

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Birkbeck, University of London
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 19
<b>Title of case study:</b> Diversity and British Political Representation: the parent politician and gender and diversity sensitive political institutions
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2010-2018
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2015-2020
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Campbell and Childs' research on parents in parliaments has influenced the way in which parliaments formally and informally organize and function with regard to the effective participation of parents, especially mothers. At Westminster, their research has directly supported the case for improvements in childcare services, the permitting of children and babies in division lobbies, and the introduction of proxy voting for MPs on parental leave. In several countries and sub-national parliaments, their work also contributed to the establishment of new parliamentary groups to review and implement reforms, and to the monitoring and auditing of the family circumstances of MPs alongside other gender and diversity indicators.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The underpinning research began with Campbell and Childs' work on the interactions between gender, parental status and political representation (<b>R1, R2</b>). This built on Campbell's work with Lovenduski (professor emerita at Birkbeck) on the 'supply side' analysis of gender disadvantage in women's political representation arising from problems of work-life balance in the politician role. The research maps and analyses how gender and parental status interact to produce specific limitations on the representation of mothers, establishing the basis for ongoing measurement and auditing of this aspect of the gender gap. A 2012 survey of UK MPs revealed a substantial 'motherhood gap': women MPs were much less likely to be mothers than men MPs were likely to be fathers (<b>R2</b>).</p> <p>This research supported the case for improvements in childcare and provisions to make it possible for parents to exercise their statutory rights to parental leave, specifically provision for proxy voting. Campbell and Cowley (<b>R3</b>) investigated public attitudes to a less familiar reform proposal, job-sharing. Working with the Fawcett Society, Campbell and Childs convened a seminar with MPs, advocates, experts and practitioners, including the Green Party's aspirant job-share candidates and their legal team. They then commissioned, edited and contributed to an interdisciplinary study with authors from the fields of employment relations, law and politics, along with campaigners, published in 2017 as a Fawcett Society pamphlet (<b>R4</b>). Their contribution drew on The Representative Audit of Britain 2015 project, for which Campbell was PI and Childs CI. The pamphlet provided considered evidence that job-shares could both be legally and practically viable and would facilitate the participation of a range of excluded groups in electoral politics. This publication provided campaigners with systematic research on the viability of their proposals.</p> <p>In advocating reforms to parliamentary procedures and services to support parent politicians, Campbell and Childs engaged with MPs, particularly women, and parliamentary officials in numerous venues described below. Childs drew on her work with Allen (Bath) on women's parliamentary organisations (<b>R5</b>) to analyse how gender and politics scholars can help to promote institutional change by working with politicians and officials to achieve reforms (<b>R6</b>, with Dahlerup, Stockholm). They showed that gendered reform campaigns can overcome partisan differences, and that reforms to parliaments can draw support from parliamentary officials concerned to sustain the reputation and influence of parliaments in public life. International collaboration, dissemination and experimentation contributes to these processes. An academic network was founded by an international workshop in Canada in 2012, 'Mothers and Others', which yielded an edited book including Campbell and Childs' chapter (<b>R1</b>).</p>
<b>3. References to the research</b>

- R1. Campbell, R & Childs, S. (2018) 'The Motherhood Trap: Reconsidering Sex, Gender and Legislative Recruitment', In Thomas, M & Bittner, A. (Eds.) *Mothers and Others: The Role of Parenthood in Politics* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press).
- R2. Campbell, R. & Childs, S. (2015) 'Parents in Parliament: 'Where's Mum?' *Political Quarterly* 85 (4): 487-493. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12092>
- R3. Campbell, R. & Cowley, P. (2014) 'The Representation of Women in Politics, Addressing the Supply-Side: Public Attitudes to Job-Sharing Parliamentarians', *British Politics*. 9: 430-449. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/bp.2014.12>
- R4. Campbell, R. and Childs, S. (2017) *Open House? Reflections on the Possibility and Practice of MPs Job-Sharing* (London: Fawcett Society).
- R5. Allen, P and Childs, S (2019) The Grit in the Oyster? Women's Parliamentary Organizations and the Substantive Representation of Women, *Political Studies* 67(3) 618-38. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321718793080>
- R6. Childs, Sarah and Dahlerup, D. (2018) Increasing women's descriptive representation in national parliaments: the involvement and impact of gender and politics scholars. *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 1 (2), pp. 185-204. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510818X15272520831094>

