

Free Markets and Feminism: the neo-liberal defence of the male breadwinner model in Britain, c. 1980-1997¹

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The most far-reaching social changes of the late twentieth century in Britain (and many other advanced industrialised nations) were the rise of market liberalism in economic policy and a marked cultural shift towards less unequal gender norms. The rise of what became dubbed ‘neo-liberalism’ and the rise of second-wave feminism therefore coincided with one another and were the most influential ideologies in British public life after the 1970s. But could we strengthen this statement and identify some connection between the success of neo-liberal and feminist ideas? One argument that might be posed along these lines is that the rise of feminism – or at least the changing role of women in British society – unintentionally weakened the economic model of traditional social democracy by unsettling the male breadwinner model of family life.² On this account, the traditional social democratic vision of political economy was based on a gendered division of household labour, full male (but not female) employment in paid work, and a welfare state structured to allocate benefits and services to families with a male earner and female carer. The 1970s and 1980s were characterised by rising divorce rates; an increase in single parent families and in the number of children born to cohabiting rather than married couples; an increase in the employment of women, including married women and women with children (a trend that had already been underway since 1945); and a rise in male unemployment (especially in those manufacturing industries that were the targets of the economic restructuring pursued by the Thatcher

government). All of these changes, it might be argued, opened up new social risks that had not been contemplated by social democracy's founding fathers and complicated the valourisation of male working class labour that was at the heart of the left's identity and guiding purpose.

While this argument is correct as far as it goes, it is also important to recognise that the changing role of women in society, and the rise of feminist ideas, posed an equally serious challenge to neo-liberalism and to the new market economy that neo-liberals envisaged as the ultimate product of a period of strenuous economic reform.³ Although neo-liberalism is often seen as a set of ideas that prioritises the interests of the individual, in fact neo-liberals have always seen the traditional family as the critical social institution that is to be protected from the depredations of the state and to be granted new freedoms by greater access to market opportunities. As Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Melinda Cooper have pointed out, the leading exponents of neo-liberalism ultimately sought to substitute family responsibility for state responsibility in social policy and saw the incentive of providing for one's children as a more moral guide to economic conduct than contributing to the impersonal welfare bureaucracies created by socialists and progressive liberals after the Second World War.⁴ Neo-liberals sought social arrangements that would enable families to run their own affairs and to look after themselves, independent of public support. But they were also usually clear that the most efficient organisation of the family would involve a gendered division of labour and that such an arrangement was also likely to be the overwhelming choice of most men and women. A male bread-winner model of economic life was therefore as central to the worldview of neo-liberalism as it was to traditional social democracy.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the British left, including the Labour Party, slowly and inconsistently adapted to changing gender roles and relations and increasingly accepted

certain feminist arguments about the need to alter economic and social policy accordingly.⁵ But how did the advocates of market liberalism on the British right conceptualise and respond to these shifts in gender norms? How far did they adapt their free market objectives to these new social trends and how far did they resist them? How did they react to the growing salience of feminist arguments and policies on the left of British politics, and in particular Labour's growing enthusiasm for a social democratic politics that integrated some feminist insights? This article investigates these questions through an examination of the ideas of Britain's neo-liberals – the network of British experts, commentators, and political leaders committed to the market liberal ideas disseminated internationally by the Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS) and the string of think-tanks and advocacy groups that it inspired.⁶ These were the ideological outriders and technocratic experts who shaped the policy priorities and language of Thatcherism and in the course of the 1980s came to dominate the discourse of Conservative policy-making. This article demonstrates that their response to shifts in gender roles was two-fold: in the first instance, a concerted, although unsuccessful, effort to resist some of this social change, but secondly, greater success in delimiting the role that could legitimately be played by the state rather than the market in addressing the social challenges posed by shifting gender norms.

Traditionalist conservative opposition to the liberalisation of gender identities and sexuality – although not absent – was more muted in Britain than the United States during the high watermark of the New Right in the 1970s and 1980s.⁷ But while the regulation of sexuality and reproductive rights remained largely orthogonal to the core policy objectives of Thatcherism, the implications of changes in gender roles for social and economic policy raised issues that were central to Margaret Thatcher's desire to foster a new Britain based around self-sufficient families. Although it took some time for this issue to surface in right-wing policy circles, it became a topic that attracted significant attention during the 1990s as

the profound implications of changing patterns of family life became clearer and some of the heat was lost from the economic policy battles waged during the 1980s. However, this timing also meant that much of the subsequent unease expressed by right-wing commentators about these changes came too late, since new forms of social behaviour had already become established and would be hard to reverse.

Like other strands of British neo-liberal thought, the ensuing debate about the proper response of the right to the family drew extensively on authors, concepts and evidence from the United States, deriving intellectual authority from American expertise and political energy from the more full-throated critique of the growth of women's rights and feminism to be found on the American New Right.⁸ Social trends in the United States and Britain were in fact sometimes bundled together by British neo-liberals in an unhelpful and misleading way. A more distinctive feature of the British neo-liberal engagement with the family and gender roles, however, was that these discussions brought to the fore a number of important female writers, an exception in the hitherto male-dominated intellectual culture of free market think-tanks and policy debate. The field of family policy was therefore one in which there was greater space for women to stake a claim for expertise. The discourse that was generated by a wide range of neo-liberal thinkers, and sponsored by key think-tanks such as the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), the Social Affairs Unit, the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) and the Adam Smith Institute (ASI), was not homogenous, but it broadly sought to challenge what was regarded as the key claims and political achievements of post-1960s feminism while recognising that a different form of more market-friendly feminism might nonetheless represent a viable route forward for the right. This was a difficult line to tread and it is doubtful that all of the contributors to this literature managed to do so. At times a more unvarnished anti-feminist rhetoric became the dominant note instead. The defence of what was thought to be an earlier model of family life and marriage seemed on the surface to be

the chief concern of many of these authors, but by the time the Conservatives lost office in 1997 it was clear that the practical policy upshot of much of this analysis had resolved into a focus on market rather than state solutions to the provision of childcare (and perhaps the rebalancing of fiscal policy to recognise the importance of marriage), but not, as some of these thinkers had hoped, a tightening of divorce law, a repeal of equal opportunities legislation, or even a return to the norm of a family wage for male breadwinners.

