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**Popularism and Punishment or Rights and Rehabilitation?
Electoral Discourse and Structural Policy Narratives on
Youth Justice: Westminster Elections 1964-2010**

Journal:	<i>Youth Justice</i>
Manuscript ID:	YJJ-14-0011.R1
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Youth Justice, Elections, Policy, Manifestos, Discourse
Abstract:	This study explores the formative origins of youth justice policy and the discursive process of mandate-seeking in party manifestos in Westminster elections. Analysis of issue-salience and policy framing reveals: party politicization, a significant increase in issue-salience from the 1990s onwards, and a shifting structural policy narrative with inherent contestation and contradictions. The past decade has seen some attempts to revisit pre-1970s welfarist approaches following an extended emphasis on criminalization, incarceration and punishment. This discursive shift has presaged an impressive reduction in levels of incarceration and numbers sentenced, yet international and historical comparative data suggest party programmes need to place continuing emphasis on diversion if full compatibility with the UNCRC is to be secured.

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Manuscripts

Author Response to Referees' Comments

I am very grateful to the two referees for their helpful and constructive comments. I've listed below the ways in which I've addressed each point. Apologies if it looks a little long-winded - I wanted to explain how I've carefully and systematically addressed every point. The paper is much improved as a result and I have added an acknowledgement at the end of the paper. Once again - thank-you.

Referee: 1

Comments to the Author

The article deals with an important topic - and there is no doubt much more that might usefully be written about the politics of youth justice. The scope of the research reported upon is also promising dealing with elections from 1960 to 2010, and with a further election imminent, a rigorous analysis of historical tendencies would provide a context in which those interested in youth justice could understand the likely consequences of that contest.

The article is however undermined by a number of serious weaknesses that, in my assessment, render it unpublishable in its current form.

1. The author makes a plausible case for analysing election manifestos as an indicator of electoral discourse and political agenda setting. However, the findings derived from that exercise appears to undermine that case in that, abstracted from any context, the analysis lacks a relationship to the complexity of the broader political, policy and practice dynamics that have framed youth justice over the relevant period.

Author Response

This is really helpful - thanks. As noted below - I've extensively restructured/ refocused the paper - replacing the former analysis of aggregate framing patterns (i.e. breakdown of use of frames over the whole period 1964-2011) with careful attention to distinct narrative phases in the development of youth justice. This then situates the framing/ discourse into the political/ policy context as referred to by the reviewer(s).

a) The account presented - relying on the manifesto data - is one of a growing political salience attached to youth justice underpinned by the use of an increasingly punitive language. While that is undoubtedly a reasonable characterisation of part of the period under discussion, it simply does not do justice to the substantial political and policy sways that have occurred over the relevant time frame.

Author Response

Apologies - the first submission was heavy handed in concentrating on the punitive aspect. As the following points (below) explain, I've taken on board the reviewer's helpful comments and the revised paper now outlines the twists and turns in the narrative - and

1
2
3 importantly, moves away from criminalization and punitive policy
4 during key periods - giving a more balanced view.
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8
9 b) The reader would not pick up from the article, for instance, that far from the 50 years spanned by
10 the article following a single increasingly trajectory of intolerance towards young people in trouble,
11 that the 1970s were characterised by rapid increases in custody, albeit that intervention was often
12 justified with a welfare gloss and that the 1980s saw massive reductions in the use of child
13 incarceration which continued to the early 1990s. The remainder of that decade and the early 2000s
14 witnessed an escalation in the use of custody which then remained relatively stable until to 2008. In
15 the last two years covered by the article, there was a substantial decline which has continued in the
16 period since.
17

18 19 20 Author Response 21

22 This is really helpful - thank-you. As noted, I've made a major
23 change to the structure of the paper to address this point. I have
24 fully taken on board the criticism re. the complexity of the broader
25 political, policy and practice dynamics.
26

27 In response I've restructured the paper using structural narrative
28 analysis (Peterson and McCabe, 1983) as it's an ideally-suited
29 framework to pick out the twists and turns in YJ policy - linking
30 them to the political context. I've used the periodization set out
31 by the reviewer. Instead of, as before, aggregate discussions of
32 framing over the whole 5 decades, the paper summarises the framing
33 in each period.
34

35 For accessibility I've captured this in the (new) Table 1 - which
36 provides illustrations of the discourse from each of the periods -
37 and I've linked this through commentary, to the wider literature.
38

39 I've substantially updated the literature cited (20+ new references)
40 - in order to address the foregoing point - and offer a more
41 balanced view.
42
43

44 Additional Citations: 45

46 Gelsthorpe, L. and Morris, A. (2001) 'Restorative Youth Justice? The
47 last vestiges of welfare' Chapter 16 in J. Muncie, G. Hughes, and E.
48 McLaughlin (eds) in Youth Justice: Critical Readings, London, SAGE.
49

50 Hazel, N. (2008) Cross-National Comparison of Youth Justice, London,
51 Youth Justice Board.
52

53 Kohler Riessman, C. (2008) Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences,
54 Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
55

56 Maines, D. (1993) Narrative's moment and sociology's phenomena:
57 Toward a narrative sociology, Sociological Quarterly 34(1): 17-38.
58
59
60

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2
3 **Ministry of Justice (2014) Youth Justice Statistics - 2012/13**
4 **England and Wales, Youth Justice Board/ Ministry of Justice**
5 **Statistics bulletin, London, MoJ/ YJB.**

6
7 **Newburn, T. (1996) 'Back to the Future, Youth Crime, Youth Justice**
8 **and the Rediscovery of "Authoritarian Populism"', Chapter 5 in J.**
9 **Pilcher and S. Wagg (eds) Thatcher's Children?: Politics, Childhood**
10 **And Society In The 1980s And 1990s, London, Routledge.**

11
12 **Petersen, A. and McCabe, A. (1983) Developmental Psycholinguistics.**
13 **NY: Plenum.**

14
15 **Smith, D. and Utting, D. (2011) Reforming the response to youth**
16 **crime: from evidence to implementation, Journal of Children's**
17 **Services, 6, 2, 67 - 76.**

18
19
20
21 c) The author also discerns in the data an increasingly interventionist stance towards children who
22 break the law. If that is so, it would appear to demonstrate the tenuous nature of the links between
23 manifestos and policy and practice since the 1980s and the present conjuncture are notable for the
24 high level commitment to diversion, manifested in both periods, by very sharp falls in the number of
25 children entering the formal and in particular being subject to prosecution. Again the reader would
26 struggle to find any acknowledgement of that reality.

27 28 29 **Author Response**

30 **This is really helpful - thanks. I have carefully amended the text**
31 **of the revised paper in the 'Structural Policy Narrative' section to**
32 **note the high level commitment to diversion, manifested in both**
33 **periods referred to.**

34
35
36
37 d) Rather than simply representing the data as objective facts that describe the political reality, the
38 article accordingly needs to mediate the statistical and discourse analysis through what we know
39 actually happened if it is to help explain (or even accurately reflect) developments.

40 41 **Author Response**

42 **In the restructured paper I've now made connections between the**
43 **discourse and policy developments.**

44
45
46
47
48 2. Part of the difficulty resides in the selective nature of the literature review which the author uses
49 to develop a narrative of increasing punitivism. Almost all the materials cited were published
50 between the mid 1990s and 2002 during which time many critical authors were – with some
51 justification – describing the impact of the punitive turn and the politicisation of youth crime. That
52 account fitted with that period, but cannot necessarily be extended in either direction. John Pitts'
53 the New Politics of Youth Crime, which deals with the New Labour experience is for instance cited,
54 but his earlier work published in 1998 – which argues that youth crime under Thatcher was
55 depoliticised is not mentioned. Similarly, although Haines and Drakeford's 1998 book is referenced,
56 one would not know that much of the content was describing what they consider to be the many
57 successes of youth justice in the period up to the early 1990s in terms of establishing a philosophy of
58
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3 minimum intervention. Strangely, perhaps, the author does not refer to perhaps the best known
4 series of writings on politics and crime by David Downes and Rod Morgan in successive volumes of
5 the Oxford Handbook on Criminology which trace in some detail the contours of changing political
6 responses to law and order and recognises that in many ways that the 2010 election was
7 significantly less focused around a punitive agenda than previous electoral contests. In the most
8 recent of that book, Rod Morgan and Tim Newburn detail the rediscovery of 'devolution, discretion
9 and diversion' so far as youth justice is concerned in the final years of the Labour government and
10 the run up to the last election.
11

12 13 14 Author Response

15 Again, this is really helpful - thank-you. I've substantially
16 updated the literature cited - in order to address the foregoing
17 point - and offer a more balanced view/ reflect the subtleties and
18 twists and turns - not least the most recent move away from earlier
19 punitive approaches - and I've updated the references.
20
21
22
23

24 Added References:

25
26
27 Downes, D. and Morgan, R. (2012) 'British General Elections and Law
28 and Order' in Maguire, M., Morgan, R. and Reiner, R. (eds) The
29 Oxford Handbook of Criminology, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
30

