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Changing frames:
The discursive influence of the
women's movements of
New Zealand and Australia

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent research and that all authorities and sources which have been used are duly acknowledged.

Sandra J. Grey
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Abstract

This thesis examines the discursive influence of women's movement activity in New Zealand and Australia from 1970 to 2000. The aim is to further understanding about how and when social movements influence cultural norms and reframe public policy. While there exists extensive sociological research into the conditions under which social movements emerge in societies, there is little empirical research into the effect of these phenomena. Similarly, the influence of social movements is under-researched within political science literature, where the focus has been on the impact of formal actors such as political parties and interest groups. Textual analysis is applied to public debate around the issues of childcare and unpaid work in Australian and New Zealand over a 30-year period. The four in-depth case studies identify the number and prevalence of discourses used in policy debates and the coalitions that defend these differing narratives.

The analysis of discourses and coalitions shows that women's movement activity brought changes to policy discourse in New Zealand and Australia. This influence, however, was often only partial. 'Radical' messages put forward by social movements hindered their discursive influence in the political realm and the attempts of the Australasian women's movements to alter policy debates were negatively affected by the introduction of neo-liberal narratives. Also limiting the impact of movement activity were the discursive legacies found in each of the policy debates, the type of alliances built by grass-roots activists, and the power of entrenched political elites. The analysis shows that messages challenging the status quo will alter the way policy is discussed in society, but at the same time processes of political debate will modify the messages advanced by social movements.
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<td>Australian Council of Trade Unions</td>
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<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<td>Office of the Status of Women</td>
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<td>PSA</td>
<td>Public Service Association</td>
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<td>SMO</td>
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<td>SNA</td>
<td>System of National Accounts</td>
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<td>WEL</td>
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<td>YWCA</td>
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Changing frames

I have a neighbour, one of those
Not very hard to find,
Who knew it all without debate
And never change their mind
I asked him, "What of women's rights?"
He said in tones severe
"My mind on that is all made up,
Keep woman in her sphere."

I met an earnest, thoughtful man,
Not many days ago,
Who pondered deep all human law,
The honest truth to know.
I asked him, "What of woman's cause?"
The answer came sincere,
"Her rights are just the same as mine,
Let woman choose her sphere."

From Keep Woman in Her Sphere

I was born in 1969 making me a 'daughter' of the women's liberation movement. During my teenage years I was told 'girls can do anything' and so had high expectations of what women's movement activity in Aotearoa-New Zealand would bring women of my generation. I expected to be able to have it all—an education, a career, a partner, children, and extensive travel—expectations opened up by the women's liberationists. Yet, I was paid less than male colleagues employed on identical job descriptions; was often questioned about my dedication to my career due to pending marriage; and have continually delayed child-bearing after watching the long hours worked by my female contemporaries as they tried to keep their families' washing piles from reaching the ceiling. As a working woman and wife in the 1990s I often sensed strong resistance to feminist principles. The 'mothers' of

women’s liberation had travelled a rocky road and made progress, yet there lay ahead a rocky road of unmet expectations for new generations of women. ‘Girls might be able to do anything’ in poster campaigns but in real life there were still barriers to achievement.

The women’s liberation movement and the other ‘equality’ movements that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s have been credited with radically altering the way the world operates. My own experience attested to a change in the expectations of women due to the activity of feminist mobilisations. However, could we say that the way the world operates at the dawning of the twenty-first century was as different as the feminists of the 1970s had hoped? I sought to discover why there appeared to be a disjunction between the expectation that ‘girls can do anything’ and reality. My research was prompted at one level by a desire to understand when and how movements, like the women’s liberation movement, were able to influence the political and civil realms. How much influence has the women’s movement had since 1970? Was it that the feminist movement was not as successful as is often claimed? Or that women’s movement influence in the 1970s had been over run by subsequent changes in the social and political realms?

When I decided to investigate the influence of what is frequently presented as a unitary mass mobilisation I thought there would be a simple answer to the question. However, the more I investigated the role of social movements in general (and the women’s movements of Australia and New Zealand in particular) the more it became apparent that mobilisations operate within a complicated web. Even defining the boundaries of the women’s movement became complex and absorbing, generating a need to answer an a priori question: What makes social movements distinct actors in the political and civil realms? Delving into the literature on social movements provided no single accepted definition of mobilisations but rather a myriad of propositions about what makes a social movement a social movement. From these various constructions it is possible to draw out critical elements that separate social movements from other collective actors operating in modern societies. I am making no claim of drawing together a definitive statement on what social movements are but taking a step towards the development of a sound working definition on which to base empirical research into these phenomena.
Seeking to answer when and how social movements bring influence to bear in the political and social realms also required the development of a methodology to gauge the impact of these diffuse and decentralised groupings. While social movements have been the subject of intensive research over last three decades there is minimal empirical research into social movement outcomes. Sociological research on these phenomena has been focussed on the emergence of protest movements, while political science literature has avoided gauging mass mobilisation influence and focussed on the impact of more conventional political actors, such as political parties and interest groups.

In order to gauge the influence of women’s movements in New Zealand and Australia I decided to journey through debates on unpaid work and childcare. In these debates there was clear evidence of the activity by women’s movements that was aimed at changing the way we talk and think about ‘domestic’ and ‘caring’ duties, as well as changing institutional structures that had ‘bound’ women to the private realm. However, women’s movements were not the only collective actors over the last 30 years who tried to change the beliefs underlying the operation of the ‘private realm’. This led to another question: What opportunities and constraints impact upon social movement attempts to change the world? As will be seen in later chapters, for feminist mobilisations bringing influence to bear was not simply a case of overthrowing the ‘patriarchy’, women’s movements had to battle new discourses on the roles of men and women that were raised by a range of actors functioning in the public realm. In particular, many of the debates around unpaid work and childcare in Australasia over the last three decades have come to be dominated by advocates of neo-liberalism\(^2\). These advocates have proved to be strong adversaries for women’s movements trying to ensure that ‘girls’ could do anything.

\(^2\) Within this thesis the label neo-liberal is used to apply to rhetoric and programmes driven by a belief in small government and superiority of the market in distributing goods in society. This follows the definition of neo-liberalism given by Mark Beeson and Ann Firth, who have called it “a convenient shorthand for a range of ideas, practices and approaches to the conduct of government that are associated with a normative preference for small states and reliance on market mechanisms to determine economic outcomes”. M. Beeson and A. Firth (1998) “Neoliberalism as a political rationality: Australian public policy since the 1980s” Journal of Sociology Vol. 34 No 3 November, p. 215. The label of neo-liberalism covers alternative names given this project including the new right and economic rationalism.
At the simple level this thesis is an account of the competition in childcare and unpaid work debates in Australasia over three decades. From this account of policy debates it is possible to isolate out the historical and contextual factors that aided (or hindered) active New Zealand and Australian women's movements seeking political and social change in regards childcare and unpaid work. At another level the aim is to move back from the contextualised case studies and look for broad patterns of when and how social movements as collective actors are able to bring about change in society. This thesis is not concerned with the factors that led to women's movements activity in New Zealand and Australia but, rather, how effective mass mobilisations were in challenging existing social and political structures and discourses. In better understanding how change is brought about, social movements may benefit in being able to exert more pressure on existing regimes. In demonstrating the role social movements play in policy debates, policy analysts and practitioners may gain a further understanding of the way changes occurs in society.

Chapter One: From the periphery

Chapter One surveys existing sociological literature on social movements in order to develop a working definition of these phenomena. A combination of characteristics is set out in this literature as making social movements distinct political and social actors. The elements are drawn together and lead to social movements being defined as collectives of individuals and groups who share a common message of opposition to dominant norms, and who use unconventional action and structures (at least some of the time) to bring about social change.

The second part of the chapter looks at existing research into social movement influence. As has been noted, there is little within social movement literature on influence and attempts to measure the political impact of these phenomena have often been labelled as fruitless. During the last two decades social movement writers have often sought to separate mass mobilisations from the political realm entirely. The work of Alberto Melucci has been influential in leading researchers to look at the ‘new social movements’ as cultural, not political, actors. While it is important to acknowledge the cultural aims of movement activity, researchers should not discard the ‘political’ aims and outcomes of mass mobilisations. Social movements are on the periphery of the political realm and public decision-making, but this does not
exclude these collective actors from changing the way issues are discussed by public sector actors or from influencing the final policy decisions.

As with all things associated with social movements there is no simple way forward when attempting to gauge political impact. The ‘political’ targets of social movement action are multiple and include the acceptance of new actors into the political realm; the adoption of new policies and laws; and changes in the meanings or codes used in society. The small amount of sociological literature on social movement influence (or ‘success’ as it is commonly presented) has often focussed on the material and participatory changes brought about by social movements. Structural gains brought about through social movement activity are important but this focus frequently leads researchers to bypass a central element of social movements—their message.

Investigation into the discursive influence of social movements on the other hand, provides a way forward in researching when and how movement activities are able to impact upon political decisions. A focus on discursive change allows movement researchers to gauge the level of external influence brought by mass mobilisations while at the same time recognising the importance of symbols, narratives, language, and cultural codes to liberation movements, such as the women’s movement. As Sally Kenney notes: “The characteristics of the so-called new social movements, symbols, framing, and the construction of meaning have been central aspects of the women’s movement since the beginning, in addition to expanding women’s piece of the economic pie. Feminists are particularly interested in the discursive aspects of politics, in reframing the dominant discourse.”

Chapter Two: Discourses, debates, and coalitions
In order to investigate the influence of social movements on policy discourses I turn to models developed within public policy literature. Increasingly there has been an argumentative turn in public policy reflecting a wider interest in the role of discourse

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in policy change. This argumentative turn recognises that the way policy is constructed impacts upon policy outcomes.