Home Economics

An important – although ambiguous – intellectual resource for neo-liberals writing about the family was the new economic analysis of the household that emerged during the 1970s and was given an authoritative intellectual statement by the Chicago economist and MPS member Gary Becker in his 1981 book, *A Treatise on the Family*.⁹ While an economic approach of considerable sophistication and analytic complexity – which could even be said to meet feminism half-way insofar as it sought to recognise the household as a site of labour and economic production – the analysis it generated was nonetheless susceptible to a reading that was congenial to the traditional family policy preferences of the neo-liberal right. One influential implication of this economic analysis of the family, which Becker himself offered support for, was that the traditional division of domestic labour in a marriage, in which men undertook paid work and women domestic work, reflected rational economic decision-making, in that each sex had (in part for biological reasons) their own area of specialisation and this complementarity in married life generated efficiency gains that would not be available under alternative social arrangements.¹⁰ This basic idea was widely used in a more popularised form in the pamphlets and articles issued by the neo-liberal right to maintain that a traditional family structure and division of labour was in fact justified to maximise the

economic well-being of family members. In its policy recommendations, this argument arrived at similar conclusions to the functionalist sociology of Talcott Parsons, which was widely invoked in the 1960s to justify the rationality of a gendered role specialisation in the family, but Becker used a rational actor theory based on the pursuit of individual economic advantage rather than Parson's concern for social stability and continuity. This economic argument was therefore one that fitted more easily within a neo-liberal framework, since Parsons's functionalism posited social structures and values that at the most abstract level leading neo-liberals considered to be dangerously collectivist.¹¹

One of the first attempts by a British neo-liberal think-tank to analyse family life from this perspective was the IEA's 1980 pamphlet, *For Love or Money?*, written by Ivy Papps. The aim of the pamphlet was to present for the first time to a British policy audience some of the key insights that could be gleaned from the economic analysis of the family pioneered in the United States. Papps was a lecturer in economics at Durham University who later became an economic consultant, and who had completed her PhD at Chicago under the supervision of Gary Becker and George Stigler. Papps's pamphlet was published before Becker's *Treatise* emerged into print, but it drew on articles that Becker had already published on the subject and a familiarity with Becker's work from her time at Chicago in the early 1970s (Becker himself acted as a referee on an earlier draft of the pamphlet), as well as related work undertaken by economists such as Cynthia Lloyd and Theodore Schultz.¹² Papps offered a variety of examples of the kind of analysis that could be generated by approaching the family as a unit of production, but perhaps the most striking claim was that from this perspective women had a comparative advantage in household work and men in market work, even if a man and a woman with the same amount of education were equally productive in the market when they left school and were equally productive at domestic labour – because women will nonetheless have a comparative advantage in 'the bearing and nursing of children.'¹³ Indeed,

Papps continued, it could well be that the clustering of women in jobs that bear some relation to domestic labour ‘such as catering, nursing, teaching of small children’ is from this perspective ‘economically rational’, since the skills gained from engaging in such paid work would also make women more efficient at their household tasks.¹⁴ All of this went to show, Papps argued, that marriage and family life should be understood as an arrangement entered into for mutual gain and based on the greater efficiency yielded by complementarity in the domestic division of labour. Citing the work of Germaine Greer, Ann Oakley and Sheila Rowbotham, Papps rejected the feminist argument that marriage should be seen as a relationship that exploits women on the grounds that individuals choose to get married and thus would not voluntarily enter into a relationship in which they would be worse off than when they were single. In terms of whether the distribution of the ‘additional output’ that resulted from marriage could be seen as unequal, Papps suggested that from a market perspective this would vary according to supply and demand – men would be able to acquire relatively more from marriages at a time in which there were fewer eligible men, women at times when there were fewer women.

However, in a disarming footnote Papps observed that it was quite likely empirically that men would have the advantage in most circumstances, since factors such as wars, the greater likelihood of female children surviving into adulthood and so on would ‘restrict the number of men relative to the number of women. It seems that the arguments of the “Women’s Movement” have some *a priori* support from economic theory.’¹⁵ This was a characteristic move, in that Papps sought several times in the pamphlet to debunk arguments made by feminists but subsequently endorsed reformulated versions of those same arguments.¹⁶ In what initially seemed a startling and radical analysis, Papps appeared to mount an economic critique of equal opportunities legislation on the classic market liberal grounds that it interfered with employers’ capacity to make efficient allocations of positions

according to their own best judgements about employee productivity. This was a familiar line of argument in neo-liberal circles, ultimately going back to Gary Becker's analysis in his 1957 book, *The Economics of Discrimination*.¹⁷ But Papps qualified this assessment by noting that such laws might nonetheless be valuable as transitional measures insofar as they would accelerate women's investment in their market work skills relative to household skills when new economic opportunities for women become available outside the household, something that might otherwise take a long time to come about.¹⁸ She also mounted a defence of the objectives of the women's movement as not, in fact, about effacing the efficiency benefits of specialisation in marriage but rather about seeking to dissociate the division between household and market work with gender differences. From an economic perspective, she argued, little could be said either way on the merits of this question, although she did note that in this scenario 'the costs of searching for a suitable partner would, however, be increased.'¹⁹

Papps was more critical of the 1970s feminist case for wages for housework. Although she applauded this measure for recognising the economic point that work in the home was productive, she argued that it ignored the other insight of the economic theory of the family, namely 'that the benefits of such productive work are received by members of the family. There seems to be little reason for the family to receive an extra benefit in the form of a payment simply because the family contains a woman.'²⁰ Furthermore, unless the wages were paid to all women, the policy would distort market behaviour in the sense that it would either (if paid to all married women) be a subsidy from single people to married couples or (if given to married women not in paid work) would create an incentive for women to undertake household rather than market work.²¹ Papps was likewise unconvinced of the fairness and efficiency of policies geared towards the provision of free or subsidised nursery provision, since in her view it would transfer resources from childless people to those with children and

would increase the incentive for women to undertake market work but without reflecting any change in their market productivity and would therefore create ‘an inefficient allocation of time.’²² The other side of this unflinching application of economic criteria was that Papps was sceptical of attempts to use the tax system to create incentives for marriage. As she later argued, she thought the state should be neutral on value judgements relating to whether or not to get married or whether or not women should work outside the household, since these were ultimately matters that in a free society should be the province of individual choice.²³ She was critical of the creation of the Family Policy Group by the Thatcher government in 1982 on the grounds that it did not recognise that at the core of Conservative philosophy was individual choice and the construction of policies that did not distort those choices by artificially altering incentives to behave in a certain way. Papps was unusual among neo-liberals in regarding the individual, and not the family, as ‘the basic unit for the criteria of social policy’, since ‘only individuals can create families’ in the light of their own preferences and choices about how they want to live.²⁴

Although Papps’s work was pioneering in its application of economic theories to family policy, it was ultimately notable as a harbinger of future neo-liberal analysis rather than a work that was itself widely discussed by policy-makers. The immediate reception of her pamphlet by the press was a mixture of bafflement and amusement.²⁵ In part, this was because in 1980 the application of economic principles to non-economic domains was still a novel and rather heterodox development in British political discourse. But Papps’s work also had less resonance than later neo-liberal interventions in this field because she offered a more libertarian view of the state’s role in relation to the family than most commentators and intellectuals on the right were willing to entertain, particularly during the later 1980s and 1990s, as the Conservative government became firmly embedded in Whitehall and the social

behaviour of men and women continued to depart from what were thought to be the well-established norms of the past.