#### 4. Details of the impact

Campbell and Childs' research has influenced parliamentary practices and promoted parliamentary reforms through several channels. Particularly notable was Childs' report *The Good Parliament* (1) which drew on her research with Campbell to recommend child-friendly reforms to parliamentary practices, and also proposed institutional mechanisms to bring about reforms. Campbell and Childs have drawn on their research in giving evidence to enquiries on parliamentary practices, presenting their work to ad hoc groups, and working with leading parliamentarians. Childs has worked closely with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians network, updating the latter's Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines in 2020 (2).

#### Driving reform through institutional innovation and data collection

Campbell and Childs' research on mothers and parents in Parliament fed directly into both the approach and recommendations of *TGP*. Drawing on her research on how change around gender and diversity issues happens in parliaments (R5 and R6), Childs sought to ensure that recommendations were linked to individuals or institutions that could promote change, with new institutions created where necessary. For example, she advised the then-Speaker of the House, John Bercow, to establish the Commons Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion. The Group subsequently drove the adoption of 18 of *TGP*'s formal recommendations.

*The Good Parliament* engaged with the IPU's well-established 'Gender Sensitive Parliaments' auditing framework, and Campbell and Childs' work contributed to the GSP Audit undertaken in 2018 (3). Specifically, the report presents the findings of a parenting survey undertaken by Campbell and Childs in 2017-18, updating their 2012 survey (R2).

Following an invitation in 2017 from the Greffier of the States of Jersey, Childs consulted with members of the Jersey States Assembly on promoting a diversity and inclusion agenda. Working with the Deputy and the Chief Minister Senator, the States of Jersey Assembly Diversity Forum was established in July 2017. The report on the establishment of the Forum cites her briefing on *TGP*, specifically on the need for an internal action group to promote reform, as the key driver for the creation of the Forum, which was modelled on the House of Commons Reference Group recommended by *TGP* (4). The Forum moved quickly to conduct a Gender Audit (States of Jersey Assembly Gender Audit 2019). Childs' active involvement was pivotal in gaining support across the political spectrum for the aim of working towards a gender-sensitive parliament. The

impact of *TGP* has been felt well past the Jersey States Parliament, and the recommendations from the Gender Audit are beginning to have an impact on policy and legislation across several areas (5).

### **Changes to House of Commons rules, procedures and practices**

*The Good Parliament* contained a number of recommendations on improving the child-friendliness of the House of Commons. Recommendation 13 suggests that Parliament should 'undertake a review for the provision of a creche facility on the Parliamentary Estate'. This review was carried out in 2017, a short term emergency childcare service was put in place, and today there is institutional provision of information about local suppliers of childcare. Recommendation 3 states that Parliament should 'permit MPs to be counted at the 'door' of the division lobbies when accompanied by their children'. In March 2017, the Commons Reference Group endorsed this and it has become normal practice. Furthermore, a subsection of Recommendation 12 states that Parliament should 'permit infants in the Chamber and committees'. This has also been realised. In September 2018, the Speaker permitted Jo Swinson MP to bring her baby son into a debate; in December 2019 three women MPs – Creasy, Reeves and Badenoch – brought babies to their 'swearing in'; and in February 2020, the new Speaker, Lindsay Hoyle MP, announced that he would permit MP breastfeeding. These changes together demonstrate the institutionalisation of a more child-friendly House, reflecting the impact of Campbell and Childs' research on the gender gap in parental status in Parliament as well as the effectiveness of *TGP* in finding effective reform levers.

*Proxy Voting:* Under Recommendation 12, which deals with Parliamentary policy around maternity and paternity leave, *TGP* recommended the appointment of 'a proxy from amongst fellow party MPs' who could 'vote and otherwise act for' MPs who were absent on parental leave. The House passed a motion in favour of proxy voting for parental leave on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2019. This was initially for a pilot period of 12 months but, after Covid-19 related extensions on the 16<sup>th</sup> January and 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020, Parliament voted on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 to make the arrangement permanent.