31 Gelsthorpe, L. and Morris, A. (2001) 'Restorative Youth Justice? The
32 last vestiges of welfare' Chapter 16 in J. Muncie, G. Hughes, and E.
33 McLaughlin (eds) in Youth Justice: Critical Readings, London, SAGE.
34

35 McIntosh, B. and Phillips, A. (2011) Understanding the demonised
36 generation, Criminal Justice Matters, 83, 1, 28-30
37

38 Muncie, J. (2004) Youth and Crime, London, SAGE.
39

40 Meyers, M. K., Glaser, B. and Donald, K. M. (1998) On the front
41 lines of welfare delivery: Are workers implementing policy reforms?
42 Journal of Policy Analysis and Management. 17: 1, 22-31.
43

44 Newburn, T. (1996) 'Back to the Future, Youth Crime, Youth Justice
45 and the Rediscovery of "Authoritarian Populism"', Chapter 5 in J.
46 Pilcher and S. Wagg (eds) (eds) Thatcher's Children?: Politics,
47 Childhood And Society In The 1980s And 1990s, London, Routledge.
48

49 Pitts, J. (1998) The New Politics of Youth Crime: Discipline or
50 Solidarity? Basingstoke, Palgrave.
51

52 Smith, R. (2013) Youth Justice: Ideas, Policy, Practice, London,
53 Routledge.
54
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1
2
3 3. Given this literature, the data in figures 1 and 2 which show that the salience of youth justice was
4 considerably greater than at any previous election since 1964 comes as something of a surprise –
5 and is rather counterintuitive. It would be appropriate for the author to acknowledge that fact.
6

7 **Author Response**
8

9
10 I've amended the text to address this point:
11

12
13
14 **Additional text:**
15

16
17 They are also striking because the 2010 election was significantly
18 less focused around a punitive agenda than previous electoral
19 contests, yet youth justice continues to be a prominent issue. An
20 underlying explanation here being public attitudes – and parties'
21 attempts to be seen to be addressing continuing fear and anxiety
22 over youth crime from key sections of the electorate, groups parties
23 need to engage if they are to secure electoral success (Jacobson
24 and Kirby, 2012).
25

26
27 **Additional reference:**
28

29
30 Jacobson, J. and Kirby, A. (2012) Public attitudes to youth crime -
31 Report on focus group research, Occasional Paper 105, London: Home
32 Office.
33

34
35 It would perhaps also help if the article was a little bit clearer about the mechanism by which
36 incidents of 'salience' are counted. A quick search of the Labour and Tory 2010 manifestos for
37 instance show there is (between them) just one reference to youth crime and none to youth
38 offending (although Labour notes that youth reoffending has fallen). Each manifesto has one
39 reference to young offenders but in the Conservative document this is in the context of providing
40 help. There are several references to anti-social behaviour but few of these are specific to young
41 people and where they are Labour indicate that they intend to provide support and the
42 Conservatives that they will provide mechanisms to allow the police to deal with it without
43 criminalising the child. (The author quotes the relevant passage but chooses to omit this conclusion
44 to the sentence.) None of this is obviously consistent with the data shown in figures 1 and 2.
45

46
47 The methodology describes a range of 'frames' but it is not totally clear whether occurrences are
48 only counted if they relate to youth crime or youth offending (although the author implies this). For
49 instance, simply logging instances of 'partnership or multi-agency working' generates a much higher
50 count, but many the references in the latest manifestos are not in the context of addressing crime
51 and certainly not youth crime. Even where the frames are more obviously to do with crime – such as
52 'revising the law / increasing penalties' – they are not necessarily indicative of an approach to youth
53 justice – and the former half of the frame could of course be referring to introducing more lenient
54 approaches. Similarly, to suppose that references to 'family support, rehabilitation and addressing
55 social causes' is indicative of a more punitive climate is questionable.
56
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1
2
3 In this context, the paper should be clearer about what the data actually show.
4

5 Author Response

6
7 Apologies. I didn't do a good enough job in the earlier version.
8 I've clarified this in the Methods section. So for example with the
9 2010 manifestos references to content like 'Cadet forces will move
10 increasingly into state schools and we will expand spare time
11 activities for young people, doubling those available - including
12 sport - on Friday and Saturday nights, with neighbourhood police
13 teams closely involved in areas where youth crime is highest' -
14 contains quasi-sentences under 'proaction/ early intervention' to
15 prevent youth crime. Likewise, 'Youth reoffending is now falling,
16 and the numbers in youth custody have fallen by 30 per cent. We will
17 expand US-style street teams which use youth pastors and vetted ex-
18 offenders to reach out to disaffected young people' etc.
19

20 Added/ clarifying text:

21
22 The references analysed refer to quasi-sentences on youth crime or
23 youth offending. They were identified using signifiers and context.
24 Thus exhaustive searches of the manifesto text using key signifiers
25 associated with youth justice - 'youth', 'child' 'young' (person/
26 people), juvenile etc. - allowed the quasi-sentences to be
27 identified. In addition, the context of references was also
28 important - for example where, seemingly generic references were
29 proximate to youth justice-related manifesto sections and sub-
30 headings (e.g. 'Tackling Youth Crime'). Dividing the manifestos
31 using quasi-sentences controlled for long sentences that contain
32 several policy proposals.
33

34 4. The use of data as evidence is also a little idiosyncratic. For instance on page 17, the author
35 describes what is, at first sight, a debate between the three political parties on the effectiveness of
36 their opponents' crime policies. But the quotations used each come from different elections and
37 accordingly in very different political contexts. To present them as a dialogue would seem to be
38 inappropriate. The use of quotations similarly has no sense of history or chronology; so on page 18,
39 for instance, Goldson's 1997 assessment that youth justice policy making has been shaped by
40 conditions of moral panic is evidenced the Conservative manifesto from 1979. Similarly, on page 14,
41 two quotations are presented alongside each other from manifestos published in 1964 and 2005
42 without any recognition of the different context in which the passages originated.
43
44

45 Author Response

46
47 I didn't do a good enough job explaining this - I wasn't really
48 presenting these examples of politicking as a contemporaneous
49 dialogue as such - but evidencing the way that the discourse
50 featured such attacks and dismissal of opponents' policies in order
51 to secure 'issue ownership'. I've taken these examples out of the
52 revised version.
53

54 Re. chronology - I've removed the adjective 'prescient' in relation
55 to Goldson - and added a note that the quotes used are illustrative
56 of tropes yet underlining that each example is specific - contingent
57 - and the result of the prevailing historical and political context.
58
59
60

1
2
3 5. There also some conceptual difficulties with the paper:
4

5 a) To characterise traditional Conservative policies as based on neo-liberalism is a little ahistorical
6 given that most commentators point to 1973 oil crisis as being the at which neo-liberalism as a
7 serious political / economic force emerged – some 13 years after the start of the period with which
8 the article deals.
9

10 **Author Response:**

11 **I have amended the sentence - removing the reference to neo-**
12 **liberalism.**
13
14

15
16
17
18 b) Eliding ideas of the social investment state with punitive early formal criminal sanctioning of
19 children is not an obvious connection
20

21 **Author Response**

22 **This aspect of the text is removed from the revised paper.**
23
24

25
26 c) Partnership and multi-agency working is singled out as one 'frame' that has become increasingly
27 salient and it is contended that it is an indication of successive government's commitment to welfare
28 pluralism. A number of issues arise here. First, it is undoubtedly true that there has been a shift
29 towards reduced state intervention in welfare – and that this has impacted more significantly on
30 criminal justice since 2010 with the Coalitions' transforming rehabilitation agenda. But neither of the
31 quotations adduced to support the salience of the frame make any reference to anything that could
32 be regarded as pluralism in this sense. Second, partnership working in youth justice has, arguably,
33 been more a reflection of what John Pratt calls the corporatist model of youth justice, in which
34 managerialism plays a key role. Youth offending teams are for example statutory partnerships and
35 even the Coalition has no current (published) plans to change that arrangement. Third, while
36 managerialism may be a concomitant of increased punitivism, it is not a necessary correlate. In this
37 context, the author appears to misunderstand what Pitts has in mind when he talks of Korrektional
38 Karaoke. Although the phenomenon he describes takes place against the background of 'increasing
39 penalties', Pitts' point is a rather different one that relates to deprofessionalisation associated with
40 top down performance measures and targets.
41
42

43
44 **Author Response**

45
46
47 **Apologies 'non-state provision' is a better/ more accurate label**
48 **I've amended the text accordingly. I've replaced the quotes referred**
49 **to. I've also outlined the economic driver behind the Coalition's**
50 **use of non-state delivery. I've removed the Pitts reference to**
51 **Korrektional Karaoke in the revised/ restructured paper.**
52
53