The Family Way

By the late 1980s, as the period of high Thatcherism began to give way to the more uncertain times of Thatcher's final years in office and John Major's tenure as Prime Minister, the Conservatives and allied neo-liberal think-tanks began to pay more attention to the family and its implications for social policy.²⁶ As significant changes in family life became more apparent to policy-makers, and as the facts about rising poverty and disadvantage under the Conservatives became harder to gainsay, the relationship between the family and the market graduated to a more important place in the discourse of the neo-liberal right. The line of argument that was subsequently developed was strongly opposed to what was perceived to be the legacy of post-1960s feminism and its apparent success in shifting public policy against traditional family structures. Faced with the challenge of explaining why the liberalisation of the British economy had coincided with higher rates of poverty and unemployment, the exponents of Thatcherism attributed this growing social polarisation to the decay of the conventional model of family life, synthesising traditional conservative ideas with concepts taken from neo-liberalism. Two key sponsors of this analysis were the Social Affairs Unit, founded as a spin-off from the IEA in 1980 by a former sociology lecturer, Digby Anderson, to examine sociological and social policy questions, and the IEA's own Health and Welfare Unit, founded in 1986 with an initial remit to analyse the NHS but which quickly widened its ambit to include the whole range of social policies. The Health and Welfare Unit was run during this period by David Green, a former Labour councillor and academic who had moved to work at the IEA in 1984.²⁷ Similar ideas were also articulated around the same time in the

publications of the Centre for Policy Studies, which was closer to the leadership of the Conservative Party, as well as in more popular form by leading newspaper commentators.

The most trenchant and prolific contributor to British Conservative debates on the family in this period was Patricia Morgan, an academic sociologist who had been based at the LSE from 1979 to 1982. Morgan subsequently established a career writing and commentating on family policy and criminology, chiefly for right-wing think-tanks and publications, as well as later holding a Visiting Fellowship at the University of Buckingham.²⁸ In spite of her ubiquity in the publications of neo-liberal think-tanks in this period, Morgan in some respects departed from a more orthodox market liberalism to offer instead a hybrid communitarian-neo-liberal position on family policy. Morgan's intellectual trajectory was a complex one. Her first book, *Child Care: Sense and Fable* (1975), was a robust critique of the maternal attachment theory of John Bowlby, marshalling a considerable body of research to demonstrate that Bowlby's emphasis on the unique importance of the bond between mothers and their children, and its psychoanalytic foundations, were without merit. Morgan concluded from this that a less maternalist approach to child-rearing was necessary, one that recognised the importance of other family members and the wider community in caring for and developing young children. The 'isolated, independent, child-centred' family needed to be augmented by a wider creation of intermediate social institutions between the family and the state, while men and women should both be able to pursue careers and 'creches and nursery schools' should 'be created as an integral part of housing units.' There should be 'an opening up of the nuclear family, a sharing of parental functions by people who become involved with children not biologically theirs.'²⁹ There were intimations here of some of Morgan's later positions, since this argument was also embedded within a wider concern about a child-centred psychology that paid no attention to the need to communicate to children a clear set of moral and social rules.³⁰ Morgan subsequently became more worried by changes in family

structure and social morality, which she initially expressed through a sceptical analysis of the treatment of juvenile delinquency by parents, teachers, liberal intellectuals and social workers. She argued that progressive opinion wrongly treated delinquency as a product of social deprivation rather than a failure to transmit and enforce moral and legal rules.³¹

When Morgan then emerged in the 1980s as a leading commentator on social change in the publications of think-tanks such as the IEA and the CPS, she focused on what she saw as a feminist-influenced attempt to downplay the role of fathers in raising children; on her assessment of the disadvantages of the emergence of dual-earner households for family life; and on what she regarded as the damaging social consequences of the rise of single parent families. Her first major contribution to these debates to some extent built on her earlier work, in the sense that she argued strongly on the basis of a large body of empirical evidence for the importance of fathers as well as mothers in parenting children, a point she contrasted with a feminist tendency ‘to disestablish men’s ties to families, where support for “carers” (men appear to be disqualified from occupying his position by their sex membership), will be provided by the state.’³² But it was also framed as an objection to the maternal attachment literature she had earlier criticised, which she argued had served to marginalise the importance of fathers in child-rearing.³³ Morgan defended the importance of men’s breadwinning as a contribution to family life that should itself be recognised as a crucial form of care and recommended that ‘values, rules and institutions’ were needed to root men in family life, including (she implied) some recognition of the value of marriage within the tax system.³⁴ Morgan’s later work became more explicit about this point and about her view that the state should be much clearer about which forms of family life were better than others. Some of this research involved a detailed critique of non-parental childcare. Morgan argued that the available evidence showed that extensive use of nurseries rather than parental care would lead to bad outcomes for young children, including poor socialisation, greater

aggression and emotional insecurity. She also reviewed the experience of other countries, particularly Sweden, to show that the widespread use of child-care had been unsuccessful elsewhere. Finally, Morgan argued that the provision of sufficiently high quality nurseries would in any case be unaffordable, either in the public or private sector.³⁵ Indeed, Morgan later strengthened this analysis to argue that the dual earner couple was ‘probably the most effective contraception devised’, since the need for two incomes to maintain living standards changed the calculus of advantage in having children.³⁶ She drew on a loosely household economics framework to explain this point, citing Becker, and arguing that women’s increased employment made child rearing a more expensive use of women’s time and undermined the efficiency of a gendered division of labour between domestic and market work.³⁷ This was compounded by changes in state policy that had taken away the material incentives for couples to have children or run a household as a single (male) earner family. Instead, she argued, state policy now overwhelming presented an incentive for the formation of single parent households, which were of course predominantly headed by women.³⁸

But Morgan departed from the standard neo-liberal script in that she saw decision-making about families as also shaped by the availability of secure, well-paid employment for men. She was clear that the collapse of male manufacturing employment during the 1970s and 1980s (and a more general deregulation of the labour market) had played a causal role in forging communities in which it was harder to have a family. ‘The growth, not merely of unemployment, but of jobs which neither pay much nor survive very long’ had, Morgan said, ‘produced momentous change in the marital as well as the economic opportunities of populations.’³⁹ With the decline of secure male employment, she argued, men were less likely to get married or more likely to defer it.⁴⁰ In her view, it was therefore ‘the ideology of both feminism and the free market’ that was undermining family life, since ‘the fashion for translating all life, including the family, into one big market’ was undermining the ‘moral

economy' of family 'relationships, obligations and responsibilities' that ultimately 'sustained and subsidised' both the state and the economy.⁴¹ Morgan's recommendation was therefore two-fold: first, that the tax and benefit system should be altered to recognise and incentivise marriage, including an expansion of personal and occupational family allowance schemes, and second, that secure, high skill manufacturing jobs for men should be created, which would enable a return to the male bread-winner role and ideally to the old idea of a 'family wage' for men. This might even entail, she hinted, a move away from the use of unemployment as 'a tool of anti-inflationary policy.'⁴² Rather than offer state support for childcare, whether in the form of vouchers, tax relief or subsidies, Morgan argued that 'what is needed is help for parents, male and female, that allows them to choose whether they spend family allowances on their own care or that of substitutes.'⁴³ For her part, Morgan was certain that, if given such a choice, most women would elect to remain at home caring for their children when young rather than undertake paid work outside the home, and she located this position as in continuity with an earlier, maternalist strand of feminism that advocated 'measures to foster the special contribution of mothers' and had been displaced by the new women's movement after the 1960s.⁴⁴

