seen rises in career politicians.<sup>15</sup> It would be worthwhile to investigate whether parties of the right are also more likely to adopt centrist positions when they have more careerist legislators that are in tune with swing voters. When thinking more broadly about how this paper's results could generalise to other countries, it is important to bear in mind that the British Labour Party's experience may be distinctive in comparative

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15. Working-class politicians may be more common in far-right parties, though (see e.g. Wauters 2012)

perspective. For one thing, the UK's first-past-the-post voting system is unusual in Europe. In the PR systems that are more typical of European politics, career politicians from social democratic parties may face weaker incentives to appeal to swing voters than Labour's did under Blair, since their parties face competition from the left as well as the right.

For another, although both the professionalization of politics and declines in working-class legislators are occurring around the world (Borchert 2003), the extent of these changes and the form that they take differs across countries. In the UK, careerists are mostly drawn from the same pool and follow the same well-worn path into politics from London-based political occupations tied closely to the central party. In Germany though, Ohmura et al. (2018) show that career politicians come in several guises, including those who first build their careers in regional rather than national party structures and legislatures. Their behavior may differ to 'central-party' careerists including, perhaps, lower loyalty to the central party. In other countries the political class has narrowed not due to the rise of party insiders as elected politicians, but instead due to a new-found dominance of middle-class former public-sector workers and civil servants, particularly in Scandinavia (Pedersen 2000; Ruostetsaari 2000). This contrasts to the British Labour Party, where the number of former public sector workers remains high but has fallen slightly over time (see Figure 1). Hence a comparison of careerists and working-class politicians is appropriate in the UK when trying to understand the substantive effects of changes in descriptive representation, but simple comparisons of middle-class and working-class politicians or of former public versus private sector workers might be more appropriate elsewhere.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, replicating this analysis in other settings would require close attention to specific contexts and institutions. Regardless of the details of a case, one contribution of this paper has been to present a new methodology for studying intra-party differences in systems with strong party discipline. It should therefore be possible to extend the results much more widely in future.

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16. See Hyytinen et al. (2018) for evidence on the effects of electing public-sector workers.

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