This rule change required both Government support for tabling the motion and majority support amongst MPs. The motion was passed without requiring a division, reflecting the sustained mobilization of support that had occurred over the previous 3-4 years. The importance of proxy voting to equality of participation was recognised by women MPs who worked across party lines in the Commons Reference Group. The Mother of the House, Harriet Harman (Labour), worked closely with the Reference Group; the Speaker worked behind the scenes to garner support with party leaders, the Leader of the House, and the Chair of the Procedure Committee; the Procedure Committee was tasked with and undertook an inquiry into how to implement the House's commitment; and in total three debates were held to allow parliamentary discussion.

The momentum of these processes is particularly striking since the government lost its majority in 2017, meaning that parliamentary votes were often tight and procedures for casting votes could make a real difference.

### **Job-sharing in Wales**

Campbell and Childs were members of the Expert Panel on Electoral Reform convened by the (then) Welsh Assembly, which reported in 2017 (they participated on a job-sharing basis). The report of the Panel (6) cited Campbell and Childs' research (R4) to highlight that job-sharing could have an impact on the diversity of political representation, and recommended practical steps for its adoption in the Senedd. While this was not taken up, in December 2019, the Assembly introduced a new Bill to allow for Jobshares for local council executives (Gov.Wales: New law to make it easier for more people in Wales to stand to be local councillors).

### **Wider impacts on debates and policies**

Campbell and Childs are regularly called upon to contribute to policy and advocacy discussions, public debates and media events. In addition to their contributions at Westminster and Cardiff Bay, they have made presentations to committees of the Alberta State legislature, the Catalunya

Parliament and the Finnish, New Zealand, and Canadian Parliaments about the need for measures to address the motherhood gap and the importance of data collection and gender auditing (see for example their evidence to Canada's Standing Committee on the Status of Women (7)).

Campbell and Childs' research has also been cited in support of the recommendations of reports and inquiries on promoting diversity in representation in several jurisdictions. For example, a report for the Scottish Parliament on how to improve the diversity of committee witnesses cited the recommendation in *TGP* that there should be systematic and comprehensive collection and publication of diversity data on witnesses for each session and each committee of Parliament (8). A briefing paper on Women in Parliament for the New South Wales Parliament cited *TGP* extensively, and also drew on R3 and R4 in discussing job-sharing (9).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- (1) Childs, S. (2016) *The Good Parliament Report* (Bristol: Bristol University).
- (2) Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (2020) *Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines* (news release at [http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/Main/News/News\\_Items/CWP\\_launches\\_Gender\\_Sensitising\\_Parliaments\\_Guidelines\\_Oct\\_2020.aspx](http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/Main/News/News_Items/CWP_launches_Gender_Sensitising_Parliaments_Guidelines_Oct_2020.aspx))
- (3) Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit Panel (2018) *UK GSP Audit*.
- (4) States of Jersey Assembly: Diversity Forum: Establishment Report (<https://statesassembly.gov.je/AssemblyPropositions/2018/P.135-2018.pdf>);
- (5) Greffier of the States of Jersey and States of Jersey Deputy for St. Saviour 2 Testimonial
- (6) Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform (2017) *A Parliament that works for Wales*.
- (7) Standing Committee on the Status of Women (Canada) (2018) Evidence session, Tuesday 12 June (<https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/FEWO/meeting-108/evidence>).
- (8) Bochel, H and Berthier, A (2018) *Committee witnesses: Gender and representation*, Scottish Parliament Briefing Paper SB18-16 (<https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/2018/2/27/Committee-witnesses--gender-and-representation/SB%2018-16.pdf>)
- (9) Ismay, L (2018) *Women in Parliament*, NSW Parliamentary Research Service Briefing Paper No 3 ([https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/Women%20in%20Parliament\\_FINAL\\_19NOV2018.pdf](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/Women%20in%20Parliament_FINAL_19NOV2018.pdf)).