Another, equally radical contribution to the family policy debate on the right was made by Hermione Parker, a researcher at the House of Commons for a number of Conservative MPs, and an important social policy writer, particularly on the idea of a basic income (she was one of the founders of the Basic Income Research Group in 1984 and one of the MPs she worked for was Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, a key advocate for a basic income).⁴⁵ Parker presented a basic income scheme as a solution to the negative impact that the British tax and benefit system had on work and saving incentives and on family life. The basic income, she argued, would have the effect of 'strengthening the traditional two-parent family' and removing the disadvantages of the current system for 'the traditional two-parent,

single-earner family.’ With a basic income for every individual, ‘non-earners (particularly non-earning mothers)’ need no-longer feel the pressure to enter the labour market, which, Parker said, ‘has nothing to do with women’s emancipation, which is about freedom of choice, but has more to do with an outdated socialism, which sees everybody’s salvation in the labour market.’⁴⁶

The redistributive policy implications of the arguments of Morgan and Parker were ignored or downplayed by their Conservative readers. A similar fate met the interventions of the eminent sociologists A. H. Halsey and Norman Dennis, whose writings on the importance of two parent families, and in particular fathers, to children’s life chances were published by the IEA but were embedded within a wider argument for an ethical socialism that was neither laissez-faire in economics nor social behaviour.⁴⁷ It was the attention Morgan, Parker, Dennis and Halsey paid to the interaction between the welfare state and family structures, and to the disadvantages of both single parents and the dual-earner model of family life, that found a ready audience on the right and were echoed in numerous other publications. The most prominent argument along these lines was the widely discussed intervention by the American conservative Charles Murray in British social policy debate. Murray brought his concept of an ‘underclass’ to bear on data from Britain and wrote high profile articles for the *Sunday Times* in 1989 and 1994 (subsequently reprinted by the IEA), which sought to make the case that, like the United States, Britain faced a growing social problem with an excluded section of the poor set apart from the rest of society by their anti-social behaviour.⁴⁸ Murray’s argument was a wide-ranging one, but a central theme was the dangerous social consequences attendant on a social welfare system that made it ‘more expensive to raise children within marriage, less expensive to raise children outside it.’⁴⁹ Murray denied that a return to full employment would change the central problem of ‘illegitimacy’ and doubted that the British state could afford to pay subsidies to married couples. He therefore prescribed

a radical cut back in social welfare entitlements, including ‘eliminating benefits for unmarried women altogether.’⁵⁰ Patricia Morgan noted that Murray was inconsistent in regarding some economic incentives as important, namely those associated with the welfare state, but dismissing others, namely those that flowed from stable and secure employment. She therefore dissented from what she saw as his simplistic solution of cutting back social welfare entitlements, favouring instead the combination of welfare reforms and active labour market policy discussed above.⁵¹ But insofar as Morgan’s work had a political impact, it was the former and not the latter suggestions that were taken up in public debate.⁵²

Conservative Responses

There was in fact substantial disagreement among Conservative policy-makers about how best to respond to this debate over changing family structures. The most consequential tension here was over how far the state should subsidise childcare for working parents. The traditional, reflexive view of many Conservatives was that if both parents (or a single parent) wished to take on paid work, then they were of course entitled to do so, but they could not expect any financial support for childcare from the state, since that would unfairly disadvantage parents who chose to stay at home with their children. But as the Thatcher government drew to a close in 1990, it became clear that there was an emergent current of opinion in the Party, associated particularly with female government ministers such as Gillian Shepherd and Angela Rumbold, and eventually with John Major, which on the contrary supported greater state spending on childcare.⁵³

The traditional view was well expressed by Keith Joseph in a 1990 pamphlet for the CPS that acknowledged Morgan’s influence, and which sought to advance her proposal to modify the tax system to ensure that single-earner, two-parent households were granted the

same tax advantages as single parent or dual earner households.⁵⁴ The aim was to give women a genuine choice between working or not ‘without the financial factor predominating’.⁵⁵ While Joseph noted the decision about whether or not the mother of a family would undertake paid work was for the families themselves to decide, he added that children’s need ‘for secure and deep attachment for her or her care’ would mean that ‘mothers will want to be in the company of their children in their early years as much as possible.’ But he also conceded that participation in paid work could have benefits beyond the financial: ‘it is true that often part-time work may help a young mother to be more cheerful and lively than if she had no paid work.’⁵⁶ However, Joseph also adopted Morgan’s critique of childcare outside of the home on the grounds that ‘crèches and nurseries are not ideal; they tend to be impersonal with changing staff. Would it not be better if playgroups run by the mothers themselves – either paid or on a rota or both – were encouraged by government?’⁵⁷ Government, Joseph firmly concluded, should ‘not provide taxpayers’ money to subsidise crèches.’⁵⁸ This was also the view expressed by Margaret Thatcher after leaving office in her autobiography. Reflecting on her efforts towards the end of her time in government to support family life, Thatcher noted: ‘There was great pressure, which I had to fight hard to resist, to provide tax relief or subsidies for childcare. This would, of course, have swung the emphasis further towards discouraging mothers from staying at home.’⁵⁹ Perhaps recognising that this view was somewhat in tension with her own life experience, she added:

I believed that it was possible – as I had – to bring up a family while working, as long as one was willing to make a great effort to organise one’s time properly and with some extra help. But I did not believe that it was fair to those mothers who chose to

stay at home and bring up their families on the one income to give tax reliefs to those who went out to work and had two incomes.⁶⁰

A similar line of argument was expressed by David Willetts in a 1991 CPS pamphlet. Willetts at that time worked for the CPS and was a Conservative parliamentary candidate, having previously worked in the No. 10 Policy Unit. Representing a younger generation of Conservatives than Thatcher and Joseph, his conclusions nonetheless followed the lines that they set out. Indeed, Willetts had earlier disagreed publicly with Gillian Shepherd on this issue at a CPS conference in 1990, with the pair clashing over whether greater state support for dual earner households constituted an ‘intrusion into family life’ or encouraged ‘personal responsibility and choice.’⁶¹ In his pamphlet, Willetts reviewed some empirical evidence about the changing patterns of family life in Britain, concluding that women were indeed increasingly undertaking paid work – partly, he thought, because the liberalisation of the British economy in the 1980s had opened up new opportunities for part-time and more flexible work patterns, and partly because house price inflation necessitated higher family incomes. But Willetts also argued that the evidence showed that only a small proportion of women worked outside the home when their children were very young, with full-time work only becoming common once the children were about 10. This, he said, reflected ‘the general, intuitive belief that when a child is very young it is likely the mother will be around for much of the time.’⁶² Like Joseph, Willetts broadly seemed to agree that this was the right pattern for most families. He argued that the evidence showed that ‘very young children (under three years old) may not thrive if they spend long periods in anonymous institutional settings’ because they lack ‘a close attachment to their mothers, or some other special individual.’⁶³ While the private sector would be free to offer childcare, he concluded that ‘it would be wrong to use the tax and benefit system to encourage mothers with young children back into

the workforce.’ The core principle of family policy-making, argued Willetts, was that the state ‘should be neutral between mothers who choose to go out to work and those who wish to spend more time with their children.’⁶⁴