Through discourse analysis it is possible to develop a method of inquiry that maps the transfer of social movement narratives into the texts and decisions of public sector actors. While discourse analysis provides the tools for investigating discursive influence it does not provide a model for how social movement influence occurs. It is to Maarten Hajer’s work on discourse coalitions that I turn for explanation of the processes that allow social movements to bring impact to bear on public narratives. Hajer states that the policy process involves coalitions formed around specific narratives: “A discourse coalition is an ensemble of a set of story lines, the actors that utter these story lines, and the practices that conform to these story lines, all organised around a discourse.” The concept of discourse coalitions allows researchers to investigate the narratives used in policy debates and to discover which discourse coalitions are able to ‘win’ in policy argumentation. Through the very process of policy debate discourse coalitions seek to dominate the discursive space and change the ‘rules of the game’. This identification of discourses and coalitions provided a way to trace the influences within public sector texts of social movements and other collective actors operating in the debates under investigation.

The inquiry into the women's movement influence in New Zealand and Australia on the topics of childcare and unpaid work comes in two parts. There are four case studies, each of which involves a thick descriptive section based on textual analysis. In each case study a broad range of public documents from groups on the periphery of the political realm and actors central to public decision-making are scrutinised to locate the range of discourses used in the policy debates. For each case study 30 years of debates are selected and scrutinised, as any discursive is likely to occur slowly. From the textual analysis, the investigation proceeds to identify the


membership of the various coalitions involved in the debates and which of these groupings achieved discursive superiority on the topics analysed. Finally, the four case studies form the basis of a comparative chapter in order to draw out generalised patterns of influence achieved by active women's movements. Physical proximity, similarities in historical development, and similar political heritages made New Zealand and Australia suitable subjects for this comparative analysis.

Chapter Three: Mothercare, education, and the needy
The first case study is an exploration of childcare debates in New Zealand. A textual analysis of 212 documents on non-parental care reveals five different narrative positions used during the three decades scrutinised, including two narratives used by grass-roots women's organisations. The analysis of the coalitions formed to defend these five childcare narratives shows that activity from different branches of the New Zealand women's movement generated very different responses from actors in the political realm. A discourse coalition asserting the needs of working mothers achieved some public sector support during the three decades analysed, while demands for state-funded childcare for all women remained on the periphery of the political realm. It is non-movement narratives that dominated debates about the provision of non-parental care at the close of the 30-year time frame analysed.

Chapter Four: Work and leisure
Chapter Four looks at debates on the valuation of unpaid work in New Zealand and textual analysis of 110 documents highlights the existence of three competing discourses on the topic. The New Zealand debates on unpaid household tasks provide evidence of women's movement activity bringing influence in two ways. Feminist activity changed the language used to describe 'housework'. Movement agitation also led to the New Zealand government launching a time-use survey to measure the amount of unpaid work carried out in society. But, as will be seen in Chapter Four, the public sector acceptance of women-centred claims was only partial and unpaid work was confined as a 'women's issue' at the close of the time frame analysed.
Chapter Five: For women workers and the needy

In the Australian childcare case study 340 texts were subjected to analysis and from these documents seven discourses were found to play a part in Australian childcare debates between 1970 and 2000. The Australian childcare debates were far more complex than those found in the New Zealand case study and the influence of women’s movement activity was felt more strongly in this nation. Australian women’s movement activists who had argued for state-funded childcare provision for working mothers were able to achieve a level of institutionalisation of their claims. However, this influence is temporary. By the late 1990s the influence of the women’s movement over childcare argumentation was subjected to pressure by a neo-liberal based discourse coalition, highlighting the precarious nature of discursive gains made by actors from the periphery of the political realm.

Chapter Six: Women’s work, men’s work

A less complicated discursive terrain was found during the analysis of unpaid work debates in Australia. In this case study analysis of 90 documents on ‘the housework question’ revealed four narrative coalitions battling for discursive supremacy during the 30 years scrutinised. The Australian debates around unpaid work included discussions about the statistical measurement of household work; debates about the gendered differences in time spent on household tasks; and calls for the payment of a ‘housewife’s wage’. The analysis of the discourse coalitions involved in Australian debates on unpaid work from 1970 to 2000 indicated influence by formal women’s organisations seeking to change views held about household labour. However, concerns about the comparability of statistical measures hindered feminist calls for the inclusion of household activities in mainstream measures of productivity.

Chapter Seven: Frame alignment, discursive legacies, and political allies

The tentative findings from each of the four case studies are brought together in Chapter Seven in order to develop generalisations about the influence brought by social movement activity. While there are always problems in comparing in-depth case studies, the aim of Chapter Seven is to begin the development of hypotheses for social movement influence that can be tested with further studies. The comparison
of the discursive battles in New Zealand and Australia highlights the importance of
the type of message being proffered by social movements seeking to attain policy
influence. ‘Radical’ messages appeared to have little chance of being accepted by
political elites, while ‘pragmatic’ messages of reform were more likely to be
incorporated into public sector narratives. Beyond the content of discourses the
comparison of the case studies shows the importance of investigating the impact of
past policy debates and decisions on actors seeking to ‘win’ policy debates, and the
way alliances are utilised in attempts to gain supremacy in childcare and unpaid work
debates.

Chapter Seven completes the circle of the thesis by returning to the literature that
exists on the emergence of social movements. The aim is to establish whether the
factors seen to contribute to the emergence of social movements can be used to
explain the ability to bring discursive influence. Existing social movement research
looks to three factors to explain movement emergence: the political opportunities and
constraints confronting movements; the forms of organisation available to activists;
and, the discursive constructions of collective action. Using these three models—
political opportunity structures, resource mobilisation, and framing—social movement
researchers attempt to explain the reasons for mass mobilisation emergence while
paying only scant attention to the outcomes achieved by mass mobilisations. The
research into women’s movement influence in New Zealand and Australian debates
about childcare and unpaid work indicate that the narratives of social movements and
the political opportunity structures faced by mobilisations are significant factors for
collective actors seeking to bring discursive change.

The mixed results of the women’s movements of New Zealand and Australia may
not come as a surprise to those working within social movements. What it does help
to illustrate is some of the circumstances under which discursive influence was
achieved. It is important to continue analysis of the outcomes of social movement
activity, to further develop a sense of the conditions under which discursive influence
is brought about. There is also the need to investigate other social movements and

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6 D. McAdam (1996) “Introduction: Opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes –
towards a synthetic, comparative perspectives on social movements”. In D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy,
M. Zald (eds) Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and
collective actors involved in public debates to see whether other groups have more or less influence over the discourses underlying public policy decisions. For women’s movement activists it is clear that continued effort is needed if they are to fully win the discursive battle and ensure that ‘girls can do anything’.
Chapter One

From the periphery: Social movements and policy change

Soon will all women see the light,
They'll comprehend our common plight.
Together we'll fight and win our reward,
Men will cease to be our lords.

We were divided for years and years,
One didn't know of the other's tears.
Sisters! United, We'll be free,
We've joined the human company.

From: Sororité (sisterhood)¹

What follows in this thesis is an empirical investigation of the discursive influence of the women’s movements of New Zealand and Australia between 1970 and 2000. This investigation does not begin by assuming that women's movements were actively involved in the policy debates selected for investigation. Instead, it begins with an examination of the elements that distinguish mass mobilisations from other collective actors in order to develop a definition that allows for empirical inquiries into these phenomena. Part of this development of a definition involves placing mass mobilisations in context with other collective actors in the civil and political realms. Boundaries are drawn by setting out what movements are and by noting what they are not. It is important to begin by establishing a working definition that allows for identification of social movement activity, as the world of social movements is complex. Any a priori assumption of a unitary women’s movement at work in either New Zealand or Australia would close down the possibility of detecting activity by multiple arms of a movement or the possibility that there was no involvement in a policy debate by an unconventional feminist mobilisation. The
importance of discarding preconceptions about unitary women’s movement activity in New Zealand and Australia will be seen in the subsequent chapters. In two of the case studies (one in New Zealand, the other in Australia) there was activity by two groupings premised on feminist ideologies, while in one case there existed a feminist narrative but little that could identifiably be labelled as an active social movement. This discussion of social movement characteristics and the place mass mobilisations occupy in the civil and political realms is the first step in developing a methodology aimed at answering a range of questions about social movement activity, including: Do contemporary social movements have any influence over political decision-making? Under what conditions do movements influence the discourses of the political realm? Are some forms of social movement activity more ‘successful’ than others?

As well as drawing boundaries around social movements, the opening chapter will determine what type of influence sought by these phenomena should be the focus of empirical inquiries. From existing social movement literature it is evident that movements have historically sought to raise the consciousness of their members and have fought for cultural and political influence in society at large. The external influence sought by mass mobilisations has included attempts to bring substantive, participatory, and discursive changes in the political realm. It is this final form of influence—discursive change—that I will settle on in order to gauge the effects of any women’s movement activity in New Zealand and Australia between 1970 and 2000.

Drawing boundaries around social movements

It is frequently assumed that all modern democracies contain active mass mobilisations such as the women’s and environmental movements. An example of this assumption is found in the work of Ian Marsh. Marsh sets out nine major issue movements he says have emerged in Western democracies since the 1960s: “These are the women’s, peace, environment, consumer, gay rights, animal liberation, ethnic, racial minority and ‘New Right’ movements.” There are limitations in such an approach as these ‘issues’ movements are treated as unified entities, fixed in time

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1 From J. Silverman op.cit., p. 89.
and space. Movements may be "relatively unified entities" but as the name 'social movements' suggests, mass mobilisations are fluid collectives that move and change. As such we need a way to identify movements without fixing them in time and space. The aim is to make explicit the characteristics that make movements distinct political and cultural actors before beginning empirical investigations into their activities and influence. Social movements have been extensively studied in both sociology and political science and from this literature it is possible to develop a definition of social movements on which to base empirical investigations. While social movement theorists and empirical researchers frequently use different language to describe these phenomena, it is possible to draw out common themes from which to develop a definition. Though it is important to acknowledge that the boundaries drawn in any empirical study are artificial and the real world is not as clear-cut as definitions generated for empirical research make out.

Collective action

The most common assertion found in literature on mass mobilisations is that social movements are not a single actor but individuals and groups who join together around a common identity, a shared set of values, or a collective grievance. John McCarthy notes the wide variety of actors that make up social movements including individuals, groups, networks, and protest committees.

The common identity that draws individuals and groups together into a social movement is developed through both internal and external forces. Drakeford notes the internal struggle for a collective identity: "Meanings must be reassembled, solutions suggested and action proposed in ways which are continuously convincing

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4 J. D. McCarthy (1996) "Constraints and opportunities in adopting, adapting, and inventing". In D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy and M. N. Zald (eds) Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings, p. 145.
for existing members and attractive for new ones.”