54
55 **Added Text:**
56
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3 The prominence of the 'non-state provision' frame (e.g. 'voluntary
4 organisations and the private sector will be offered greater
5 opportunities to deliver offender services', Labour Party, 2005, 27)
6 - is explained by Yates (2012, 436). He observes that 'in youth
7 justice, in a similar manner to the 1980s, the neo-liberal driver of
8 reducing public sector spending, which had played such a significant
9 role in the elevation of diversionary, decarcerative and
10 decriminalizing philosophies' - is, once again to the fore. Etc.
11

12 13 14 Added References:

15
16
17 Downes, D. and Morgan, R. (2012) 'British General Elections and Law
18 and Order' in Maguire, M., Morgan, R. and Reiner, R. (eds) The
19 Oxford Handbook of Criminology, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
20

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22
23 Garside, R., Silvestri, A. and Mills, H. (2013) Third sector
24 involvement in criminal justice outsourcing, UK Justice Policy
25 Review, 3: 1, 20-21.
26

27
28
29 Pratt, J. (2002) 'Corporatism: the third model of juvenile justice',
30 in E. McLaughlin and J. Muncie (eds), Youth Justice: A Reader
31 London, Sage, 404-412.
32

33
34 Yates, J. (2012), What Prospects Youth Justice? Children in Trouble
35 in the Age of Austerity. Social Policy & Administration, 46: 432-
36 447.
37

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42
43 In sum, while the article deals with an intrinsically interesting topic, provides material over an
44 impressive time span, is quite well written and, in parts, persuasively argued, in my assessment
45 some work is required before it could be accepted for publication.
46

47 Author Response

48
49 Once again, I'm really grateful to the reviewer for the helpful and
50 constructive comments - the paper is much improved as a result.
51

52
53
54
55 **Referee: 2**

56
57
58 Comments to the Author
59
60

1
2
3 An interesting, thoughtful article on an important topic. However, I was very much left with the
4 impression that the author(s) was rather unfamiliar with youth justice in England and Wales. It had
5 the feel of an outsider's assessment of trends and changes. This is not a fatal flaw, but it does limit
6 the extent of the insight.
7

8 Author Response

9
10 **Many thanks - I'm v. grateful for the reviewer's constructive**
11 **comments and suggestions. In the revised version I have taken great**
12 **care to deepen the analysis, and engage with a broader range of**
13 **references in order to strengthen the insights.**
14

15 The time frame is used somewhat oddly. There is an analysis of manifestos across the whole period
16 and then the language is compared across parties. However, no account is taken - or appears to be
17 taken - of when the particular phrases/language appear(s). This, surely, is important? That is to say,
18 what the Conservatives or the Labour Party say is important, but when they say it is equally so. A key
19 example would be 'punitiveness'. The timing of the use of punitive language is surely key, but is
20 barely reflected upon. Surely the analysis should be structured by time period, electoral cycle and so
21 on. No sense is given, for example, of what parties say when in government versus what they might
22 claim in opposition.
23

24 Author Response

25
26 **Yes, this is really helpful. Thank-you. I've extensively**
27 **restructured the paper. Gone are the aggregate discussions of**
28 **different frames. Instead, as the reviewer suggests, I've**
29 **restructured the analysis in relation to distinctive narrative**
30 **phases - thereby allowing for engagement with the political/**
31 **prevailing context in the way referred to.**
32
33

34
35 I thought some of the citations were odd to say the least (by which I mean they were frequently not
36 the ones that I'd have thought of had I been looking for work to support particular claims being
37 made). That said, it is of course entirely up to the author to select what they feel is the appropriate
38 literature in such cases. There are few things that are missing that I think it is difficult to justify
39 having left out. Among these I would include the series of pieces written by David Downes and Rod
40 Morgan in the Oxford Handbook which have become something close to the definitive overview of
41 the politics of British criminal justice policy over the past quarter century. Second, Paul Rock's BJC
42 article on the early stages of criminal justice policy-making seems an odd omission given certain of
43 the arguments in this piece.
44

45 Author Response

46
47 **This is very helpful. I've drawn on Downes and Morgan's excellent**
48 **work in the revised version of the paper - and deepened the analysis**
49 **by engaging with around twenty new references, many of which are**
50 **more recent than in the first submission.**
51
52

53 More particular comments:

54
55 p.5: "...youth justice is a valence issue". This is an unsubstantiated claim. I'd like to know what
56 evidence there is for such a claim.
57
58
59
60

1
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3 Author Response

4 In the revised version I've not engaged with the literature on
5 valence politics - instead deepening the analysis on the discourse
6 in relation to the narrative periods.
7

8
9
10 In the methodological section I'd have expected to find some discussion of how the coding was
11 undertaken. What, for example, counts as a 'reference' to youth justice?
12 pp.6-9:

13
14 Author Response

15
16 Apologies. The methodology in the first submission as overly brief.
17 I've now expanded/ clarified the methodology in the revised version.
18

19
20 I was surprised not to find much discussion of extant research using party manifestos (pros and
21 cons). Is it a well-worn path?
22

23 Author Response

24
25 Apologies. The revised Methodology section now refers to the extant
26 research using party manifestos. Yes, it's a burgeoning area -with
27 broad coverage in journals like Electoral Studies, Discourse and
28 Society etc.
29

30
31
32 Amended text:

33 Comparative analysis of framing practices in different polities and
34 tiers of government is a long-established methodological practice
35 (Gould, 2000; De Vreese et al, 2001; Papacharissi, 2008; Aman, 2009;
36 Edwards, 2012). However, it is acknowledged that manifestos have
37 limitations as a data-source; not least because party policy
38 proposals are also set out in speeches, debates, new media updates
39 and other documents; yet they constitute the principal political
40 texts that reflect a party's priorities and issue positions thereby
41 allowing systematic analysis over time.
42
43
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45

46
47 Additional References:

48
49
50
51 Aman, I. (2009) Discourse and striving for power: an analysis of
52 Barisan Nasional's 2004 Malaysian general election manifesto,
53 Discourse and Society, 20, 6, 659-684
54
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3 Edwards, G. (2012) A comparative discourse analysis of the
4 construction of 'in-groups' in the 2005 and 2010 manifestos of the
5 British National Party, Discourse and Society, 23: 3, 245-258.
6
7

8
9 Gould, R. (2000) 'Integration', 'Solidarität ' and the Discourses of
10 National Identity in the 1998 Bundestag Election Manifestos, German
11 Life and Letters, 53: 4, 529-551.
12
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21 Once again, my thanks to the two reviewers for their helpful and
22 constructive comments.
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Popularism and Punishment or Rights and Rehabilitation?

Electoral Discourse and Structural Policy Narratives on Youth Justice: Westminster Elections 1964-2010

Abstract

This study explores the formative origins of youth justice policy and the discursive process of mandate-seeking in party manifestos in Westminster elections. Analysis of issue-salience and policy framing reveals: party politicization, a significant increase in issue-salience from the 1990s onwards, and a shifting structural policy narrative with inherent contestation and contradictions. The past decade has seen some attempts to revisit pre-1970s welfarist approaches following an extended emphasis on criminalization, incarceration and punishment. This discursive shift has presaged an impressive reduction in levels of incarceration and numbers sentenced, yet international and historical comparative data suggest party programmes need to place continuing emphasis on diversion if full compatibility with the UNCRC is to be secured.

Key Words Youth Justice, Policy, Issue-Salience, Manifesto, Elections, UK

Introduction

Effective youth justice policy¹ is an internationally-held policy goal that spans a number of key issues and debates including community safety, the exercise of state power,

1
2
3 modes of citizenship, social cohesion, law, policing and social welfare (Jones, 2001;
4
5 Junger-Tas and Decker, 2008). Whilst leading studies have charted the changing
6
7 political context shaping youth justice policy in the UK (Piper, 2001; Smith, 2005;
8
9 Goldson and Muncie, 2006; Smith, 2013), limited attention has been afforded to
10
11 electoral politics. This is a key lacuna for as Armstrong (2004, 100) notes, 'media
12
13 hyperbole about children and crime, along with electoral politics, may well reflect a
14
15 configuration of personal anxieties, competing social values and public policy options...
16
17 that represents a crisis of governance far more than a crisis of 'youth'. Accordingly, the
18
19 present study makes an original contribution by analysing electoral discourse and the
20
21 level of attention ('issue-salience') and use of language ('policy framing') in relation to
22
23 youth justice in party manifestos for Westminster elections (covering England and
24
25 Wales).
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30