Willetts agreed with Joseph that there should be a child tax allowance to direct more financial support to families with children, coupled with an enhanced child benefit for children under five. Willetts regarded the latter as more a more effective and more Conservative measure than the introduction of childcare vouchers, since it would allow mothers ‘the greatest possible choice in what they do with the money’, including but not limited to spending it on childcare.⁶⁵ Perhaps the most significant point about the targeting of increased child benefit at children under five was that Willetts also saw it as a response to the pattern of family life he had sketched earlier in the pamphlet – it was primarily intended to compensate families for the loss of income they would suffer when mothers exited the labour market for a few years while their children were of pre-school age.⁶⁶ Fundamentally, though, Willetts’s worry about the childcare conundrums faced by modern families was that they threatened to unleash new demands for large-scale public expenditure by the state: ‘Families are perfectly entitled to buy childcare, but do we want a big new public expenditure programme as well? The real solution will come from the steady improvement in women’s education and employment opportunities, enabling both families and employers to buy more childcare.’⁶⁷

The Market for Childcare

The line taken by Willetts – an uneasy halfway house between a male breadwinner and a dual earner model of social policy – proved unsustainable. The political ground on the question of childcare shifted rapidly in the 1990s, as it moved to the centre of the Labour Party’s policy-

making and became increasingly salient to the Conservatives, developments which in turn reflected the rising electoral demand for policies to support dual earner families.⁶⁸ The ascendant view among Conservative ministers became that the government could indeed play a legitimate role in enabling parents to access childcare and nursery education, a development that was officially sanctioned by John Major's pledge to the 1994 Conservative Party conference to offer nursery places to all four year olds whose parents wanted them.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, even within this new Conservative thinking there was some ambiguity about the government's objective. Major's pledge was to expand nursery education rather than day care, although he sought to do so by enabling nurseries and playgroups to act as education providers alongside schools. Ultimately, this Conservative thinking did not distinguish very clearly between nursery education and day care, or explore the extent to which the former would help with the latter.

As the debate within the Conservatives progressed, the state neutrality that Willetts had prized between working and non-working mothers, although not absent in later neo-liberal discourse, became displaced as the right's core political objective by a novel – and ultimately more achievable – aim: preventing public expenditure on childcare translating into a new universal state service. The alternative, distinctively neo-liberal model that now took shape was that the state would offer explicit financial support for childcare, but in the form of vouchers that parents could spend on private childcare services. The IEA and allied think-tanks continued to publish highly critical analyses of feminist politics during the 1990s, including robust libertarian critiques of sex discrimination legislation, positive discrimination, equal pay for equal work, no-fault divorce and other aspects of family law, and indeed state subsidies for childcare.⁷⁰ But while this generated an anti-feminist rhetoric that held a certain appeal on the right of British politics, in policy terms there was little political momentum behind any of these as practical reform agendas beyond a small circle of

commentators and politicians. One idea which did retain a tenacious longevity in the Conservative Party all the way to 2013 was the introduction of tax incentives for marriage, a measure finally introduced in an attenuated form under David Cameron. Apart from this, it was the debate about childcare, and its subsidy by the state, that placed the neo-liberal response to feminism at the heart of public policy discussions.

Sheila Lawlor, Deputy Director of the CPS and a former academic historian and advisor in the Conservative Research Department, offered a clear exposition of the revised neo-liberal approach to this question in a 1994 pamphlet, *Nursery Choices*. Like her neo-liberal predecessors on this subject, Lawlor was sceptical of many of the claims made for nursery education as a tool to narrow social disadvantage and boost educational standards, and she even echoed some of their points about its unfairness as a use of public money to boost women's ability to undertake paid work: 'Why should the one-earner family which makes the decision not to send its young children out to a nursery place, because the mother and father hold that it is better for them to stay at home, in effect have to subsidise, through the taxes they pay, the two-earner family which decides, equally conscientiously, to take up whatever nursery provision is available?'⁷¹ In spite of this rather sceptical starting point, Lawlor nonetheless argued that there was a case for the state to subsidise childcare in order to enable all parents to be able to choose for themselves whether or not to use it. Since wealthy parents already enjoyed that choice, Lawlor argued that it should be the Conservative mission to extend that choice to all sections of society. Lawlor's chief concern was rather that the childcare system should not force parents to send their children into a state system 'over which they have little or no control', by which she meant one that was run by Local Education Authorities (LEAs).⁷² The solution to this dilemma, she concluded, was to use vouchers for childcare. Lawlor proposed a universal scheme, in which all parents of three and

four year old children would receive a voucher worth the equivalent of a full-time place at a playgroup or a half-time place at a nursery.⁷³

The significance of this proposal was that it brought into the debate a voucher system for childcare. A similar idea was proposed shortly afterwards for the ASI by David Soskin, who, significantly, was the founder of a chain of private day nurseries and prep schools that sought to replicate the success of American childcare chains in Britain.⁷⁴ The ASI worked closely with Soskin and American childcare companies looking to expand into the British market to persuade the Conservative government that, as ASI President Madsen Pirie argued, it would be possible to combine state funding with 'supply led by the private sector so that it will have the variety and quality that parents as customers will demand.'⁷⁵ Soskin himself was subsequently appointed to the No. 10 Policy Unit under John Major in April 1995.⁷⁶ Soskin's ASI pamphlet, published before his appointment in January 1995, accepted without further quibbling that some form of universal pre-school provision would now be a legitimate goal of government policy but argued that leaving this as a local authority service was inefficient and inhibited parental choice. Instead, he proposed a scheme where childcare vouchers would be issued for all three and four year olds, but their value would vary according to parental income, with the full costs of a nursery place covered for the poorest families, 60% of the costs paid to basic rate tax payers and 20% to higher rate tax payers. As Soskin summarised his proposals: 'For all who wanted them – pre-school places would become available. The market will provide the solution'.⁷⁷

The use of vouchers was a concept that had long gripped the imagination of neo-liberal economists and policy entrepreneurs, stretching back to Milton Friedman's original advocacy of it as a mechanism by which individual choice in the field of education might be realised while retaining the equity of access to education achieved in the existing state-dominated system.⁷⁸ Rather than the state directly providing education, neo-liberals argued, it

should restrict itself to providing the necessary purchasing power for families to select for themselves the school they wanted from a market of state, voluntary and private providers. Neo-liberal think-tanks in Britain had pushed this argument on the Conservative government after 1979, to no avail, and leading figures such as Arthur Seldon remained bitterly disappointed by the failure of even sympathetic ministers such as Keith Joseph to make any moves in this direction.⁷⁹ Pre-school education and childcare therefore appeared to be a promising new front for these arguments, since it represented a relatively fresh policy area in which there were as yet few of the path dependencies that had led Conservative ministers to reject vouchers as impractical, while the existing structure of childcare provision that had emerged by the 1980s was one that was favourable to a private sector, market-based solution.⁸⁰