While Melucci notes that the unity created in self-identification rests on the ability of a movement to locate itself within a system of relations. It is often asserted that movements build their collective identity on external interaction:

Both individual and collective identity are affected by interaction with nonmembers and by definitions imposed on movements by state agencies, counter-movements, and, especially in the contemporary movement environment, the media.

These external and internal pressures which help form the collective identity of social movements are then the result of reaction to, and interaction with, social and historical events.

The mere identification of a collective of individuals and groups brought together by a shared set of values does not necessarily indicate an active social movement, as these are not the only collective actors in society. Political parties, interest groups, countermovements, professional associations, churches, and mobs are just some of the groups that make up modern societies. It is necessary to draw boundaries between these collective actors and social movements before attempting to gauge the influence of mass protests in society. This separation of social movements from other collectives is done not just by identifying the actors within social movements, but by identifying the unique aims, structures, and tactics of movements (See Figure 1.1).

Social change and unconventional action

Within existing sociological literature, social movements are seen as collectives brought together by a common message of, and desire for, social and cultural

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6 M. Drakeford, op.cit., p. 13
change.\textsuperscript{9} Movements challenge the rationale and operation of existing political and social systems. This challenge to the system in which they operate encompasses attempts by social movements to seek change in specific political decisions. For example, della Porta and Diani see social movements as appearing to express dissatisfaction with public policy.\textsuperscript{10} This challenge also encompasses the creation of new knowledge in society.\textsuperscript{11} This view of movements as challengers to the status quo enables researchers to differentiate social movements from their antitheses, countermovements. Countermovements share many of the structural characteristics of social movements but are set apart by their aim to protect the status quo rather than break the limits of the existing system. It is important to note that I am not making a moral claim about the challenges posed by social movements in society. While mass protests are frequently invested with a halo of optimism and labelled as ‘progressive’, there is no reason to think that all social movements are good or progressive, just that they are seeking to change the status quo.

Social movements are not the only collective actors who challenge the status quo in society, interest groups and political parties also attempt to bring about change through legislative and policy initiatives. It is the way in which social movements push for social change that sets them apart from other groupings in society. While political parties and interest groups commonly utilise institutional networks and tactics to influence decision-making, social movements operate outside public sector institutions and networks. The primary conceptual difference between the participation in traditional political institutions and protest movements is the contentious and disruptive nature of protests.\textsuperscript{12} As Sidney Tarrow notes:


\textsuperscript{11} See R. Eyerman and A. Jamison \textit{op.cit.}

Movements—especially organized ones—engage in a variety of actions. These range from providing “selective incentives” to members, to building consensus among current or prospective supporters, to lobbying and renegotiating with authorities and to challenging cultural codes through new religious or personal practices. But the most characteristic actions of social movements are collective challenges. This is not because movement leaders are psychologically prone to violence, but because, in seeking to appeal to new constituencies and assert their claim, they lack the stable resources—money, organization, access to the state—that interest groups and political parties control.\(^\text{13}\)

As Jenny Minier notes in a study of democratic movements, these mobilisations involve activities such as protests, demonstrations, and strikes.\(^\text{14}\) Not only do social movements operate outside of mainstream political structures, as has been noted they also seek to break the limits of the system in which they operate.\(^\text{15}\)

A corollary to this use of unconventional tactics by mass mobilisations is their reliance on direct or grass-roots participation.\(^\text{16}\) In contrast to cadre-led and centralised bureaucracies of traditional mass parties, new social movements tend to be segmented, diffuse, and decentralised.\(^\text{17}\) This use of unconventional tactics and forms is not absolute as movements at times may utilise institutional forms of challenge, such as petitions and letter writing, in their attempts to bring social and cultural change. But movements are more involved than other collective actors in the use of mass rallies, protests, and at times violence, in order to push for change.\(^\text{18}\) And while political parties and interest groups may use unconventional actions to push their views, these actors can more readily rely on the conventional avenues to bring about change due to access to funds, organisational resources, and political elites. It is the routine (and almost automatic) access to elites that sets interest groups apart from social movements. As Berry notes interest groups if not part of the establishment, are certainly part of the issue networks, the communities of groups

\(^{13}\) S. Tarrow. (1996) op. cit., p. 4.  
\(^{15}\) A. Melucci (1985) op. cit., p. 795.  
\(^{16}\) H. Kriesi (1996) “The organizational structure of new social movements in a political context”. In *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural framings*, p. 153.  
\(^{17}\) H. Johnston, et. al. (1994) op. cit., p. 8.  
\(^{18}\) Much of the existing literature on social movements (from which the typologies of social movement tactics have been drawn) has not investigated women’s movement activity. This means little attention has been paid to the forms of challenge by feminist movements that are usually non-violent but involve alternative structures as their main form of social challenge.
and policymakers who negotiate over the issues before government: "They are so much a part of government today, it is easy to forget that these organizations were the direct outgrowth of angry, impassioned social movements that began in the 1960s." While I agree with Berry that many interest groups are very much a part of government today, not all interests groups active in New Zealand and Australia have arisen from social movement activism and not all social movement activity will generate interests groups that are able to find a seat at the political table. However, the focus on the proximity to power and the type of tactics used by groups is useful when distinguishing social movements from other collective actors in society, including interest groups. A change in social movement form will also change their status. Leaving collectives out of investigations once they have more formalised structures is advocated within Gamson's work on challenging groups. Gamson note: "A group is no longer a challenging group once it can call upon an already mobilized constituency whenever it decides to attempt influence."
## Figure 1.1

### The defining characteristics of social movements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Tactics and form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eyerman and Jamison(^{21})</td>
<td>To develop and produce knowledge around fundamental tensions in society</td>
<td>Organisations and groups in dynamic interaction</td>
<td>Creation and articulation of new thoughts and ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>della Porta and Diani(^{22})</td>
<td>To bring social change and form new value systems</td>
<td>Plurality of actors</td>
<td>Interaction with political elites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melucci(^{23})</td>
<td>To break the limits of compatibility of a system</td>
<td>Collective based on solidarity</td>
<td>Carrying on a conflict (communicative action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarrow(^{24})</td>
<td>To mount challenges</td>
<td>Actors with common purposes and solidarity</td>
<td>Disruptive direct action against elites, authorities, other groups, or cultural codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mueller(^{25})</td>
<td>a) Creator of collective identity b) Agent of political change</td>
<td>Collective based on debated identity</td>
<td>a) Creation of identity b) Challenge as historic actor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zald(^{26})</td>
<td>To bring social change</td>
<td>Collectives based on common values and beliefs</td>
<td>Ideologically structured action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is the combination of characteristics outlined in Figure 1.1 that sets social movements apart from other collective actors. The elements can be drawn together and social movements defined as *collectives of individuals and groups who share a common message of opposition to dominant norms, and who use unconventional action and structures (at least some of the time) to bring about social change.*

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\(^{22}\) D. della Porta and Diani, *op. cit.*
\(^{24}\) S. Tarrow, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-6.
Movements, interest groups, and political parties

Using the elements taken from existing social movement literature it is possible to place mass mobilisations in relation to other collective actors who are active in the political and civil realms for the purpose of empirical inquiries (See Figure 1.2). However, I agree with Dieter Rucht that it is difficult to isolate social movements from other groupings because of the problem of shared actors. Both individuals and small groups from within social movements can create and/or join interest groups or political parties. Or entire groups of actors that began as grass-roots collectives can develop more institutional roles, changing their very nature and categorisation. For example, in both New Zealand and Australia green political parties hold seats in the national legislative chambers. These green political parties are offshoots of the environmental and peace movements in the two nations, showing a change from contentious political protest to conventional political actor by a large section of these movements.

Not only do actors change the ground on which they stand, it is also possible (and quite probable) that individual actors will find homes in several different groupings at one time. Individuals may be part of mainstream political organisations and structures while committed to the negotiated aims and contentious activities of a social movement. The movement of individual actors between mass protests and mainstream institutional political organisations may in fact assist social movement influence and this issue that will be discussed in the comparative chapter of this thesis. While this problem of shared actors must be acknowledged, it is important to place social movements in context with other collective actors in society when seeking to carry out empirical inquiries into the influence of protest activity.

27 D. Rucht (1996) „The impact of national contexts on social movement structures: A cross-movement and cross-national comparison”. In Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings, p. 186-188.
Figure 1.2
Mapping social movements on the political realm

Now that the elements and boundaries of social movements have been outlined it is necessary to examine the types of influence sought by these movements. As can be seen from Figure 1.2, social movements sit on the periphery of the political landscape, so can research into the political influence of mass mobilisations be justified?

Social movements and political influence
There have been efforts to distance social movements from the political realm.  

terrain: the need for self-realisation in everyday life. "In this respect social movements had a conflictual and antagonistic but not a political orientation, because they change the logic of complex systems on cultural grounds."\(^{29}\)

While I agree that social movements aim to raise the consciousness of individual citizens and in doing so challenge the structures of society on cultural grounds, this is not the only change they seek. I agree with Tarrow that there are multiple likely outcomes from social movement activity: "The first is the effect of protest cycles on the political socialization of people who participate in them, the second the effects of struggle on political institutions and practices and the third the contribution of protest cycles to changes in political culture."\(^{30}\) By concentrating only on the consciousness-raising and cultural achievements of movements we are denying the political importance of social movements. This concern with Melucci’s work is noted by Carol Mueller:

> In his focus on an intermediate level of analysis, the face-to-face interactions where collective identities are forged, he unnecessarily abandons the cultural level of analysis at which the product of the submerged networks enters political culture. It is at this point that the social movement emerges as historic actor and agent of political change.\(^{31}\)

Mass mobilisations at times overtly seek the support of a political party or government to have changes enacted through legislation. As Vicky Randall notes, women could be ‘against the state’ but they made demands upon it, for instance for ‘the right to choose’ whether or not to have an abortion. Even where the emphasis of feminist activism was to create ‘self-help’ networks and organisations, in practice and over time these often developed a more symbiotic relationship with the ‘local state’.\(^{32}\)

In order to gain social change outside a movement’s own membership a mobilisation may in fact be reliant on broad institutional structures to adopt and implement

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\(^{30}\) S. Tarrow, *op.cit.*, p. 172.
policies that are binding on a community as a whole. Melucci himself notes that social movements may require recourse to the political system.\textsuperscript{33} Movements, such as women's movements, which seek large-scale redistribution within society are in fact reliant on governments making changes to macro-economic policy. Even when they do not overtly seek to influence the political realm the activities of social movements are likely to impact upon legislation and policy. Activities by social movements often take place in civil society but result in democratic power being exercised over the state.\textsuperscript{34} Mass mobilisations are collective actors that impact upon the lives of individuals, the political system, and the culture of society.