31 The discourse-based process of mandate-seeking in election programmes
32
33 matters to the development of youth justice because it constitutes the link between the
34
35 representative process and policy development in liberal democracies. In this,
36
37 manifestos serve multitude of functions. *Inter alia*, they: 1. provide substantive details of
38
39 future government (and opposition parties') policies; 2. show how parties compare in
40
41 the priority they attach to youth justice; 3. reveal areas of inter-party conflict and
42
43 consensus; and 4. provide insight into how policy is shaped by party ideology and
44
45 contingent on local socio-economic and political factors. Overall, such a focus reveals
46
47 the political use of language and discourse-based processes that underpin the
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49 development of public policy, thereby providing a 'discursive benchmark' to
50
51 complement *ex post* analyses of policy delivery (Meyers et al, 1998). In short, it is a an
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3 approach that engages with the rejoinder that the 'wider social, cultural and *political*
4 context [of youth justice policy...] needs to be considered' (Case, 2007, 93, emphasis
5 added); as well as the invocation that 'academic analysts of youth justice need to remain
6 ever-cognizant of both the extrinsic and intrinsic complexities of criminological
7 research and the simultaneous play of politics' (Goldson and Hughes, 2010, 211).
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15 Accordingly, the current focus acknowledges the role of electoral discourse as an
16 important indicator of political agenda-setting (Cobb and Ross, 1997). Moreover,
17 attention to discourse and policy design recognises the way that both institutionalize
18 and legitimize particular types of governmental intervention in order to uphold law and
19 order. And, furthermore that these empower some interests and exercise control over
20 others, thereby creating a new context for future policy debates. This also provides
21 insight into parties' attempts to appeal to particular audiences at the time of elections.
22 In turn, this two-way process shapes wider voting patterns and determines which
23 policies are endorsed at the ballot box. The latter is explained by mandate and
24 accountability theories (Budge and Hofferbert, 1990; Royed, 1994; Fearon, 2003). The
25 former states that when in government parties should implement the policies that they
26 pledged when running for office. In contrast, accountability theory asserts that elections
27 are effectively 'opinion polls' on the performance of the party (or parties) forming the
28 previous administration – and whether they delivered their manifesto policy
29 programme (Przeworski et al, 1999).
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49 In summary, the following discussion explores the contemporary development of
50 youth justice policy by: 1. exploring changes in the issue-salience of youth justice since
51 its emergence in the party programmes of the 1960s; and 2. examining policy framing in
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3 manifesto discourse. Accordingly, the remainder of the paper is structured thus: a
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5 discussion of the literature on the youth justice policy and electoral competition is
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7 followed by an outline of the research methodology. The findings in relation to the study
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9 aims are then presented. Their implications are discussed in the conclusion.
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12 13 14 15 16 **Electoral Politics and the Formative Phase of Youth justice Policy-Making**

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18 Over previous decades a series of moral panics (Cf. Cohen, 1972) about hooliganism and
19
20 anti-social behaviour led to growing political attention to youth justice (Ungar, 2001;
21
22 Pitts, 1988). As Goldson (1997, 79) noted, the policy agenda was shaped by 'conditions
23
24 of 'moral panic' within which policy and practice has been refocused upon punishment,
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26 retribution and the wholesale incarceration of children'. Thus as Allen (2002, 5)
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28 concludes:
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33 the combined effect of increasing concerns raised by the most senior police
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35 officers and elements from the judiciary; almost obsessive media interest in
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37 crime with particular stress on violent crime, the sensational and the extreme;
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39 and a developing sense of fear within the public, exercised a very substantial
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41 influence over politicians and policy-makers.
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46 This is a pattern replicated in other liberal democracies (e.g. Welch, et al, 2002; Krinsky,
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48 2008). More recently, there has been a shift in approach. As Smith (2013, ix) explains:

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51 Much of the language has changed... practice has moved on. Perhaps now with a
52
53 greater emphasis on restorative approaches and less on monitoring and
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3 surveillance (box ticking); disposal patterns have revealed a significant change of
4
5 direction with the fallow years of the early 2000s succeeded by a very
6
7 substantial decline in the numbers of young people formally processed and
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9 locked up.
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12 Whilst these and other extant accounts chart developments in *government* policy on
13
14 youth justice (Cf. Newburn, 1998; Tonry, 2004; Yates, 2012; Smith, 2013), limited
15
16 attention has been given to the formative phase of policy-making and its electoral
17
18 underpinnings using longitudinal analysis of salience and framing in relation to the
19
20 programmes of the main *parties'* competing for office in a given polity. When study has
21
22 focused on youth justice policy and elections valuable reference has been made to:
23
24 parties' reconsideration of their policy positions in the wake of electoral defeat
25
26 (Rutherford, 2000, 104); popularism and the use of focus groups in setting party
27
28 programmes (Pitts, 2001), media coverage of youth crime during elections (Franklin,
29
30 2002); and substantive policy developments (Downes and Morgan, 2012).
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36 Accordingly, in order to address the absence of longitudinal work on manifesto
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38 discourse the following draws upon the electoral theory of 'issue-salience' (RePass,
39
40 1971; Robertson, 1976). This is a conceptualisation whereby pivotal importance lies not
41
42 on party issue-positions but on the prominence and attention afforded to different
43
44 issues in their campaigns; ergo the more an issue is emphasised by a party (making it
45
46 'salient'), the greater the probability it will attract voters who share similar concerns.
47
48 Traditionally, quantitative analysis has been used to explore this (Libbrecht et al, 2009;
49
50 Volkens, 2001). The present examination takes a more holistic approach by combining
51
52 this with an exploration of policy framing. Frames here are 'a necessary property of a
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3 text—where text is broadly conceived to include discourses, patterned behaviour, and
4
5 systems of meaning, policy logics, constitutional principles, and deep cultural
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7 narratives' (Creed et al, 2002, 37).
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11 In electoral theory youth justice is a 'position issue' – meaning that parties differ
12
13 in their views on what public policy should - and should not - aim to achieve; not least in
14
15 relation to the severity of penalties imposed, and degree of emphasis on rights and
16
17 restorative justice. *Inter alia*, parties' contrasting issue positions reflect their ideological
18
19 standpoint on the appropriate balance between the state and the market, their
20
21 conceptions of the nature of contemporary citizenship, and the relative merits of
22
23 statism versus *laissez faire* governance (Peck, 2008).
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26
27 As the following discussion shows, the increase in salience in Westminster
28
29 elections is a function of the party politicization of youth justice. This term refers to how
30
31 issues rise and fall on the political agenda as parties compete for votes on a given issue
32
33 (Carter, 2006). It is allied to the concept of 'issue ownership' (Petrocik, 1996), whereby
34
35 parties prioritize certain policy issues, emphasize earlier policy successes and attempt
36
37 to highlight party competence on a given topic - whilst at the same time dismissing
38
39 rivals' records. The underlying motive is to be seen as the 'owners' of an issue – thereby
40
41 securing electoral and reputational advantage.
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49 **Methodology**

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51 By applying mixed research methods the current study responds to earlier calls for
52
53 policy work to combine content and critical discourse analysis (Tonkiss, 2004).
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3 Accordingly, issue-salience is determined by content analysis of manifestos. This is
4 applied by recording the number of incidences of key words, ideas or meanings in party
5 programmes (Krippendorff and Bock, 2008) and is complemented by frame analysis
6 (Schön and Rein, 1994). The latter is concerned with how, as principal political texts,
7 manifestos enable parties to construct (or 'frame') policy proposals on youth justice and
8 other matters. In electoral terms, as Nelson and Oxley (1997, 75) observe: 'frames
9 influence opinions by stressing specific values, facts and other considerations, endowing
10 them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have under
11 an alternative frame'. In this way framing leads to political agenda-setting (Cohen, 1963;
12 Cobb and Ross, 1997) and, ultimately, the substantive policies that are mandated.
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28 Comparative analysis of framing practices in different polities and tiers of
29 government is a long-established methodological practice (Gould, 2000; De Vreese et al,
30 2001; Papacharissi, 2008; Aman, 2009; Edwards, 2012). However, it is acknowledged
31 that manifestos have limitations as a data-source; not least because party policy
32 proposals are also set out in speeches, debates, new media updates and other
33 communications; yet they constitute the principal political texts that reflect a party's
34 priorities and issue positions thereby allowing systematic analysis over time.
35 Accordingly, as noted, electronic versions of the manifestos of the leading² parties in UK
36 general elections 1964-2010 were analysed using appropriate software.³
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49 Thus, in the preliminary stage of the research, the manifesto texts were divided
50 into 'quasi-sentences' (or, 'an argument which is the verbal expression of one political
51 idea or issue,' Volkens 2001, 96).⁴ The references analysed refer to quasi-sentences on
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3 youth crime or youth offending. They were identified using signifiers and context. Thus
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5 exhaustive searches of the manifesto text using key signifiers associated with youth
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7 justice – ‘youth’, ‘child’ ‘young’ (person/ people), juvenile etc. – allowed the quasi-
8
9 sentences to be identified. In addition, the context of references was also important – for
10
11 example where, seemingly generic references were proximate to youth justice-related
12
13 manifesto sections and sub-headings (e.g. ‘Tackling Youth Crime’). Dividing the
14
15 manifestos using quasi-sentences controlled for long sentences that contain several
16
17 policy proposals.
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21 Individual quasi-sentences were subsequently coded using a deductive coding
22
23 frame (Joffe and Yardley, 2003) based on key topics and themes derived from the
24
25 academic literature on the youth justice policy (See Figure 2). Thus, this schema
26
27 incorporates a range of frames including: ‘increasing penalties/ revising the law’,
28
29 ‘victims’ needs/ restorative justice’, ‘family support/ addressing social causes’,
30
31 ‘rehabilitation’ and, ‘non-state provision/ multi-agency working’. Divergent views on
32
33 the coding emerged in <2 per cent of quasi-sentences (N=472)⁵ (resolved by discussion
34
35 between coders). Issue-salience was then determined by logging the frequency of quasi-
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37 sentences in a database of party manifestos.
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43 As existing electoral studies reveal, over recent years party programmes have
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45 tended to become more detailed and have a greater word-length. This has potential
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47 methodological implications for any claims of shifting salience over time; not least
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49 because any change might be regarded as a possible function of increased manifesto
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51 length rather than greater attention to youth justice policy by the respective parties. To
52
53 control for this the present analysis calculates references to youth justice as a
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percentage of all quasi-sentences in each manifesto⁶ (i.e. quasi-sentences on all topics and issues; see Figure 1 – below).