After a protracted internal debate, the Major government did indeed initiate a limited voucher scheme for nursery school places for four year-olds, the first time vouchers had been used in the British education system.⁸¹ This was reported as a victory for the No. 10 Policy Unit – and its argument that vouchers ‘expand freedom of parental choice’ – over the resistance of both the Department for Education and Treasury, although John Major’s firm endorsement of the scheme should also be seen in the context of the Conservative leadership election of 4 July 1995, in the run-up to which Major had affirmed his support for nursery vouchers as an indicator of his Thatcherite ideological commitments.⁸² Major’s scheme was ultimately truncated by Labour’s arrival in power in 1997 with a different agenda for childcare, but it indicated how the neo-liberal stance on family life had been forced to shift ground, from one which regarded parental working patterns as a matter for families themselves to decide upon (but with a hefty steer in the direction of women leaving the labour market while their children were young) to one which sanctioned state subsidies to families to facilitate dual earner households. However, the crucial ideological dimension of

this commitment was to preserving a market for childcare services through subsidising demand rather than instituting a new universal public service. The launch of the Labour Party's National Childcare Strategy in 1998 did mark a significant break with the Conservative approach insofar as it ended the Conservative voucher scheme and more generally deployed significant government resources in developing and co-ordinating childcare provision. But while Labour invested in some new service provision by the state, it also used supply side subsidies to childcare providers and retained the Conservative emphasis on demand side transfers, channelling significant new funds to parents to spend on state, private or voluntary sector childcare provision. This ultimately meant that British childcare policy retained significant continuities with the path first charted by the neo-liberal right in the 1990s.⁸³

Conclusion

How important was neo-liberalism to the construction of Conservative policy on the family in this period? In the first place, neo-liberal ideas played a blocking role by furnishing Conservatives with new intellectual resources that could be used to downplay or contest a feminist analysis of modern gender relations.⁸⁴ The immobility of the Conservatives in government on childcare policy was legitimised for a number of years in the late 1980s and early 1990s by the belief that the state must remain neutral over mothers entering the labour market and by a ferocious critique of what was purported to be the alternative model of family life offered by feminists. To some extent, however, these neo-liberal ideas simply gave a modernist garb to existing and deeply entrenched Conservative values and assumptions. In the long run, the greatest impact of neo-liberal ideas occurred when Conservative policy-makers eventually accepted that the state would have to play a role in

supporting dual-earner households. At that point, neo-liberal think-tanks effectively promoted market-based policies based on funding the demand side for childcare rather than the supply, interventions that were important in shaping nascent Conservative thinking on this question but more broadly in channelling subsequent British childcare policies of all parties away from the creation of a new state childcare service. Although some of the most incisive treatments of British childcare policy have regarded the failure of the state to intervene more decisively on the supply side – particularly after 1997 – as the product of a market liberalism with deep roots in British political culture, this underestimates the distinctiveness and potency of the neo-liberal policy analysis of the 1990s. The dominance of this worldview among policy-makers prevented other approaches to the issue gaining a purchase in political debate and framed decision-making in terms designed to avert a new universal public service.

From this perspective, neo-liberal family policy was relatively successful. But there were also significant limits to it as a broader framework for right-wing thinking about gender roles in society. One of the striking aspects of this debate was the extent to which neo-liberals found it difficult to engage with the hardest questions posed to public policy by feminism, in spite of the fact that those questions could themselves be formulated in ways that had common ground with key neo-liberal principles. One such question was how to promote freedom and choice for both men and women, a point that could be made in terms acceptable to neo-liberals, or at least made the subject of a productive exchange about precisely what a freely chosen life might look like. Yet many contributors to free-market publications insisted on representing feminist ideas in terms that ignored the ideal of liberty at their core. The rhetorical strategy of arguing specifically against second wave feminism disguised the extent to which neo-liberalism, like feminism, was a child of the 1960s and the rise of popular demands for greater individual autonomy and self-expression.⁸⁵ It also placed a movement that benefited politically from running with the grain of significant social and economic

changes in the 1970s and 1980s in tension with arguably the most significant sociological transformation in Britain in the late twentieth century, namely changing gender norms.

A related question posed by feminism was how to create conditions in which individuals would be able to access both a family life and paid work. Neo-liberal commentators found it difficult to appreciate that family life and relationships were central feminist concerns. But here too a more constructive dialogue could be imagined. As Jane Lewis has pointed out, the gradual evolution of an ‘adult worker model’ for social policy, which treats men and women as individual contributors, has brought with it dangers for women, insofar as it ignores the more complex social reality in which women are still more likely to work part-time outside the household and perform more unpaid care work.⁸⁶ But the difficulty for neo-liberals was that the solution proposed by feminists to this problem was not – as the right imagined – efforts to somehow compel all women into full-time paid work, but rather reforms to the nature of working life for both men and women that would enable a more equal sharing of care work and more generally the ability to combine paid work and family life more easily. Among other things, this would inevitably involve the state introducing new regulations about working practices that the neo-liberal right was ideologically ill-equipped to entertain. As a result, the ‘free-market feminism’ that neo-liberals had developed by the turn of the century was one that did not in fact succeed in seriously grappling with the pressures on contemporary family life that they had diagnosed.

Notes

¹ I am grateful to Helen McCarthy, Jeremy Shearmur and Zofia Stemplowska for their comments on an earlier version of this article.

² In this article I follow the definition and analysis of the male breadwinner model in Jane Lewis (2001) *The Decline of the Male Breadwinner Model: implications for work and care*, *Social Politics*, 8, pp. 152-69; see also Jane Lewis (1992) *Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes*, *Journal of European Social Policy*, 3, pp. 159-73.

³ Nancy Fraser (2013) *Fortunes of Feminism: from state-managed capitalism to neo-liberal crisis* (London: Verso), pp. 209-26.

⁴ Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite (2012) *Neo-Liberalism and Morality in the Making of Thatcherite Social Policy*, *Historical Journal*, 55, pp. 497-520; Melinda Cooper (2017) *Family Values: between neo-liberalism and the new social conservatism* (New York: Zone), esp. pp. 58-63.

⁵ Sarah Perrigo (1996) *Women and Change in the Labour Party, 1979-1995*, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 49, pp. 116-29; Meg Russell (2005) *Building New Labour* (Basingstoke: Palgrave), pp. 96-128; Claire Annesley, Francesca Gains and Kirstein Rummery (Eds.) (2007) *Women and New Labour: engendering politics and policy?* (Bristol: Policy Press); Stephen Brooke (2011) *Sexual Politics: sexuality, family planning and the British left from the 1880s to the present day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 185-268.

⁶ Richard Cockett (1995) *Thinking the Unthinkable* (London: HarperCollins); Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (Eds.) (2009) *The Road from Mont Pèlerin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press); Ben Jackson (2010) 'At the Origins of Neo-Liberalism: the free economy and the strong state, 1930-47', *Historical Journal*, 53, pp. 129-51; Angus Burgin (2012) *The Great Persuasion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press); Daniel Stedman Jones (2012) *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman and the birth of neo-liberal politics* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press); Ben Jackson (2012) *The Think-Tank Archipelago: Thatcherism and neo-liberalism*, in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (Eds.), *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 43-61; Ben

Jackson (2016) Currents of Neo-Liberalism: British political ideologies and the New Right, c. 1955-79, *English Historical Review*, 131, pp. 823-50.

⁷ Martin Durham (1991) *Sex and Politics: the family and morality in the Thatcher years* (Basingstoke: Macmillan); Jennifer Somerville (1992) The New Right and Family Politics, *Economy and Society*, 21, pp. 93-128; Jennifer Somerville (2000) *Feminism and the Family* (Basingstoke: Macmillan), pp. 125-66; Anna Marie Smith (1994) *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain 1968-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Matthew Grimley (2012) Thatcherism, Morality and Religion, in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (Eds.), *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 78-94.

⁸ Jackson, Think-Tank Archipelago, pp. 49-50, 60.