The existence of multiple targets and outputs of social movement activity leads some researchers to differentiate between those movements seeking cultural change and those seeking political change. For example, Craig Jenkins makes a distinction between mobilisations seeking to challenge the government and its policies, those directed at the regime and its legitimising myths, and those adopting a more radical goal of reorganising the state.\textsuperscript{35} Drude Dahlerup differentiates between policy movements (those which aim to influence the decisions taken by formal political institutions) and socio-cultural movements (those that act primarily in the social and cultural sphere).\textsuperscript{36} One problem with this type of delineation is that historically social movements have combined cultural and political aims making the differentiation of movements based on their relationship to the political realm unnecessary and unwarranted. It is important to develop a method of gauging the political influence of social movements that shows the meso-level (political) impact in society while acknowledging both the meta-level or cultural challenges brought by social movements and the micro level of change to the lives of movement members. This requires closer investigation of the 'political influence' sought by social

\textsuperscript{33} A. Melucci (1996) op. cit.
\textsuperscript{34} For a full discussion see J. S. Dryzek (1996) “Political Inclusion and the Dynamics of Democratization”, \textit{The American Political Science Review} 90(3), p. 483.
movements and how this type of impact relates to the definition of mobilisations as collectives using unconventional tactics and forms in their attempts to bring about social change.

New actors, new policies, and new messages
A variety of political goals and outcomes from social movement activities will be discussed in this section as part of the development of a methodology for researching the influence of mass mobilisations. The types of political influence sought by (or open to) movements include the acceptance of new actors into the political realm; the adoption of new policies and laws; and changes in the meanings or codes used in society. There is work which isolates out two further end goals for social movements. Schumaker sets out five categories of state response to challengers—access responsiveness; agenda responsiveness; policy responsiveness; output responsiveness; and impact responsiveness. However the final two outcomes set out by Schumaker, output and impact responsiveness, are extensions of the material gains sought by social movements, as researchers who investigate legislative and policy changes in society should explore the output of the state and the impact these policies have made on society. As output and impact responsiveness are tied to material gains achieved by movements, I have decided to concentrate on the three categories of influence sought by social movements outlined in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3
The political gains sought by social movements

| Participatory gains – elite acceptance of new actors |
| Material gains – elite acceptance of new policy |
| Discursive gains – elite acceptance of new meanings |

37 For a comprehensive discussion see P. Burstein et. al. op. cit., p. 282.
It is the participatory and material gains of social movements that have to date received the most attention in empirical work. This focus is in part due to the influence of the work of William Gamson on the ‘success’ of challenging groups.\textsuperscript{38} Gamson sees ‘success’ for challengers as being two-fold, the acceptance of a group by the political authorities and obtaining of new advantages.

We ask of such a group, did its antagonist accept it as a valid spokesman for the constituency that it was attempting to mobilize or did it deny such acceptance? Secondly, did the group gain the advantages it sought – for example, the passage of the legislation that it desired?\textsuperscript{39}

The aim of Gamson’s first measure of success—participatory change—is to investigate the opening up of new channels of participation to challengers. Studies into participatory gains point to various ways in which such gains can be achieved by mass mobilisations. For example, Marian Sawer notes that participatory outcomes can result in the creation of new agencies that provide access to the political realm previously denied a social movement: “Where the Australian women’s movement has been outstandingly successful has been in the creation of specialised bureaucratic machinery . . .”\textsuperscript{40} In other studies participatory gains lead to new actors being accepted into existing political institutions. Both Malen and Berry credit the normalisation of interest group involvement in policy-making to the activity of social movements.\textsuperscript{41}

The second part of Gamson’s work is based on gauging whether the result of action by challenging groups was to gain ‘new advantages’ or substantive gains for their constituencies. Broadly speaking, substantive success involves achieving changes to

\textsuperscript{38} Gamson does not use the term social movement in his work, however his measures of ‘success’ have been used in social movement literature. This is in part due to the way in which Gamson’s definition of challenging group matches social movement definitions: “The actor whose political career will concern us is the carrier of a challenge to the political system.” W. A. Gamson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{ibid.}, pp. 28-29.

\textsuperscript{40} M. Sawer (1991) “Why has the women’s movement had more influence on government in Australia than elsewhere?” In F. G. Castles (ed.) \textit{Australia Compared: People, Policies and Politics}. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, p. 260.

public policy in response to a challenge. Winning movement gets is messages translated into public policy. Investigations of material gains are frequently carried out by looking at legislative change in a nation state. For example, Wald et al look at the adoption or amendment of anti-discrimination ordinances as evidence of influence by gay rights movements.

It is not just the existence of Gamson’s work on the ‘success’ of challenging groups that has led to the focus on material and participatory gains in subsequent investigations into mass mobilisation activity. A structural focus in social movement research, seen in the concentration on both the political opportunities and internal resources needed for mobilisation emergence, has contributed to researchers turning their attention to the participatory and material gains made by movements. This structural focus within movement literature has been criticised in a number of recent works on social movement emergence due to the failure to recognise the cognitive or cultural dimension of social movements. The criticisms of the structural focus of social movement research has led to the development of a third arena of inquiry in social movement emergence which may also provide a way to investigate social movement influence—that of ‘framing’. ‘Framing’ research is concerned with the social constructions behind contentious political action.

Social movements not only mount unconventional action to increase the participation of excluded groups in democratic decision-making or to win material goods for constituents, mass mobilisations are fighting for different meanings and orientations to be adopted by societies. A concentration on the discursive influence of mass protests would centre on investigations of the discursive contests between the state, social movements, and countermovements. The aim would be to gauge whether


\[43\] J. D. McCarthy, J. Smith, and M Zald (1996) “Accessing public, media, electoral, and governmental agendas”. In Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings, pp. 270-271.


\[46\] D. McAdam et. al. (1996) “Introduction”. In D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy and M. N. Zald (eds) Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 19.
mass mobilizations were able to change the understandings and orientations of non-movement actors. ‘Success’ would be the effective transfer of a social movement’s knowledge production or getting your frame of an injustice onto the agenda and sustaining it. Mayer Zald claims that examination of the impact of movements on culture and frames, as well as on policy, would be extraordinarily valuable. The questions of when and how movements add to or change the cultural stock are important for understanding social change in general.

There have been a small number of attempts to measure the influence of social movements on public discourse. For example, Babara Hobson looks at the way women’s collectives in Scandinavia and Sweden impact upon discourse. There have been a number of attempts to look at the ability of feminist activists to alter abortion discourses. And Paul Bryne looks at the types of issues picked up by British political parties, politicians, and councils, as evidence of the movement’s ability to change the political agenda. However, this type of investigation is relatively under developed and under utilised.

As has been seen in this section there are three avenues for researchers seeking to investigate social movement influence: participatory, material, and discursive gains. Each form of political influence poses unique problems for researchers, and discussions of these difficulties will aid in determining the way forward when gauging the impact of social movements in the political realm. As noted, most

47 R. Eyerman and A. Jamison, op.cit., p. 64.
48 J. D. McCarthy, J. Smith, and M Zald (1996) “Accessing public, media, electoral, and governmental agendas”. In Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings, p. 302.
49 M. N. Zald (1996) “Culture, ideology, and strategic framing”. In Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings, p. 274.
research projects into social movement outcomes have focussed on material and participatory gains, so it is to these forms of research I will turn first.

**From social movement goals to measuring influence**

One problem when seeking to investigate social movement influence in the political realm is the issue of causality. Assessing the policy and legislative gains of social movement activity is complicated by the high number of intervening variables that exist between the grass-roots activism and attainment of the mobilisations' participatory and material goals. Tarrow notes that it is not easy to identify that a particular movement caused a specific policy outcome, since, to movements' voices we must add the impact of interest groups, parties and executives and the length and corrosiveness of the political process.\(^{53}\) How do we determine if it was social movement activity that was responsible for bringing about the material change? For example, was it contentious political action that prompted the development of new legislation or determined action by political parties that brought the new law into being? This problem centres on the existence of such close relationships between sets of variables that it becomes impossible to identify cause and effect.\(^{54}\) This is not unique to investigations of social movement influence, many empirical inquiries into social phenomena suffer problems with proving causality. While I acknowledge that it is only possible to talk about causality in social research in a loose sense,\(^{55}\) the need to show causality should guide any decision on a way forward in investigating social movement influence. At the very least it is important to have a way of explaining the conditions for influence. Later in this thesis I discuss ways of explaining causal relationships when focused on the discursive influence brought by collective actors.

Further difficulties in measuring both material and participatory influence arise when attempting to link the definition of social movements to measures of influence. Any approach assessing social movement influence must be closely connected to the conceptualisation of mobilisations presented earlier in this chapter. That is the

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\(^{53}\) S. Tarrow, *op. cit.*, p. 170.


conceptualisation of movements as collectives of individuals and groups around a message challenging the status quo, and utilising unconventional tactics and structures to bring about change. On several levels there is discordance between social movement definitions and the measurement of material and participatory gains.

As noted in the definition presented in this chapter, social movements are highly decentralised and diffuse. This makes it difficult to identify the material goals sought by movements, let-alone any success in reaching these goals. Burstein et al. claim it is possible to isolate out the goals of social movements by looking to the formally stated objectives of political movement organisations: those goals publicly presented in speech or writing to non-movement actors such as movement targets, the media, or bystander publics.\textsuperscript{56} This type of approach has major drawbacks. First, looking at the goals presented by social movement organisations conflates these formal structures with the broader mobilisation. Second, the approach side-steps the complications that are created by the multiple aims raised by the diverse collection of individuals and groups found in each social movement. The fact that the movement will contain multiple aims presents a complex array of avenues to follow, often too many for any single study.