Youth Justice Policy in Westminster Elections 1964-2010

Issue-salience

A survey of election manifestos from the first decades following the Second World War reveals that early party programmes failed to make specific reference to young people. The wider context to this is the prevailing ‘Buskellite’ consensus that saw parties fixed on issues of reconstruction, the economy and employment – such that limited attention was given to criminal justice in general (Downes and Morgan, 2012, 184). Youth justice finally emerges as a manifesto issue in Westminster elections in 1964. Thus, the Right-of-centre Conservative Party noted: ‘A Royal Commission has been set up to report on sentencing policies and the most effective methods for the treatment of offenders. We have asked it to give urgent priority to the growing problem of crime among the young’ (Conservative Party, 1964, 17). Subsequent pledges included, we will ‘preserve the Juvenile Courts and expand the methods available for dealing with the problems of young people’ (Conservative Party, 1966, 15). During the 1960s parties’ overall approach to youth justice was one of welfare-oriented social intervention (Cf. Doob and Tonry, 2004) – as, for example, embodied in the Children and Young Persons Act (1969) (for a discussion, see Harris, 1982).

[Temporary Note – Figure 1]

Youth justice continued to receive limited attention in parties' manifestos until the 1990s (just 14.7 per cent of all manifesto references were made prior to that decade). Subsequently there is a 'step-change' in salience in Westminster electoral politics. Just over a fifth (22.2 per cent) of references were made in the 1990s alone, 29.2 per cent in 2000s, and 33.9 in 2010. Over the period 1964-2010 the two main parties are broadly equal in the attention they pay to the issue. The Conservatives account for 45.5 per cent of references, followed by Labour with 44.8 per cent. The Liberals/ Liberal Democrats are responsible for just 9.6 per cent. However, these aggregate totals mask a key difference between the two principal parties. Prior to the 1992 election the Conservatives were responsible for almost three-quarters of quasi-sentences (72.8 per cent). Whereas Labour gave limited attention to the issue; they were responsible for just 16.3 per cent of quasi-sentences and referred to youth justice in just three of their eight election manifestos 1964-92.

The present data provide a clear indication of how, over the past quarter century, youth justice has become an increasingly important policy issue in UK politics. When the 1992 and 2010 elections are compared there is a six-fold increase in the number of references to youth justice. It is a political (re-)prioritization confirmed when parties' youth justice references are plotted as a percentage of total quasi-sentences (i.e. on all topics and issues) in each election (Figure 1). These data are significant for they show that, from the 1990s onwards, it is Labour's competition with the Conservatives

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2
3 that drives the increase in youth justice issue-salience in Westminster electoral politics.
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5 They are also striking because the 2010 election was significantly less focused around a
6
7 punitive agenda that previous electoral contests, yet youth justice continues to be a
8
9 prominent issue. An underlying explanation here being public attitudes – and parties'
10
11 attempts to be seen to be addressing continuing fear and anxiety over youth crime from
12
13 key sections of the electorate, groups parties need to engage if they are to secure
14
15 electoral success (Jacobson and Kirby, 2012).
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18 19 20 21 22 *Structural Policy Narratives* 23