⁹ Gary Becker (1991 [1981]) *A Treatise on the Family* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

¹⁰ Becker, *Treatise*, pp. 30-53; for criticism of Becker's approach to gender, see Marianne Ferber (2003) A Feminist Critique of the Neoclassical Theory of the Family, in Karine Moe (Ed.), *Women, Family and Work* (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 9-23.

¹¹ Talcott Parsons and Robert F. Bales (1956) *Family, Socialisation and Interaction Process* (Glencoe ILL: The Free Press); Betty Friedan (2010 [1963]) *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin), pp. 99-118; Carol Ehrlich (1971) The Male Sociologists' Burden: the place of women in marriage and family texts, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 33, pp. 421-30.

¹² 'Ivy Papps', TECIS Ltd Economic & Social Consultants, at <http://www.tecisLtd.co.uk/who-we-are/ivy-papps/> (accessed 19 July 2017); Shoshana Grossbard (2006) The New Home Economics at Columbia and Chicago, in Shoshana Grossbard (Ed.), *Jacob Mincer: a pioneer of labor economics* (New York: Springer), pp. 41-3; I. Papps (1980) *For Love or Money? A preliminary analysis of the economics of marriage and the family* (London: IEA), pp. 8-9;

Cynthia Lloyd (Ed.) (1975) *Sex, Discrimination and the Division of Labor* (New York: Columbia University Press); Theodore Schultz (Ed.) (1974) *Economics of the Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

¹³ Papps, *Love or Money?*, pp. 28-9.

¹⁴ Papps, *Love or Money?*, p. 29.

¹⁵ Papps, *Love or Money?*, pp. 30-2.

¹⁶ This is a feature of the pamphlet that Beatrix Campbell overlooked in her brief critique of it in her (1987) *Iron Ladies: why do women vote Tory?* (London: Virago), pp. 227-8.

¹⁷ Gary Becker (1957) *The Economics of Discrimination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

¹⁸ Papps, *Love or Money?*, pp. 51-3.

¹⁹ Papps, *Love or Money?*, pp. 53-4.

²⁰ Papps, *Love or Money?*, p. 55.

²¹ Papps, *Love or Money?*, p. 55.

²² Papps, *Love or Money?*, pp. 55-6.

²³ Papps, *Love or Money?*, pp. 56-8; I. Papps (1981) Husbands and Wives – taxes and choices, *Economic Affairs*, 1, pp. 238-9; I. Papps (1983) Do We Need a Policy for the Family?, *Economic Affairs*, 3, pp. 252-5.

²⁴ Papps, Do We Need a Policy for the Family?, p. 255.

²⁵ Frances Cairncross, 'Ideal Homes Exhibition', *Guardian*, 20 May 1980.

²⁶ David Willetts, 'Put the Family in the Foreground', *The Times*, 21 May 1990; Ruth Lister (1996) Back to the Family: family policies and politics under the Major government, in Helen Jones and Jane Millar (Eds.), *The Politics of the Family* (Aldershot: Avebury), pp. 11-31; Martin Durham (2001) The Conservative Party, New Labour and the Politics of the Family,

Parliamentary Affairs, 54, pp. 459-74; Jane Lewis (2001) Is Marriage the Answer to the Problems of Family Change?, *Political Quarterly*, 72, pp. 437-45.

²⁷ Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, pp. 279-80; Christopher Muller (1996) The Institute of Economic Affairs: undermining the economic consensus, *Contemporary British History*, 10, pp. 102, 104-5; Advert for Health and Welfare Unit (1992) *Economic Affairs*, 12, p. 16.

²⁸ Lee Rodwell, 'Suffer and be Happy; women who believe that unhappy marriages do not make unhappy children but that working mothers can', *The Times*, 19 August 1988; Patricia Morgan (2007) *The War Between the State and the Family* (London: IEA), p. 8.

²⁹ Patricia Morgan (1975) *Child Care: sense and fable* (London: Temple Smith), pp. 11-20, 27-8, 175-81, 317-8, quotes at pp. 338, 331. On the influence of Bowlby and 'Bowlbyism' on the post-war welfare state, see Mathew Thomson (2013) *Lost Freedom: the landscape of the child and the British post-war settlement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 79-105.

³⁰ Morgan, *Child Care*, pp. 12-13, 20, 318-38.

³¹ Patricia Morgan (1978) *Delinquent Fantasies* (London: Temple Smith); Patricia Morgan (1981) The Children's Act: sacrificing justice to social worker's needs?, in Digby Anderson (Ed.), *Criminal Welfare on Trial* (London: Social Affairs Unit).

³² Patricia Morgan (1986) Feminist Attempts to Sack Father: a case of unfair dismissal?, in Digby Anderson and Graham Dawson (Eds.), *Family Portraits* (London: Social Affairs Unit), p. 39.

³³ Morgan, *Feminist Attempts*, pp. 53-4.

³⁴ Morgan, *Feminist Attempts*, pp. 55, 59-60.

³⁵ Patricia Morgan (1992) *Families in Dreamland: challenging the new consensus for state childcare* (London: Social Affairs Unit); Patricia Morgan (1992) *The Hidden Costs of Childcare* (London: Family Education Trust); Patricia Morgan (1996) *Who Needs Parents?*

The effects of childcare and early education on children in Britain and the USA (London: IEA).

³⁶ Patricia Morgan (1995) *Farewell to the Family? Public policy and family breakdown in Britain and the USA* (London: IEA), p. 80.

³⁷ Patricia Morgan (1994) Double Income, No Kids: the case for a family wage, in Caroline Quest (Ed.), *Liberating Women... From Modern Feminism* (London: IEA), pp. 11-12, 17-19, 23; Morgan, *Farewell*, pp. 52-3, 76, 78-81

³⁸ Morgan, Double Income, pp. 14-16; Morgan, *Farewell*, pp. 3-26.

³⁹ Morgan, *Farewell*, p. 61.

⁴⁰ Morgan, Double Income, pp. 12-13; Morgan, *Farewell*, pp. 54-65, 76.

⁴¹ Patricia Morgan, 'To the Banks, A Child', *The Times*, 16 September 1989; Patricia Morgan, 'Not Just Taxing But Shooting the Family Fox', *Guardian*, 28 August 1995; Patricia Morgan, 'A Time for Women', *Guardian*, 29 April 1996.

⁴² Morgan, Double Income, pp. 24-5; Morgan, *Farewell*, pp. 93-112, 150-1, 154-5, 63, quote at p. 63.

⁴³ Morgan, Double Income, p. 25.

⁴⁴ Morgan, Double Income, pp. 21-2, quote at p. 21; Morgan, *Farewell*, pp. 67-8. Morgan was in effect endorsing the standard view of women's 'dual roles' among policy-makers and social scientists before the challenge to this view posed by second wave feminism in the 1970s: Helen McCarthy (2016) Social Science and Married Women's Employment in Post-War Britain, *Past and Present*, 233, pp. 269-305.

⁴⁵ Susan Raven (2007) 'Obituary: Hermione Parker', *Citizen's Income Newsletter*, issue 3, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Hermione Parker (1995) *Taxes, Benefits and Family Life: the seven deadly traps* (London: IEA), pp. 101, 88-9.