Investigating material gains by social movements is further complicated by the need to connect the adoption of legislation or regulation with policy outcomes. As has been noted in the previous section, assessment of material gains should include scrutiny of what Schumaker calls the output and impact responsiveness of the state. Any consideration of the substantive impact of social movements must look further than the production of legislation or policy, it must look at the implementation of the decisions made in order to gauge whether in practice real gains have been made for movement constituents. This necessity to look at implementation is highlighted in an investigation of the Australian environmental movement by Libby Connors and Drew Hutton. The authors note social movements were able to successfully utilise environmental law in Queensland to push for change but found victories undermined

\textsuperscript{56} P. Burstein et. al., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 282.
by public servants. This complexity creates further difficulties in showing causality, due to the high number of intervening variables.

Their very placement on the periphery of the political realm leads to a conflict between the definition of social movements and inquiries into participatory gains. As outlined earlier, social movements are actors that operate outside mainstream political institutions. Acceptance of a social movement wholesale into the political system (or full participatory success) changes the very nature of mobilisations from that of an ‘outsider’ group to that of an ‘insider’ status.

This concern about the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ status of social movements is the centre of debates that are too large to be covered in a single chapter of a thesis. However, it is important to note that there are conflicting opinions on whether inclusion in the political system is good or bad for social movements. Claus Offe presents the institutionalisation of social movements as natural part of the life cycle of movements. He claims that entry into the state can be a good bargain as a movement is able to “cash in” on resources it had mobilised in its takeoff and consolidation phase to access real political power. Other researchers see social movement incorporation into the political realm as leading to deradicalisation of the movement and even co-option.

While making no claim on whether inclusion is ‘good or bad’, the inclusion of an entire social movement within existing political processes and institutions changes the status of the mobilisation. As noted earlier, it is the use of unconventional tactics and structures that separates social movements from other collective actors in society, and in particular, separates them from interest groups who have access to power and use conventional tactics to push for social change. As Burstein et al note this means that conceptually, many of those studying social movements find themselves in a trap of their own devising. Once a social movement organisation has

59 For more see J. Dryzek et. al. (2003) Green States and Social Movements: Environmentalism in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
gained regular access to political decision-makers, it is considered an ‘insider’ group or a lobby group rather than a true social movement organisation, and social movement researchers lose interest.\textsuperscript{60} The change in access to conventional political actors when social movements are incorporated wholesale into existing political regimes makes me reluctant to look at participatory gains for mass mobilisations.

There is another problem with focusing on participatory gains in investigations of social movement influence. Getting actors accepted into the political realm does not necessarily mean you will get change in society. Actors may not be able to bring influence even when invited to the table. As John Dryzek notes that inclusion on the wrong terms may prove detrimental to environmentalists’ goals of greening and democratising public policy, because such inclusion may compromise the survival of a green public sphere that is vital to both.\textsuperscript{61}

Participatory and material gains as indicators of social movement influence are also problematic when attempting to consider the issue of partial ‘success’. It is difficult to isolate out partial influence when looking for elite acceptance of new political actors or adoption of new legislation in the political realm. If it were these structural changes that are the focus of inquiries then a social movement would be considered a ‘failure’ if it was unable to have a new law enacted or failed to have new actors accepted in the debating chamber. For example, in the childcare debates investigated in this thesis, women’s movements in New Zealand and Australia often sought universal childcare provisions for \textit{all women} but the state only provided childcare for \textit{working women}. Was the activity mounted by the Australasian women’s movements a failure or was it influential? Investigations of the material and participatory achievements of social movement activity imply that policy process is an all or nothing arena, rather than an ongoing contest over ideas and policy ‘solutions’.

Linked to the assertion that some social movement activities may lead to ‘partial’ influence in the political realm is that of unintended consequences. Unintended consequences are discussed by Kenneth Andrews who claims that we cannot fully understand social movement activity without looking at the unintended consequences

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{60} P. Burstein et. al., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 291.
\item \textsuperscript{61} For a full discussion see J. S. Dryzek (1996) \textit{op.cit.}
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
of action, such as the generation of countermovements. Verity Burgmann also notes that social movements frequently lose control over the ways in which their demands are translated into practice.

So where does this lead us? As has been noted in the previous section, a number of problems emerge when looking to measure the material and participatory gains of social movements. Does shifting the focus to discursive change overcome some of these difficulties associated with causality, partiality, and incorporation into the political realm?

**Opting for discursive influence as the way forward**

As has been noted, any measure of social movement influence must be able to demonstrate a level of causality between the actions of the unconventional actors and the achievement of particular goals. Focussing on the influence of social movements and other actors over public discourses provides a way for researchers to trace the influence of groupings in the political realm. Zald notes that looking at ideological structured action allows researchers to look at the relationship of movements to parties, to legislative activity, to bureaucratic politics, and to government rule. Inquiries into discursive influence would allow researchers to trace the origins of a discourse; to question whether the discourse began with a social movement; and, to query whether a discourse launched by a social movement was at a later date adopted by actors such as politicians and bureaucrats.

There have been some attempts to show social movement influence over the narratives found in policy debates, but few empirical investigations were able to demonstrate causality. One method used to gauge discursive change is to look at survey data for changes in beliefs and values. These survey techniques are useful for looking at changes in public discourse, however they provide little explanation of how movement influence is transferred from public opinion change into public policy discourses. Within social movement literature researchers also utilise

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discourse and close analysis techniques to trace the discursive influence of these non-state actors. Gilheanny uses a Foucauldian genealogy to look at how the state mediates between competing discourses on abortion and on how fields of discursivity structure the abortion debate.\textsuperscript{65} This technique looks for the appearance of categories of analysis and identifies the conditions that led to their creation.\textsuperscript{66} This type of analysis has been also used to trace interest group influence. For example, Jenkins and Eckert, look at policy development and paradigm shifts on economic policy, and the role of new right think tanks in this process.\textsuperscript{67} However, little explanation has been given on how changes in discourse can be linked to movement activism.

It is from outside social movement literature that models can be drawn for establishing a causal link between social movement activity and changes in policy debates and decisions. In Chapter Two I will turn to public policy literature to explore the issue of policy learning and its usefulness in explaining the influence of mass mobilisations on public discourses.

It may be possible to overcome questions of causality, but what of the other criticisms levelled against measuring material and participatory gains. The messages of social movements are no less complicated than the material gains sought by these actors but the very definition of movements may provide a solution to the problem that arises from the multiple aims and outcomes of mass protests. As was noted earlier, social movements are collectives brought together around a common negotiated message challenging the status quo. What is sought with discursive influence is a broad shift in public policy narratives that recognise the narratives of challenge forwarded by the mass protests. Success would be the transfer of a social movement’s knowledge, ideas, and narratives onto the political agenda and into policy decision.

Discursive influence may allow social movements to avoid full incorporation into the political realm and the subsequent change in status from ‘outsider’ to ‘insider’.

\textsuperscript{65} B. Gilheany (1998), \textit{op.cit.}, p. 58-79.
Achieving discursive gains may be an end goal that affords social movement influence over political decisions but allows movements to maintain a level of autonomy from ruling elites. Social movements can achieve acceptance of their discourses without being subsumed by the state. As Melucci notes, “A new political space is designed beyond the traditional distinction between state and “civil society”: an intermediate public space, whose function is not to institutionalize the movements nor to transform them into parties, but to make society hear their messages and translate these messages into political decision making, while movement’s maintain their autonomy.”\textsuperscript{68}

Investigating the discursive influence of social movements also allows for discussion of areas of partial acceptance of the social movement’s claims and the achievement of unintended consequences. Through textual analysis it is possible to look for minor shifts in language and representation linked to the narrative promoted by contentious political actors. I agree with Kriesi that it is useful to carry out investigations of the possibility that a movements provoke a sensitising of some actors in the political or public arena that goes in the direction of the goals of the movement.\textsuperscript{69}

**Conclusion**

Social movement research into the political influence of mobilisations is not only possible it is necessary. As was seen in this chapter, social movements are actors that operate on the periphery of the political realm but at the same time are actors that are likely to impact upon policy and legislative decisions in society. Their use of unconventional tactics and structures to bring about social change should steer researchers away from investigations of material and participatory gains. Instead research into social movement influence over the knowledge and ideas at the base of conventional political decision-making provides a way forward in investigating when and how social movements bring social and political change.

\textsuperscript{68} A. Melucci (1985), *op.cit.*, p. 815.
\textsuperscript{69} H. Kriesi et. al. (1995) *New Social Movements in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 211.
While an examination of existing social movement literature provides a definition for empirical study and identifies discursive goals as something to measure, there is little available in terms of a methodology for measuring narrative influence. Neither does social movement literature explain how social movements bring discursive change. For this I will turn to public policy literature and its discussions of discourses, ‘policy learning’ and ‘coalition’ building.
Chapter Two

Discourse, debates and coalitions: Measuring discursive influence

Come on, girls, Join us in the chorus!
Come on girls, Make the rafters ring!
One alone can't speak above a whisper,
But when we get together
They can hear us sing!

From The Domestic Workers’ Song

A concern with the discursive influence of social movements in the political realm carries with it the implicit assumption that discourses have a bearing on public policy. In this chapter, I will discuss the importance of narratives and ‘coalitions’ to policy processes. The aim is to make explicit the processes that allow political actors, including social movements, to assert discursive influence. That is to present a conceptual framework through which to understand the processes of discursive change and the involvement of social movements in any narrative transformation that occurs in the political realm. Once this model has been outlined, the chapter moves on to set out the details of the methodology used to measure narrative influence in the subsequent four case studies into activity by the women’s movements of Australia and New Zealand.

The realm of ‘argumentation’

A decision to analyse the discursive influence of social movements is based on a belief that ideas, expressed in language, shape political decision-making and the application of public policy. Languages are seen to restrict or authorise, prioritise and distribute the ideas and beliefs that policy makers can think and in doing so

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1 J. Silverman (ed.), op. cit., p. 76.
partly delimit the policies they can pursue. These languages are formed into discourses that shape policy debates, decisions, and outcomes. A discourse is an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to a phenomenon. Discourses are the story line through which actors make sense of the world or, as John Dryzek puts it, a shared way of apprehending the world.