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25 The 1990s political (re-)prioritization of youth justice is accompanied by statistically
26
27 significant differences in way that the three major parties frame policy proposals
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29 ($P=>0.05$):⁷ This is evident in the parties' 'framing profiles' – a graphical illustration that
30
31 depicts the percentage of party references to youth justice falling under each frame
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33 (Figure 2). Accordingly:
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38 1. For the Conservatives the three leading frames in the Party's discourse were
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40 'increasing penalties/ revising law' (16 per cent), 'pro-action/ early intervention'
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42 (14.7 per cent), and 'strengthening the police' (13.4 per cent).
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46 2. In contrast, for Labour they were 'pro-action/ early intervention' (20 per cent),
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48 "non-state provision'/ multi-agency working' (18.4 per cent), and 'family
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50 support/ addressing social causes' (12.1 per cent).
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3 3. In the case of the Liberals/ Liberal Democrats the three lead frames were ‘non-
4 state provision/ multi-agency working’ (20 per cent), ‘custodial arrangements/
5 institutional reforms’ (18.4 per cent), and ‘pro action/ early intervention’ (12.1
6 per cent).
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11 [Temporary Note – Figure 2 – about here]
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19 Greater insight into the role of parties’ contrasting language use in the formative
20 development of policy is provided by structural narrative analysis. This is a technique
21 borrowed from linguistics (Peterson and McCabe, 1983). It offers a temporal
22 perspective of how frames as narrative devices, develop and become more or less
23 prominent and persuasive over time (Kohler Riessman, 2008, 275). It shows how policy
24 development - as well as political acts, are effected through, and need to be understood
25 in relation to narratives (Maines, 1993, 20). Applied to the manifesto data it shows how
26 the discourse shifts over time; in turn revealing the substantial political and policy
27 sways that have occurred over the past half-century (Table 1.). Four periods⁸ emerge
28 from the data. Each is discussed in turn.⁹
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46 [Temporary Note – Table 1. – about here]
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3 1970s
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6 The data underline how the 1970s were characterised by rapid increases in custody,
7 albeit that intervention was often justified with a welfare gloss. The lead frame over the
8 period was 'increasing penalties/ revising the law' (26.5 per cent), followed by 'family
9 support/ addressing social causes' (20.6 per cent), the working of the 'juvenile court
10 system' (17.6 per cent) and 'custodial arrangements' (14.7 per cent). As Muncie (2004,
11 p. 259) cogently notes:
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20 the recommitment to custody was based on three main factors. First there was
21 the popular belief that the 1970s had witnessed a rapid growth in juvenile crime,
22 characterised by a hard-core of "vicious young criminals". Second, the tendency
23 on the part of magistrates to give custodial sentences for almost all types of
24 offence... The third was the role of welfarism in drawing juveniles into the
25 system at an increasingly early age.
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35 The discourse is typified by references such as, 'a strengthened police force will be in
36 the forefront of the continuing battle against crime. But additional measures are needed
37 to tackle the growth in crime committed by young persons, especially in our towns and
38 cities' (Conservative Party, 1974b, p. 11). However, party accord did not endure. For, as
39 Smith (2011, 11) observes, 'as crime became more of a problem, cross-party consensus
40 broke down and criminal justice policies began to appear in party manifestos and
41 became the stuff of party political contest'.
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3 1979-92
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6 In contrast, 1980s saw massive reductions in the use of child incarceration; a pattern
7 that continued into the early 1990s. Indeed the period to the 1992 election is regarded
8 by analysts as one characterised by many successes in youth justice policy and practice;
9 not least in terms of establishing a philosophy of minimum intervention (Haines and
10 Drakeford, 1998). During this period almost a half (46.4 per cent) of all manifesto
11 references fall under three frames; 'family support/ addressing social causes' (22.2 per
12 cent), 'rehabilitation' and 'parental responsibility' (both 12.2 per cent). Whilst 'custodial
13 arrangements' (27.4 per cent) is the lead frame, there is also a significant decline in the
14 number of references to increasing sanctions (-11.1 percentage points).
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27 Newburn (1996, 62) explains the varied discourse of the period: 'during the
28 1980s, the Thatcher administrations – for whom punitive "law and order" policies were
29 a central electoral strategy – adopted a series of policies which had the effect of
30 reducing both recorded juvenile crime rates and the juvenile prison population'. Thus,
31 for example, the discourse placed greater emphasis on the responsibility of parents as
32 well as alternatives to custodial sentences. For example: 'this Act makes parents more
33 responsible for crimes committed by their children', and 'we shall set up more
34 compulsory attendance centres to which the courts can send young hooligans'
35 (Conservative Party, 1983, 22). In part, this shift was driven by budgetary concerns and
36 is part of what Pitts (1998, 9) describes as 'a more or less "depoliticised" strategy of
37 delinquency management" which aimed to handle offenders more efficiently and so
38 more cheaply. As a result, they were also handled more humanely'.
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6 *1997- 2001*
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9 The second half of the 1990s and the early 2000s witnessed an escalation in the use of
10 custody – a pattern which then remained relatively stable until to 2008. The majority of
11 references from this period (58.2 per cent) are couched in terms of a custodial
12 criminalizing approach (and fall under the associated frames: ‘increasing penalties/
13 revising law’, ‘juvenile court system’, ‘custodial arrangements’ etc.). As Gelsthorpe and
14 Morris (2002, 238) observe, ‘in the late 1990s into the new millennium other principles
15 began to emerge, many of these reflect restorative justice principles’. Examples of this
16 trajectory include, ‘young people who find themselves on probation for shop-lifting,
17 vandalism or petty thuggery should be shown where the path of crime may lead. They
18 should be given a brief personal experience of the nature of prison life... ‘Joy-riders’ will
19 now face prison sentences of up to 5 years’ (Conservative Party, 1992, 29). There was
20 also a hardening of Labour’s discourse. For example, ‘young men, commit about half of
21 all serious crimes. We need a new approach to catch, convict, punish and rehabilitate
22 more of them’ (Labour Party, 2001, 34).
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45 *2005 – 2010*
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47 From the mid-2000s onwards there has been a substantial decline in the number of
48 youth offenders in custody. In part, this has been driven by a shift in the political debate
49 in the wake of the Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour
50 (2010). As McIntosh and Phillips (2011, 30) note, this has seen ‘a new rhetoric around
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3 crime, justice and anti-social behaviour which focuses more on rehabilitation than
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5 previous approaches... A move away from the more punitive vestiges of New Labour's
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7 law and order agenda' (McIntosh and Phillips 2011, 28). Thus, the last years of New
8
9 Labour and run up to the 2010 election can be characterised as one where there has
10
11 been a rediscovery of 'devolution, discretion and diversion' so far as youth justice is
12
13 concerned (Morgan and Newburn, 2012, 490). It is a shift evident in the manifesto
14
15 discourse where 'non-state service provision' is the lead frame (33.3 per cent), followed
16
17 by 'pro-action/ early intervention' (26.8 per cent) and 'family support/ addressing
18
19 social causes' (15.9 per cent). The prominence of the 'non-state provision' frame (e.g.
20
21 'voluntary organisations and the private sector will be offered greater opportunities to
22
23 deliver offender services', Labour Party, 2005, 27) - is explained by Yates (2012, 436).
24
25 He observes that 'in youth justice, in a similar manner to the 1980s, the neo-liberal
26
27 driver of reducing public sector spending, which had played such a significant role in
28
29 the elevation of diversionary, decarcerative and decriminalizing philosophies' - is, once
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31 again to the fore.
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38 Against this backdrop it should be noted that, in many ways, the 2010 election
39
40 was significantly less focused around a punitive agenda than previous electoral contests.
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42 As Downes and Morgan (2012, 190) suggest, this was also partly due to the pressing
43
44 need to address the economic crisis, furthermore it was driven by Labour's challenge to
45
46 the Tories claim to be the traditional 'party of law and order'. The shift towards reduced
47
48 state intervention in welfare - and commensurate increase third and private sector
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50 provision has thus impacted more significantly on criminal justice since 2010. Notably
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52 with the UK Coalition government's transforming rehabilitation agenda. Thus, for
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3 example, the Ministry of Justice, National Offender Management Service, the Youth
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5 Justice Board and Probation Trusts awarded £53.7m of contracts to third sector
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7 organisations between May 2010 and October 2012 alone (Garside et al, 2013, 9). Such
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9 non-state provision has, arguably, been a reflection of what Pratt (2002) calls the
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11 corporatist model of youth justice, in which managerialism plays a key role.
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18 [Table 2 – about here]
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21 *Tropes*
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24 Tropes form part of political discourse and cross-cut policy frames. As Fischer and
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26 Forrester (1993, 117) explain, they are ‘figures of speech and argument that give
27
28 persuasive power to larger narratives [including policy frames] of which they are part’.
29
30 The present analysis shows a number crosscut the discourse. The data related to earlier
31
32 electoral cycles support Goldson’s (1997, 79) assessment that policy-making on youth
33
34 justice was been shaped by ‘conditions of ‘moral panic’ [... and] has been refocused
35
36 upon punishment, retribution and the wholesale incarceration of children’. Accordingly,
37
38 as Table 2 underlines, retribution and punishment are key tropes in the manifesto
39
40 discourse. At their most extreme examples appear to disregard ‘due process’ and the
41
42 possibility that defendants may be found not-guilty. For example, ‘at the moment about
43
44 a third of all juveniles appearing before the youth courts are discharged without any
45
46 punishment at all. This sends all the wrong signals to youngsters - particularly first time
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48 offenders - who then feel they can get away with crime’ (Conservative Party, 1979, 15).
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3 Also particularly evident in the 1990s, is the prevalence in the discourse of
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5 pejorative descriptors under the 'demonization' trope supports Haines and Drakeford's
6
7 (1998, 34) assessment of political and media debate 'habitually demonising young
8
9 people and baying for ever more excessive punishment'. This trope was frequently
10
11 employed by parties at the time. In a party political sense it is a valuable device for it
12
13 allows social problems to be blamed upon 'others'. The negative consequences of which
14
15 are that this often encompasses marginalized groups - or those with limited access to
16
17 power and redress. As Young (1999, 111) observes, it is a mode of politicking that may
18
19 entail a 'customary inversion of causal reality... instead of acknowledging that we have a
20
21 problem in society because of basic core contradictions in the social order, it is claimed
22
23 that all the problems of society are because of the problems themselves'. Allied to this is
24
25 parties' use of 'fear' (Bailey and Williams, 2000). Playing on popular fears about youth
26
27 offenders is a further troubling aspect of the discourse owing to its de-sensitising
28
29 effects. As Armstrong (2004, 113) notes, 'the fear of crime is what strips us of our moral
30
31 sensitivity. While crime is understood in terms of 'risks', our concern is with limiting
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33 risk rather than understanding and changing the world in which we live'.
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40 The discourse of fear is heightened by the manner in which the party manifestos
41
42 emphasise what they regard as contemporary policy failings and their associated social
43
44 costs; both of which may contribute to moral panic. In the 1990s in particular, this trope
45
46 was employed by both main parties in order to present their proposals as the solution
47
48 to a prevailing malaise (Goldson, 1997; Moore, 2000). Use of the frame resonates
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50 strongly with what Young (2009, 4) refers to as 'moral disturbance because of conflicts
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3 in values'. These are most event in the Right's promulgation of 'traditional values under
4
5 attack' (e.g. Conservative Party, 1987, 31).
6
7

8 Each of the foregoing are used as a rationale for the dominant pre-2000 trope of
9
10 'punitiveness' (cf. Hamilton, 2014). This is an approach described by Pratt et al (2005,
11
12 xv-xvi) as one that:
13

14
15
16 in a number of ways, reverses long-standing traditions that had become
17
18 hallmarks of modern democratic penal culture, while overseeing the
19
20 introduction of sanctions that were, until recently, seen as incommensurate with
21
22 its values [... or at least,] obeying a different set of values and cultural
23
24 expectations from those that had previously provided the frame of reference
25
26 under welfare state/penal modernity.
27
28

29
30 Examples of the latter include: 'Young Offenders - A strengthened police force will be in
31
32 the forefront of the continuing battle against crime... to deal more effectively with
33
34 persistent juvenile offenders-for example, football hooligans-and the range of available
35
36 institutions must be improved' (Conservative Party, 1974b); and 'cracking down on
37
38 local disorder and anti-social behaviour... to deal with the 'yob culture'" (Labour 2001,
39
40 32).
41
42
43

44
45 A further trope, particularly evident in Labour's manifestos after 1997, is that of
46
47 'transformation' (e.g. 'transforming our approach to the young offender', Labour Party,
48
49 1970, 18). This artfully removes the party concerned from the pre-existing political
50
51 context. It resonates with the policy literature on responsibility-displacement and (non-
52
53)defence of earlier rounds of policy making (Gray and Jenkins, 1982; Boardley and
54
55

1
2
3 Kavussanu, 2010). It is revisionist in nature and gives the impression 1. that the party in
4
5 question bears no responsibility for past rounds of policy-making, and 2. is offering a
6
7 corrective and championing the cause of those suffering from the problems of youth
8
9 crime by promising the wholesale reform of a dysfunctional policy and governance
10
11 framework created by others (Cf. Walgrave, 2004).
12
13