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- ⁴⁷ Norman Dennis and George Erdos (1992) *Families Without Fatherhood* (London: IEA), with a foreword by A. H. Halsey; Norman Dennis (1993) *Rising Crime and the Dismembered Male* (London: IEA).
- ⁴⁸ John Welshman (2013) *Underclass: a history of the excluded since 1880* (London: Bloomsbury), pp. 163-84.
- ⁴⁹ Charles Murray (1996 [1994]) *Underclass: the crisis deepens*, in Ruth Lister (Ed.), *Charles Murray and the Underclass: The Developing Debate* (London: IEA), p. 112. Murray drew on data he had been given by Patricia Morgan to make this case: see p. 120.
- ⁵⁰ Murray, *Underclass: the crisis deepens*, pp. 124-8, quote at p. 126.
- ⁵¹ Morgan, *Farewell*, pp. 93-5.
- ⁵² See for example the discussion of Patricia Morgan's work by Janet Daley, *The Times*, 5 January 1995 and Melanie Phillips, *The Observer*, 10 November 1996.
- ⁵³ Nicholas Wood, 'Minister in Family Policy Clash', *The Times*, 29 June 1990; Teresa Hunter, 'Women's Votes Mean Childcare is Vital in the Mother of all Election Battles', *Guardian*, 18 January 1992.
- ⁵⁴ Keith Joseph (1990) *Rewards of Parenthood? Towards more equitable tax treatment* (London: CPS), p. 2.
- ⁵⁵ Joseph, *Rewards*, p. 12.
- ⁵⁶ Joseph, *Rewards*, p. 12.
- ⁵⁷ Joseph, *Rewards*, p. 13.
- ⁵⁸ Joseph, *Rewards*, p. 13.
- ⁵⁹ Margaret Thatcher (1993) *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins), pp. 630-1.
- ⁶⁰ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 631. Some glimpses of the childcare arrangements in the Thatcher household, including the employment of a full-time nanny, can be gleaned in John Campbell (2001) *Margaret Thatcher Volume 1: the grocer's daughter* (London:

Pimlico), pp. 98-106; Charles Moore (2013) *Margaret Thatcher: the authorised biography volume 1: not for turning* (London: Penguin), pp. 118-22.

⁶¹ Wood, 'Minister in Family Policy Clash'.

⁶² David Willetts (1991) *Happy Families? Four points to a Conservative family policy* (London: CPS), pp. 18-19, quote at p. 18.

⁶³ Willetts, *Happy Families?*, p. 20.

⁶⁴ Willetts, *Happy Families?*, p. 21.

⁶⁵ Willetts, *Happy Families?*, pp. 30-2, quote at p. 32.

⁶⁶ Willetts, *Happy Families?*, pp. 24-5.

⁶⁷ Willetts, *Happy Families?*, p. 10.

⁶⁸ Vicky Randall (2000) *The Politics of Child Daycare in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 76-107; Jane Lewis (2013) Continuity and Change in English Childcare Policy 1960-2000, *Social Politics*, 20, pp. 368-77.

⁶⁹ John Major, Leader's Speech to Conservative Party Conference, Bournemouth, 13 October 1994, at <http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=140> (accessed 19 July 2017).

⁷⁰ See for example Caroline Quest (Ed.) (1992) *Equal Opportunities: a feminist fallacy* (London: IEA); Jon Davies (Ed.) (1993) *The Family: is it just another lifestyle choice?* (London: IEA); Caroline Quest (Ed.) (1994) *Liberating Women... From Modern Feminism* (London: IEA); Robert Whelan (Ed.) (1995) *Just a Piece of Paper? Divorce reform and the undermining of marriage* (London: IEA); David Conway (1998) *Free-Market Feminism* (London: IEA).

⁷¹ Sheila Lawlor (1994) *Nursery Choices: the right way to pre-school education* (London: CPS), pp. 16-21, quote at p. 21.

⁷² Lawlor, *Nursery Choices*, p. 5, also pp. 21-2. Lawlor was a long-standing critic of the role of LEAs in running schools: Lucy Hodges, 'The Right-Hand Woman of Education's Right-Wingers', *Independent*, 15 May 1996.

⁷³ Lawlor, *Nursery Choices*, pp. 34-5.

⁷⁴ Derek Harris, 'Nursery Schools Spell Success', *The Times*, 18 October 1993.

⁷⁵ Fran Abrams, 'American Nurseries Want Your Vouchers', *Independent*, 26 March 1995.

⁷⁶ Barry Hugill, 'Nursery Boss Joins Tory Think-Tank', *The Observer*, 2 April 1995.

⁷⁷ David Soskin (1995) *Pre-schools for All: A Market Solution* (London: Adam Smith Institute), pp. 15-18, 25-8, quote at 28. The ASI's earlier, less far-reaching proposals in this area had advocated tax exemption for parents who used workplace childcare: Madsen Pirie (1989) *Mind the Children* (London: Adam Smith Institute).

⁷⁸ Milton Friedman (1955) The Role of Government in Education, in R. Solo (Ed.), *Economics and the Public Interest* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press), pp. 123-45; Milton Friedman (1962) *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 85-107. The British version of the education voucher scheme was first outlined by Alan Peacock and Jack Wiseman (1964) *Education for Democrats* (London: IEA) and E. G. West (1965) *Education and the State* (London: IEA).

⁷⁹ Arthur Seldon (1986) *The Riddle of the Voucher* (London: IEA); Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett (2001) *Keith Joseph* (Chesham: Acumen), pp. 369-73.

⁸⁰ Jane Lewis (2013) The Failure to Expand Childcare Provision and to Develop a Comprehensive Childcare Policy in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s, *Twentieth Century British History*, 24, pp. 249-74.

⁸¹ Randall, *Politics of Child Daycare in Britain*, pp. 95-102.

⁸² Paul Gosling, 'Why Vouchers are for Grown-ups too', *Independent*, 5 July 1995; Judith Judd and Fran Abrahams, 'A Child of Four Could See the Problems: at long last the right has got a voucher scheme off the ground. But will it work?', *Independent*, 7 July 1995.

⁸³ Jane Lewis (2003) Developing Early Years Childcare in England, 1997-2002: the choices for (working) mothers, *Social Policy and Administration*, 37, pp. 219-38; Mary Daly (2008) Shifts in Family Policy in the UK under New Labour, *Journal of European Social Policy*, 20, pp. 433-43; Eva Lloyd (2008) The Interface Between Childcare, Family Support and Child Poverty Strategies Under New Labour: tensions and contradictions, *Social Policy and Society*, 7, pp. 479-94.

⁸⁴ The supply of alternative sources of expertise to cast doubt on an emerging policy consensus has been a core function of neo-liberal think-tanks in many different contexts: Thomas Medvetz (2012) *Think Tanks in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 176-212; Philip Mirowski (2013) *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste* (London: Verso), pp. 223-323.

⁸⁵ Fraser, *Fortunes*, pp. 224-6; Emily Robinson, Camilla Schofield, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Natalie Thomlinson (2017) Telling Stories About Post-War Britain: popular individualism and the 'crisis' of the 1970s, *Twentieth Century British History*, 28, pp. 268-304.

⁸⁶ Lewis, *Decline of the Male Breadwinner Model*, pp. 161-6.

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