The discourses through which actors make sense of the world are important in shaping political activity and policy decisions, as social constructions will help determine if a problem exists and what actions (if any) are needed. This view of language and discourse can be seen in a study of social movement activity by Kara Zugman who notes “language consists of a changing of shared ‘concept-metaphors’ that constitute every individuals consciousness. . . . These signs are joined together in ‘discourses’ that produce our understanding of distinct areas of social life”. The belief in the power of social construction implies that if mass mobilisations and other collective actors in society are able to change the discourses used in the public arena, they will affect policy decisions and even policy outcomes. The power of discourses (as expressed in language) to shape public policy is recognised by politicians. For example, in debates over childcare provisions in New Zealand in 1985 MP Ann Hercus noted the need to re-think what was meant by the words ‘family’ and ‘women’s roles’ and ‘men’s roles’.

While the focus of this thesis is on political change, it is important to note that discourses not only shape policy, they impact upon all areas of life. As Fairclough notes “People live in ways which are mediated by discourses which construct work, family, gender (femininity and masculinity) sexuality and so forth in particular ways, which emanate from experts attached to social systems and organisations, and which come to them through the mass media (print, radio, television and internet).”

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This concentration on discourses encompasses the recognition that policy processes involve competition between numerous narratives. There is a significant canon of public policy literature that acknowledges the competition of discourses within policy processes. Barbara Hobson notes how women as social actors use discursive resources to encode their programmes into hegemonic cultural forms and ideologies—in effect, to manipulate and extend the meanings of existing vocabularies. Diane Stone states that policy making is a constant discursive struggle over boundaries of problems, interpretation of common experience, social classifications, and definition of the ideas that guide the way in which we create shared meanings. Carol Bacchi asserts analysts must look at policies as constituting competing representations or interpretations of political issues. The competition occurring in the political realm is best summed up by Frank Fischer and John Forester who see policy as practical processes of argumentation. These processes of argumentation involve collective actors such as social movements, interest groups, political parties, and bureaucrats.

A crucial element of politics, then, is the struggle to define social reality and to interpret people’s embryonic aspirations and needs. The argumentative approach views politics as the struggle for discursive hegemony in which actors try to secure support for their definition of reality. “If discourses help to reconcile people with the world around them, it can even be called a supreme form of regulation.” As James Keeley elaborated:

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8 B. Hobson, op. cit., p. 171.
10 C. L. Bacchi, op. cit., p. 2.
A dominating or hegemonic discourse provides a "regime of truth," a means of assessing not only whether statements are true or false but also whether they have a meaning at all or are mere nonsense. A regime of truth goes beyond agenda setting and "decisions and non-decisions." It endorses certain language, symbols, modes of reasoning, and conclusions.14

Acknowledgement of the role of discourses and political argumentation in society is not new. For example, Gramsci observed that there is a ‘war of position’ over the constitution and maintenance of meaning in which some social and political forces exert greater influence.15 But the argumentative turn in policy literature and focus on narrative that has occurred in recent decades is an attempt to refocus the lens through which the processes of policy making are investigated and to develop frameworks to explain these processes.16 A similar refocusing onto the role of language and discourse can be seen in social movement literature.17 Does this argumentative turn within public policy literature provide a way to explain when and how actors from the periphery of the political realm can influence policy processes and outcomes?

Advocacy coalitions and social movements
One model utilised to explore the role of discourses within the policy process is the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) of Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith. The advocacy coalition framework was developed due to dissatisfaction with the stages model that breaks policy processes into functionally and temporally distinct sub-processes. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith aimed to develop a model of the policy process that clearly explained causal relationships, provided a clear basis for empirical hypothesis testing, and incorporated policy-oriented learning:

According to ACF, policy change over time is a function of three sets of processes. The first concerns the interactional competing advocacy coalitions within a policy subsystem. An advocacy coalition consists of actors from a variety of public and private institutions at all levels of government who share a set of basic beliefs (policy goals plus causal and other perceptions) and who see to manipulate the rules, budgets, and personnel of governmental institutions in order to achieve their goals over time. The second set of processes concerns changes external to this subsystem in socioeconomic conditions, system-wide governing coalitions, and output from other subsystems that provide opportunities and obstacles to the competing coalitions. The third set involves the effects of stable system parameters—such as social structure and constitutional rules—on the constraints and resources of the various subsystem actors.18

When looking to measure the discursive influence of one of society’s many collective actors, such as interest groups and social movements, ACF looks appealing. It is centred on investigations of the ‘belief systems’ through which actors make sense of the world and on the process of policy learning through which actors can change the belief systems of others. ACF has been used in a number of investigations into the influence of feminism in the public policy arena,19 as well as a number of studies looking at interest group involvement in policy.20

In part, the appeal of ACF is that the framework focuses on competition in a policy subsystem21 between “actors from a variety of public and private organisations who are actively concerned with a policy problem or issue such as air pollution control,

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21 A policy subsystem according to Sabatier are those actors from a variety of public and private organisations who are actively concerned with a policy problem or issue such as pollution control or mental health. P. A. Sabatier, op.cit., p. 17.
mental health, or surface transportation." Sabatier urges researchers to widen out policy analysis to include the role not just of central government in these subsystems, but the media, researchers, and policy analysts. It seems reasonable to include within these policy subsystems 'state' and 'non-state' actors—that is to include alongside politicians and bureaucrats in studies of policy subsystems, activists and interest groups. Certainly Abrar et al do this in an investigation of domestic violence policies in the United Kingdom. The researchers note that in the domestic violence policy subsystem in the United Kingdom there were two advocacy coalitions: feminists and traditionalists. The feminist advocacy coalition consisted of municipal feminists, radical feminist groups, the feminist sections of the women's movement, academics and experts, individual feminists located in relevant agencies, the political parties, local councils, Parliament, the civil service, and central government. In contrast the researchers identified a traditionalist discourse coalition as including policy, medical staff, government officials, social service professionals, and other public officials.

While Abrar et al incorporate unconventional actors into their investigation of a policy subsystem few other studies include social movements in coalition membership, perhaps with good reason.

Sabatier asserts that advocacy coalitions are groups of actors "who show a non-trivial degree of co-ordinated activity over time". The requirement for co-ordination between actors in a coalition is used in part to explain the collective action (or free rider) problem. Zafonte and Sabatier have argued that the hurdles of collective action are lowered in a context of frequent interaction with the organisational structures of policy subsystems, thereby fostering co-ordination between those actors who realise that they have similar policy beliefs. The co-ordination is also seen as necessary as it is actors' interests that motivate them into action and belief systems are seen to be predominantly stable. It is this non-trivial degree of co-ordination that should discount the advocacy coalition framework as the right conceptual tool for investigating social movement influence in policy debates. As defined earlier social

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22 ibid., p. 17.
23 S. Abrar et al. op. cit., pp. 242-244.
24 P. A. Sabatier, op. cit., p. 25.
movements are collectives that emerge around a discourse of challenge and which utilise unconventional structures and tactics to bring about social change. It is difficult to illustrate (or even assert) that groupings utilising unconventional forms and tactics have been involved in a non-trivial degree of co-ordinated action with other actors in a policy subsystem.

As well as failing to encompass unconventional actors, the advocacy coalition framework provides little explanation of why and how changes come about. As Fischer notes “It neglects the social and historical context in which such changes take place.”26 Given that social movements are collectives of individuals and groups formed in reaction to and interaction with social and historical events, it is difficult to justify utilising a framework that side steps these factors. In order to encompass the unconventional nature of social movements in the processes of policy argumentation and the historical and cultural contexts in which this argumentation occurs, I will turn to Maarten Hajer’s concept of discourse coalitions.

*Discourse coalitions and social movements*

In setting out his theoretical framework Hajer notes the increased focus on constructivism and discourse analysis in policy literature but expresses a need to emphasise that social constructs do not “float” in the world, but are in fact tied to specific institutions and actors.27 To overcome the disembodiment of discourses Hajer states that the policy process involves coalitions formed around specific narratives. “A discourse coalition is thus the ensemble of a set of story lines, the actors that utter these story lines, and the practices that conform to these story lines, all organised around a discourse.”28

In the previous section I discounted the advocacy coalition framework as the right conceptual tool for investigating social movement influence. So how is it possible to consider involvement of mass mobilisations in discourse coalitions? It is the different essential variable that distinguishes Sabatier’s advocacy coalitions and Hajer’s discourse coalitions. For advocacy coalitions it is actors’ belief systems that

28 *ibid.*, p. 47.
are seen to draw them together to act in concert. As Hajer notes unlike conventional coalitions, it is the story lines (not interests) that form the basis of discourse coalitions:

    Story lines are the medium through which actors try to impose their view of reality on others, suggest certain social positions and practices, and criticize alternative social arrangements.\(^{29}\)

These story lines interpret events and courses of action in concrete social conditions. As Fischer notes, this is not to assert that beliefs do not matter, just that it is simplified story lines to which most actors are attracted.\(^{30}\)

In order to ensure actors coalesce on the basis of shared beliefs, there is a process of negotiation and renegotiation that is done through a non-trivial degree of coordinated action. If it is story lines rather than interests that are central to actors and draw them together in coalitions, there is less need for non-trivial degrees of coordination. After all, discursive influence does not necessarily require face-to-face interaction. For Hajer, policy coalitions are discursive phenomena that are reproduced and transformed through a variety of political actors that do not necessarily meet.\(^{31}\) As Dryzek notes, “Communicative power is diffuse and pervasive, felt in the way terms are defined and issues are framed, not in the direct leverage of one actor over another.”\(^{32}\) Within social movement literature there is an acknowledgement that discursive influence is often not directly exercised but is about sensitising actors.\(^{33}\) This sensitising may take place in direct discussions between women’s movement activists and political elites, or it may occur indirectly through other actors, media reports, books, reports, slogans, and even via informal conversations. If face-to-face interaction is less necessary, then it is much easier to assert that actors from the periphery of the political realm are part of the discourse coalitions found in the policy realm.