14
15 'Efficiency' is the remaining trope. It is particularly prominent in the
16
17 Conservatives' manifestos of the 1980s, subsequently it also features in the policy
18
19 programmes of New Labour following the party's embrace of neo-liberalism. Its
20
21 adoption reflects the pervasive language of managerialism resonant in the 1980s and
22
23 1990s, as well as parties' keenness to extoll the benefits of 'new public management' (Cf.
24
25 Hood, 1991; McLaughlin, 2001) as well as 'best-value' regimes (Stewart, 2002). For
26
27 example, 'Faster Justice - Justice delayed is justice denied... We are determined to speed
28
29 up justice... the time taken to bring juveniles to court would be cut from 10 weeks to a
30
31 matter of days' (Conservative Party, 1997, 37). It is a trope that has gained renewed life
32
33 in the context of the post 2007/8 economic recession.
34
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42 Discussion

43
44 The present findings highlight the discursive underpinnings of the late-twentieth
45
46 century rise in the issue-salience of youth justice policy in the main state-wide parties'
47
48 manifestos in Westminster elections. Prior to the 1990s the data show how it received
49
50 little attention in party programmes. During this era the political Right was the 'owner'
51
52 of youth justice in electoral discourse, for throughout the 1960s, 70s and 80s Left-of-
53
54
55

1
2
3 centre Labour Party paid scant attention to the issue; instead concentrating on other
4
5 areas of welfare development (Pugh, 2011). From the 1990s onwards the analysis
6
7 reveals the political (re-)prioritization of youth justice as an election issue as the two
8
9 main parties competed in framing policy pledges in order to secure issue-ownership
10
11 and colonise the political centre-ground.
12
13

14
15 The current study also reveals how the Conservative manifestos of the 1990s,
16
17 together with aspects of the New Labour discourse, perpetuated and intensified
18
19 pervasive popular politics of criminalization, incarceration and retribution (McVie,
20
21 2011). This endured through to the early 2000s, thus undermining earlier welfarist
22
23 approaches to youth justice (Pitts, 2001). Subsequently, the use of custody remained
24
25 relatively stable until to 2008. In the two years leading to the 2010 election there was a
26
27 substantial decline in prosecutions and incarceration. This has continued to the present,
28
29 for since 2009/10, there have been 55 per cent fewer young people entering the Youth
30
31 Justice System and 36 per cent fewer young people (under 18) in custody (MoJ, 2014,
32
33 4). Over the past election cycle the manifesto discourse has instead emphasised a high
34
35 level of commitment to diversion. On one level this might augur well. Yet, as Smith and
36
37 Utting (2011, 71) note, problems remain – and these are fully not addressed in the party
38
39 programmes. Not least the fact that, in their view, ‘the present system in England and
40
41 Wales fails to resolve the tension between punishment and welfare in a coherent way...
42
43 and it is incomprehensible to most young offenders’. Part of the blame here might be
44
45 attributed to the framing practices of parties and the prevalence of ‘mixed messages’. In
46
47 turn, this underlines the relevance of the present focus on the formative phase of
48
49 politics, and in particular manifesto discourse and the electoral grounding of future
50
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1
2
3 government policy. In this this parties find themselves facing the challenge of bridging
4
5 two conflicting priorities. Electoral necessity dictates the need for robust quasi-punitive
6
7 language that 'plays well' with the key sections of the electorate that the parties hope to
8
9 engage. Whereas, the policy shift away from the earlier punitive 'turn' of the 1990s has
10
11 resulted in a rapid drop in sentencing and convictions.
12
13

14
15 There is a further key point that emerges from this. Whilst the 'direction of
16
17 travel' of the past half-decade is wholly encouraging (compared to 2011/12 levels, there
18
19 has been a 20 per cent reduction in the level of youth incarceration). It is also the case
20
21 that the average custody population in 2012/13 (including 18 year olds held in the
22
23 youth secure estate) was 1,708 (MoJ, 2014, 10). From an historical viewpoint this is
24
25 approximately 50 per cent higher than in 1993 (Pickford and Dugmore, 2012, 93) and,
26
27 from an international perspective it is comparatively high (Hazel, 2008). The most
28
29 recent data relating to September 2011 (Council of Europe, 2013, 76, Table 2.2) reveal
30
31 that England and Wales still has the third highest number of inmates aged under 18
32
33 years of age in Europe (after Greece and Turkey).¹⁰ This would suggest the need for
34
35 parties' to place greater emphasis on compliance with the United Nations Convention on
36
37 the Rights of the Child (Cf. Scraton and Haydon, 2002; Goldson and Muncie, 2006;
38
39 Muncie, 2008) and, heed the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's (2007: para. 10)
40
41 call (in relation to practice in England and Wales) that, 'the traditional objectives of
42
43 criminal justice, such as repression/retribution, must give way to rehabilitation and
44
45 restorative justice objectives in dealing with child offenders'.
46
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51
52 It is against this backdrop that the foregoing discussion points to a future
53
54 research agenda that builds on the current study and explores and number of associated
55

1
2
3 aspects of policy-making on youth justice and electoral politics. Topics for future study
4
5 include examination of: 1. the effect of lobbying and public attitudes data on the shaping
6
7 of youth justice policy pledges in party election programmes; 2. the internal party
8
9 processes of agenda-setting on youth justice as parties draft their manifestos, including
10
11 the role of individual political actors and lobbyists; and 3. the influence of youth justice
12
13 policy pledges on voting behaviour.
14
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17
18 In summary, the present analysis underlines that, from a criminological research
19
20 perspective, future study of youth justice policy in liberal democracies needs to be
21
22 cognizant of the formative origins of state intervention and the discursive process of
23
24 mandate-seeking, issue-salience and policy framing in party election manifestos. Not
25
26 only does this reveal patterns and processes of party politicization it also shows the
27
28 parties' shifting emphasis from popularism and punishment to rights and rehabilitation.
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39
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6 ¹ This paper follows Pickford and Dugmore's (2012, 2) definition 'The youth justice system in England
7 and Wales caters for young people who get in trouble with the police who are aged 10-17 (inclusive)'.
8 (Northern Ireland also has 10 years as the minimum age of criminal responsibility. In contrast, Scotland
9 since 2011 will not prosecute below 12 years under the terms of the Criminal Justice and Licensing
10 (Scotland) Act 2010, provision 52.

11 ² Defined in terms of share of the popular vote.

12 ³ Where necessary, hardcopy only versions of early manifestos were transcribed. The software used was
13 Nvivo 9.

14 ⁴ A worked example of coding with quasi-sentences: 'We will extend extra powers to the police for dealing
15 with anti-social behaviour by young people and streamline the system of youth courts to make it far more
16 effective' is coded as one quasi-sentence under the 'police powers' frame, and one under the 'juvenile
17 court system' frame.

18 ⁵ 9 incidences.

19 ⁶ Derived from the Comparative Manifesto Project, <https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/>

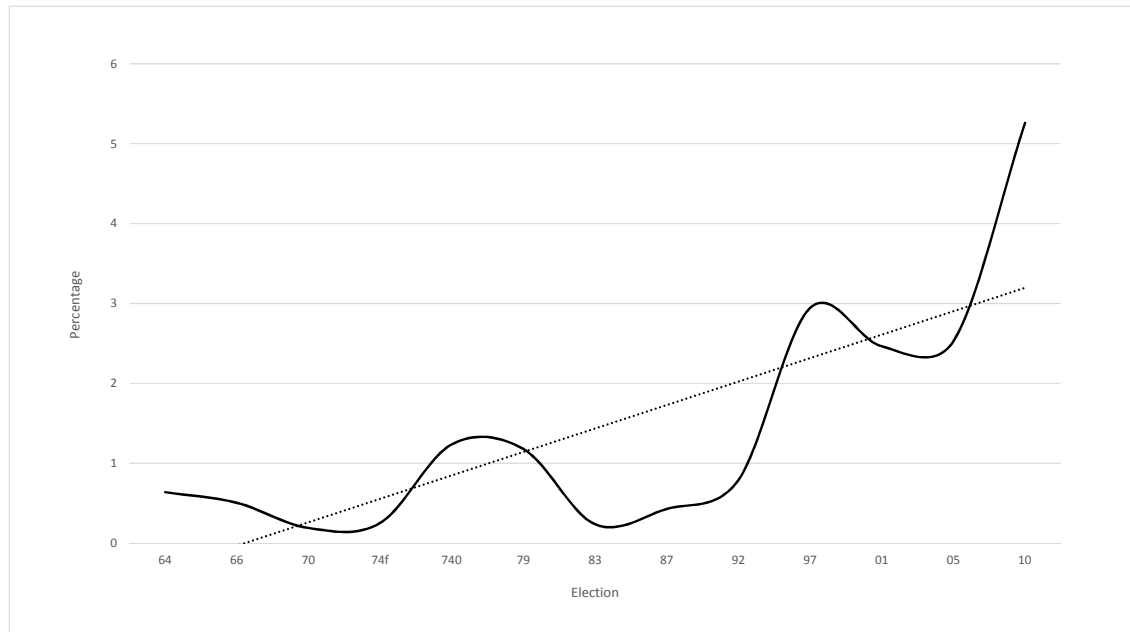
20 ⁷ ANOVA $P=0.001769463$, $Df=2$, $F. crit = 3.327654499$

21 ⁸ These are non-discrete –they are based on general election cycles.