The term coalition itself suggests a degree of organisation and structure. Perhaps it is better to think of these groupings of actors as ‘constellations’ drawn together around

\(^{29}\) ibid., p. 41.  
\(^{30}\) For more on this see F. Fischer (2003), op.cit., p. 102.  
\(^{31}\) ibid., p. 105.  
\(^{32}\) J. S. Dryzek (1996), op.cit., p. 481.  
\(^{33}\) D. della Porta and M. Diani, op.cit., p. 236.
a story line that gives meaning to a particular problem or situation. However, I will continue to use the term discourse coalition with the understanding of the reader that it does not imply any condition of structured co-ordination on these groupings. I will utilise the concept of coalitions as it is important when investigating discursive change to differentiate between discourses (the story lines themselves) and combination of both actors and story lines (the discourse coalitions). In this way I agree with Hajer that it is important to overcome the disembodiment of discourses. For example, it would be significant in a policy arena if a feminist discourse was utilised by state agents, not only social movement activists. The existence of a discourse and the attachment of actors to the story lines put forward are both significant factors when looking at policy change and who is responsible for advancing the winning narratives in society.

Two factors make the discourse coalition approach of Hajer more useful in gauging social movement influence than Sabatier’s ACF. First, there is no necessity for members of a discourse coalition to meet in a non-trivial degree of co-ordinated action when story lines are seen as the glue that binds coalitions together. Second, there is no separation in Hajer’s model of beliefs from policy processes as will be seen in the next section.

_Institutionalisation as ‘winning’_

The concept of discourse coalitions allows for investigation of the different narratives used in public policy debates and inquiries into the context in which a discourse coalition is ‘winning’. Through the processes of argumentation, actors attempt to have their narratives adopted by others. Hajer proposes that a discourse coalition can be said to dominate a given political realm only if it fulfils two conditions: (1) it dominates the discursive space; that is, central actors are persuaded by, or forced to accept, the rhetorical power of a new discourse (condition of discourse saturation); and (2) this is reflected in the institutional practices of that policy realm.\(^{34}\)

The saturation of the argumentative realm can be gauged by looking at the composition of discourse coalitions and any change in ‘membership’ that occurs over time. This modification in discourse coalition membership varies from the changes scrutinised by Abrar et al in their inquiry into women’s movement influence in the United Kingdom. In using the advocacy coalition framework, Abrar et al looked for changes in the belief systems of advocacy coalitions, in order to show the impact of the women’s movement on domestic policies in the United Kingdom. This focus on the change in belief systems by actors was necessary as the advocacy coalition framework asserts that actors will alter the story lines in order to protect their core interests. As narratives are the central element drawing actors together in a discourse coalition it is more appropriate to look for changes in the composition of coalitions, not changes in the composition of actors’ story lines. Coalitions active in the political realm will in particular seek to ensure that state sector actors are part of their discourse constellation.

Saturation of the political realm with a story line can be seen as a durable resource for social movements wanting to bring discursive change, but the process of argumentation is not a one-way street. Not only will state actors move from one discourse coalition to another, it is possible that social movement activists will shift from one coalition to another.

A coalition’s ability to ensure its message was used by public sector actors (Hajer’s saturation) would indicate influence in the political realm, but equally as important for long term impact is the ability to have the narrative institutionalised. The power of institutionalisation is often noted in policy literature. Goldstein and Keohane state that ideas influence public policy when (1) principled and causal beliefs provide road maps for actors; (2) they are the focal points for co-operative solutions; (3) they are embedded in institutions. Sheri Berman claims that the most important factor in

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determining long-term influence of ideas is their institutionalisation. As Yee puts it, ideas are "encased" and "embedded" within institutions in the form of legally prescribed organisational rules, procedures, and the like. For discourse coalitions the institutionalisation of their message into the structures of society provides protection and longevity of impact. This focus on saturation and institutionalisation emphasises the role of experts and elites in society. As was seen in Chapter One it is recognised that social movements may need the support of conventional political actors in order to alter policy and societal norms.

**The motor of change**

These assertions about the attempts by discourse coalitions to 'win' in policy debates returns us to the question of causality raised in Chapter One: How to show that it was the actions of the social movement that caused the discursive changes in the policy arena? As was noted earlier this is a well-known problem in social science, as there often exists such a close relationship between a set of variables that it is hard to identify cause and effect. In his measure of group success Gamson attempts to side-step causality altogether:

> Did the potential beneficiaries of the challenging group receive what the group sought for them? No assumption is made that the challenging group necessarily caused the benefits. We asked only whether desired results were forthcoming, for whatever reason, during and immediately after the period of challenge.

Gamson's response to the issue of causality does not provide a satisfactory answer when the aim is to make generalisations about when and how social movements influence the political realm. It is Hanspeter Kriesi that offers a solution to the problem of causality in social movement research:

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40 W. A. Gamson, *op.cit.*, p. 34.
What allows us to say that a certain political change is the result of the action of a social movement or a challenging group? ... We have to make the link between the movement’s action and the observed change indirectly, by specifying the mechanisms through which the former produces the latter.41

In the case of discursive impact, it is the very process of public debate that provides the mechanisms through which influence will come about. The processes of public debate provide opportunities for policy learning.42 As described by Abrar et al, policy-oriented learning is seen as the motor of change in public policy.43 There is recognition within social movement literature that mass mobilisations are involved in policy learning. As Rucht argues, women’s movements and states, in interaction with each other, have experienced political learning.44 It is the interaction within the policy arenas that provides an opportunity for social movements to persuade other political actors to take up the mobilisation’s own narrative—to join it in a ‘discourse coalition’. In particular movements may attempt to bring new understandings into the political realm. As Hajer argues discursive interaction (i.e. language in use) can create new meanings and new identities, i.e. it may alter cognitive patterns and create new cognitions and new positionings.45

Literature on policy learning stresses the importance of previous policy, the importance of pressure on political processes, and the ability of the state to act autonomously in determining how much change will occur.46 Of course it is the ‘pressure’ put on the process of policy development that is central to investigations of the discursive influence of social movements, but it is important to recognise that other factors will impact upon changes to policy debates. In his study of the women’s movement in New Zealand, Stephen Uttley saw three elements as

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42 Policy learning is the development of ‘consensual knowledge’ about the functioning of the world that is accepted by decision-makers.
43 S. Abrar et al., *op. cit.*, p. 239.
important in the change process—the development of language to describe policy problems, the emergence of discourse coalitions as groups engaged in policy dialogue, and finally, the influence of the institutional context within which such dialogue occurs.\textsuperscript{47} Hajer’s concept of discourse coalitions acknowledges the importance of political and historical contexts on the operations and actions of constellations. So it is reasonable that analysis of coalitions encompass recognition of political and cultural factors. In particular, the importance of previous policies and institutions will be discussed in the comparative chapter of this thesis. Investigations in Chapter Seven will look to discussions of path dependency in explaining the stability and the changes in discourse coalitions in New Zealand and Australian debates on childcare and unpaid work. I will also look to social movement literature on political opportunity structures, resource mobilisation, and framing in Chapter Seven in order to see what factors contribute to (or detract from) any policy learning instigated by mass mobilisations.

Inquiries into policy transfer, diffusion, and learning are usually focused on official actors from the political realm\textsuperscript{48} and as a result social movements are excluded from investigations. For example, Dolowitz and Marsh set out nine categories of political actors in their analysis of policy transfer: elected officials, political parties, bureaucrats/civil servants, pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs and experts, transnational corporations, think tanks, supra-national governmental and non-governmental institutions and consultants.\textsuperscript{49} Within investigations into agenda setting (an area where policy learning may occur) social movements are relegated to the “hazy realm” of the political climate or the mood of the times.\textsuperscript{50} While I acknowledge that identifying social movement activity within policy argumentation is complicated by the dispersed and unconventional structures of this phenomenon, it is important to investigate their role in the processes of debate and any policy learning that occurs. Social movements may be on the periphery of what is usually


investigated in analysis of policy transfer and learning, but they are seeking to alter the way other actors perceive and represent the world. Social movement activity can be detected in a policy subsystem by looking for discourse coalitions that incorporate actors utilising unconventional tactics and forms at least some of the time in their attempts to bring about social change. Discursive influence by movements can be detected by looking at whether the narratives that these unconventional collectives launch are adopted up by political elites, such as politicians and public servants.

Moving from processes to methodology

The first step in investigating the discursive influence of social movements is to investigate the discourses and coalitions active in a policy arena. This analysis takes the form of a three-step process, beginning with textual analysis (a close reading of the texts to develop a map of the discursive terrain); moving to an analysis of discourse coalitions (the argumentation which has taken place in the policy arenas under investigation); and finally in Chapter Seven I move to look at the broader contexts in which the changes in argumentation occurred. At the centre of these processes is a concern with discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is concerned not only with power relations in discourse . . . but also with how power relations and power struggles shape and transform the discourse practices of a society or institution.51 But the discourse analysis in this thesis is textually based in line with Fairclough’s work rather than the more abstract Foucauldian approach. Given that political and governmental processes are substantively linguistic processes there is clear general rationale for using the resources of language and discourse analysis in researching politics and government.52 Though as has been noted, this inquiry into language is placed within broad social and political contexts. “Starting with language, the discourse analyst traces the influence of ideas in society by asking who promotes certain ways of speaking and how words involved are related to other powerful ideas (metaphors) and experiences in society.”53

In selecting the texts for analysis in this thesis I am mindful that the aim of the work will impact upon the texts selected. For these reasons it is essential to make explicit

the rationale behind the selections made and types of texts chosen for the four subsequent case studies. The texts chosen for analysis in each of the four case studies will all come from the period of 1970 to 2000 (inclusive). This time frame was chosen as it is widely recognised as a distinct period in social movement history when a large number of ‘rights-based’ movements emerged in advanced democracies. The decades chosen are seen as significant for the women’s movement. As Deborah Stienstra notes “The two decades from 1970 to 1990 were the most dynamic in the history of international women’s movements.”

As the thesis is about the influence of any women’s movements active within New Zealand and Australia, it was necessary to select policy debates that were likely to involve activity by women’s movements. In-depth inquiry is needed to show social movement activity in a policy arena, but the involvement of women’s organisations (often seen as the institutionalised arm of women’s movements) may indicate activity by a social movement. A scan of public documents indicated that the issues of childcare and unpaid work are two policy subsystems in which there is involvement from women’s organisations.