22 ⁹ Of the handful of references to youth justice in the manifestos of the 1960s the majority were in relation
23 to 'custodial arrangements/ institutional reforms' (42.6 per cent), followed by 'family support/
24 addressing social causes' (28.6 per cent).

25 ¹⁰ Source: Table 2.2: Age Structure of Prison Populations on 1st September 2011: Minors and Persons
26 Between 18 and 21 of Age (CoE, 2013, 76).
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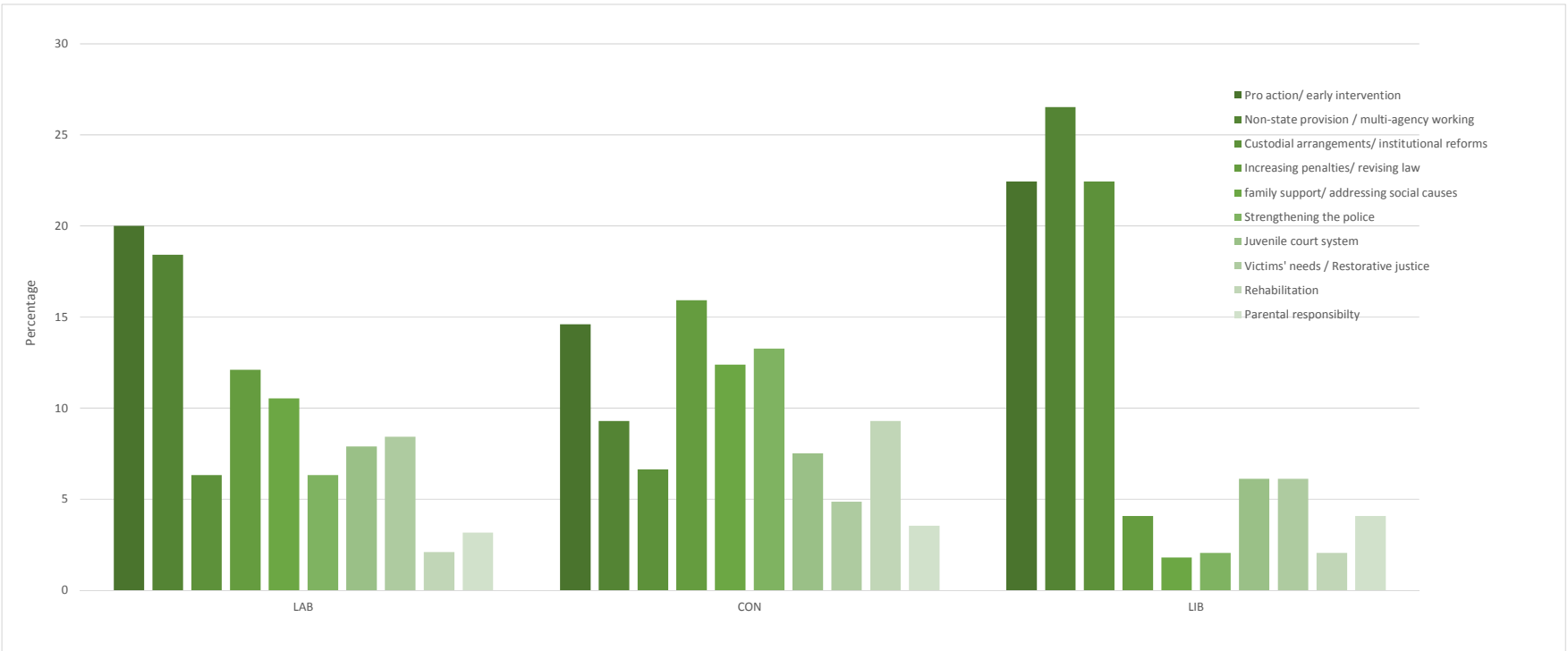
Figure 1. The issue salience of youth justice policy in the three main parties' general election manifestos 1974 (Feb)-2010: Youth justice as a percentage of all quasi-sentences in each election (N= 3,060).ⁱ



ⁱ 1974 rather than 1964 is the start year in the Figure owing to availability of base data from the Comparative Manifesto Project from which the 'all quasi-sentences' data are derived.

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Figure 2. Policy framing profiles: UK General elections 1964-2010 (All-party post-1964 total of youth justice policy quasi-sentences disaggregated by frame. Each party = 100%) (N= 472).



Decade	Narrative Phase	Examples of Discourse
1970s	Rapid increases in custody, albeit that intervention was often justified with a welfare gloss	'The courts must be enabled to deal more effectively with persistent juvenile offenders-for example, football hooligans-and the range of available institutions must be improved' (Conservative Party, 1974b, 11)
1980s - early 1990s	Massive reductions in the use of child incarceration	'The Prison Scandal - The 'short, sharp, shock' has failed. As the Magistrate's Association has recommended there should be a single youth custody sentence. Detention centres, already under-used by the Courts, should be abolished, and the accommodation released to be used for remand centres' (SDP, 1987, 17).
Early 2000s	Early 2000s witnessed an escalation in the use of custody which then remained relatively stable until to 2008.	'It's time to stop turning a blind eye to crimes committed by young offenders and ensure instead that they are put back on the right track. We will increase tenfold the number of places in Secure Training Centres - taking persistent young menaces off our streets' (Conservative Party, 2001, 23); 'Cracking down on local disorder and anti-social behaviour through local partnerships and measures to deal with the 'yob culture' (Labour Party, 2001, 21).
2009-10	Substantial decline in custody	'We recognise the need for criminal sanctions like ASBOs and fixed penalty notices, but they are blunt instruments that often fail their purpose of deterring people from committing more crime. We will introduce a series of early intervention measures, including grounding orders, to allow the police to use instant sanctions to deal with anti-social behaviour without criminalising young people unnecessarily' (Conservative Party, 2010, 56).

Table 1. Manifesto Discourse and the Structural Narrative of Youth Justice in England and Wales 1970- 2010.

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TROPE	EXAMPLE
Retribution	'Tackle youth crime. We will widen the use of schemes that require offenders to repay their debt to society and to confront the consequences of their actions' (Liberal Democrats, 1997); 'As part of a community sentence, young offenders will be taken to see what life is really like inside one of our prisons - a sobering experience for them' (Conservative Party, 1992); 'Persistent juvenile offenders need to be properly punished ' (Conservative Party, 1997).
Fear	'[Parents] worry that... the dangers of being drawn into crime and drug use are growing. And they fear that passing our values on from one generation to the next is harder than ever' (Conservative Party, 2001); 'drink- and drug-fuelled violence... young people getting onto the conveyor belt to crime ' (Conservative Party, 2010).
Demonization	'A hard core of persistent young offenders commit a disproportionate number of crimes. ... [we will] combat loutish behaviour' (Conservative Party, 1997). 'We will increase tenfold the number of places in Secure Training Centres - taking persistent young menaces off our streets for at least 6 months' (Conservative Party, 2001); 'We shall set up more compulsory attendance centres to which the courts can send young hooligans ' (Conservative Party, 1983); '...deal with the yob culture ' (Labour Party, 2001)
Moral panic	'The origins of crime lie deep in society: in families where parents do not support or control their children... where... traditional values are under attack ' (Conservative Party, 1987); 'They offend again and again, laughing at the law and making their neighbours' lives a misery ' (Conservative Party, 1997).
Punitiveness	'Family Intervention Projects – proven to tackle anti-social behaviour – a no-nonsense regime of one-to-one support with tough sanctions for noncompliance' (Labour Party, 2010); 'Anti-social behaviour can be confronted . [... with] genuine neighbourhood policing clearly focused on zero tolerance (Conservative Party, 2005); 'we will experiment with a tougher regime as a short, sharp shock for young criminals ' (Conservative Party, 1979); 'We will be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime , and halve the time it takes persistent juvenile offenders to come to court' (Labour Party, 1997); 'by cracking down on local disorder' (Labour Party, 2001); 'We are piloting a tough new regime, with a heavy emphasis on discipline' (Conservative Party, 1997).
Transformation	' Transforming our approach to the young offender' (Labour Party, 1966); 'mostly young men, commit about half of all serious crimes. We need a new approach to catch, convict, punish and rehabilitate more of them' (Labour Party, 2001); ' overhaul our youth justice system and improve Young Offender Institutions' (Labour Party, 2005).
Efficiency	'... streamline the system of youth courts to make it far more effective... The job of the Crown Prosecution Service is to prosecute criminals effectively. There is strong evidence that the CPS is over-centralised, bureaucratic and inefficient' (Labour Party, 1997).

Table2. Cross-cutting Tropes in Parties' Manifesto Discourse on Youth Justice: Westminster Elections 1964-2010. ⁱ

ⁱ The quotes used are illustrative of tropes yet each example is specific and the result of the prevailing historical and political context.