Searching for women’s interest groups

Women’s organisations in New Zealand and Australia have been active in debates on childcare for decades. In reflecting on 20 years of active feminism in New Zealand Anne Else and Rosslyn Noonan wrote: “We wanted good child care—for our sakes and our kids’ sakes—and we believed early childhood services, like schools, should be funded through our taxes.” The importance of childcare is noted in the feminist magazine Broadsheet in 1976 and in a Select Committee Submission by the National Organisation of Women in 1990:

The applications that came in for I.W.Y [International Women’s Year] project grants highlighted women’s centres and child-care facilities as urgent needs of every community in New Zealand.

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Career choices, childcare, and women’s education have all been addressed by the Council at various times and in various forums. No one of these measures is sufficient in itself. But each has its place if all New Zealanders are to have the opportunity for full and free development.\(^{57}\)

The centrality of childcare to the agendas of 1970s Australian women’s organisations is noted in a feminist history of the period and is apparent in a 1970s statement from the National Women’s Advisory Council:

> When, for example, the Liberal-Country Party coalition government led by Malcolm Fraser came to power late in 1975, it had little choice but maintain the child-care policies of its predecessors. Child-care had become a social necessity, and the women’s groups pressing for it had become very vocal and powerful lobby groups that could not easily be ignored.\(^{58}\)

All women have a need, and a right to some time of their own. This is especially important for single mothers who bear the responsibility for children alone.\(^{59}\)

Within feminist research, childcare policies are seen as central to the way the state defines ‘motherhood’\(^{60}\) and this may explain the number of women’s organisations found to be involved in New Zealand and Australian debates on non-parental care provisions.

Similarly with debates on the valuation and measurement of unpaid work there was clear involvement by women’s organisations and self-proclaimed feminists. The National Organisation of Women in New Zealand discussed the need for the recognition of work in the home in its 1974 submission to the Women’s Rights Select Committee:


Setting up a homeworkers’ wage system could mean a total reorganisation of all wage systems throughout the country—many of which are still heavily contaminated with the Victorian belief that a working man’s wage should be sufficient to provide for his wife and family.\(^6^1\)

While the Wellington Women’s Workshop submission to the parliamentary committee rejected the idea of the payment of a wage or salary to housewives:

- It has been suggested that the problem of housewives’ neurosis might be solved by the payment of a kind of a salary to the person who elects to stay at home and look after the home, children and aged or sick relatives. Although this may seem to some a progressive gesture, the Wellington Women’s Workshop wants to submit here that such a step is reactionary and harmful in its very nature.
- . . considering the low status and low pay and the present prejudice attached to housework once can safely assume that this work would continue to be reserved to women.\(^6^2\)

In Australia the issue of unpaid work was also found within the publications of women’s organisations. In an address published by the Women’s Electoral Lobby Eva Cox noted the problems that existed in the division of labour in society:

- In the finance sector, a study showed that between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, there had been a 38 per cent increase in men working between 50 and 59 hours and a 19 per cent rise in men working more than 60 hours. And the longer men remain at the office, the more likely it is that women are left holding the baby at home. Men’s absenteeism on the home front continues to turn women into a servant class.\(^6^3\)

Adding weight to the decision to look at debates about domestic chores in New Zealand and Australia was the claim that unpaid work is central to feminist theory. “All feminist theory has identified the crucial role of women’s unpaid labour in the household and, to a lesser extent, in the community too. Liberal feminists have pressured the state for welfare and legal provisions to achieve equality of opportunity for women. Radical feminists have challenged the role of the State in reinforcing


women’s dependency within the family. Socialist feminists have identified the State’s role in regulating the family to ensure reproduction of the labour force.”

A scan of ‘texts’ of policy debates on childcare and unpaid work provides evidence of the interest in these issues from women’s organisations, interest that with further scrutiny may show activity by women’s movements on the two topics. But social movements are not the only actors of interest when looking at processes of policy argumentation and the role of social movements within these processes. Evaluating the level of discourse saturation and institutionalisation achieved by discourse coalitions involving women’s movement actors entails measuring the extent to which social movements’ discourses were utilised by ‘state’ actors. Any analysis in this thesis must encompass the texts from the ‘state’ or ‘public sector’, as well as those from grass-roots women’s organisations.

**Searching for the ‘state’**

There are numerous documents in which state agencies, public servants, and politicians discuss the issues of childcare and unpaid work on both sides of the Tasman. Before outlining these arguments it is necessary to note that the two Australian case studies are concentrated on documentation from the commonwealth government. Australian state governments do play a role in childcare in particular, but for the sake of the comparative chapter I chose to focus on the commonwealth government.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is one government agency that openly discussed measuring and valuing unpaid work:

> The ABS supports the development of such specialised accounts as part of the revised SNA, and proposes to work towards the development of satellite accounts for Australia incorporating estimates of the value of unpaid household production.

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65 Australian government is based on a bicameral system of rule, while New Zealand is a unitary system.

The Bureau's New Zealand counterpart, Statistics New Zealand—Te Tari Tatau\textsuperscript{67}, also discussed the issue of time-use surveys:

The recent international review of the UNSNA has been considering the question of extending the production boundary to include unpaid household work. While the review concludes that the production boundary should not be significantly altered, it also acknowledges that it may be appropriate to produce separate satellite accounts which provide additional information to supplement the core national accounts. Such accounts should be consistent with, and able to be used in conjunction with, the national accounts.\textsuperscript{68}

As well as being of interest to the two statistical bodies, the measurement and valuation of unpaid work was debated by politicians in both New Zealand and Australia. For example, time-use surveys were discussed in New Zealand in 1990 by MP Margaret Shields, and by Senator Newman in Australia in 1987:

We pledge resources to support a nationwide Time Use survey to be conducted by the Department of Statistics in 1991. Information gained from the survey will help to determine concrete policies and programmes to support and acknowledge unpaid workers. These will include a compilation of a set of satellite national accounts as a resource for future economic and social planning.\textsuperscript{69}

The Minister said that this survey would provide useful information for planning of all sorts of things. She said that we would get sound statistical information on the way work in the home is undertaken. She is very concerned to learn something about work in the home. Perhaps it would be a jolly good idea if she went home and practised and gave this place away. Perhaps that is not a very kind thing to say, but I suggest that if she needs to spend all this Government money to find out about work in the home, she really should go home and do a bit of in depth research herself.\textsuperscript{70}

Public sector interest in childcare and unpaid work can also be inferred via the most recent policy directions and decisions. In both New Zealand and Australia governments are actively involved in funding and regulating childcare. In 2003 in

\textsuperscript{67} Statistics New Zealand is the name that will be used throughout the body of this thesis for New Zealand's central statistical agency, even though in the early documents analysed this government department was called the Department of Statistics.


New Zealand the government provided childcare subsidies to parents, with the most recent policy change resulting in the number of hours of childcare for which some families can receive financial assistance being raised. “The maximum number of hours of childcare for 0-5 year olds subsidised through the Childcare Subsidy for low-income families, has been raised from 37 hours to 50 hours per week. The maximum number of hours for which the OSCAR (Out of School Care) subsidy (for 5-13 year olds) is available during the school holidays has also been increased from 37 to 50 hours per week.” As well as support to ‘parents’, the government provided funding directly to childcare centres. In 2003 the New Zealand coalition government provided $421 million for early childhood education, some of which went to childcare centres. Similarly for parents in Australia there is state subsidisation of non-parental care and childcare centres. The subsidisation of childcare centres is legislated for in three pieces of legislation at the commonwealth level: Child Care Act 1972; A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999; ad New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999. In 2001-2 the Commonwealth government spent $1.26 billion on childcare benefits. The Commonwealth government claimed the aim of its funding regime is “to keep childcare affordable for low and middle-income families.”

As well as being involved in childcare policies and provisions, governments in both New Zealand and Australia have been active in the policy subsystem surrounding the measurement and valuation of unpaid work. In 1996 two government departments undertook the first national time-use survey ever carried out in New Zealand. The survey was completed and results released in 1999. A pilot time-use survey was conducted in 1992 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, with a full survey conducted in 1997.

_Involving countermovements, unions, sector groups, and businesses_

Much of the focus within this thesis is on the interaction between social movement and public sector actors but there is a need to look wider than these two groupings.

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71 R. Dyson, 14 July 2003, Address to UN CEDAW Committee.
Firstly, discursive influence may not be direct from the women’s movement to the public sector, but transmitted through groups such as unions and formal interest groups. There is evidence that women’s organisations recognised the need to gain the support of groups such as unions on the issue of non-parental care provision. In 1975 the Committee on Women in New Zealand claimed that trade unions needed to provide for childcare needs, for example, by establishing childcare facilities at the father’s work place.\textsuperscript{74} A second reason for looking wider than the state and social movement dichotomy is that influence by women’s movements may be stymied by the existence of competing discourses in the political and civil realms. Those competing discourses may come via public sector actors or they may emanate from groups such as businesses, unions, churches, other social movements, and countermovements.

In New Zealand there was clear evidence of interest in the topic of childcare from a wide range of organisations and individuals, not just women’s organisations and state sector actors. For example, childcare was seen by New Zealand union umbrella organisation, the Federation of Labour, as an important industrial issue:

Federation of Labour policy on childcare is based on three major principles:-

- the right to work for all New Zealanders with no discrimination on grounds of sex, marital or family status.

- the right for all New Zealanders, whether or not in paid employment, of access to quality affordable childcare for pre-school children and to quality after-school and school holiday programmes for young school-age children;

- the belief that childcare is an industrial issue - that unions should have the right to negotiate with employers of the rights of workers with family responsibilities and that employers should be obliged, as part of their contribution to the social wage, to share responsibility for the provision of quality childcare.\textsuperscript{75}

In Australia childcare was also hotly debated over the last three decades not only by women’s organisations, politicians, and bureaucrats, but also by childcare workers,

\textsuperscript{74} (1975) *International Women’s Year New Zealand 1975: From the Committee on Women Newsletter No. 4.*, Wellington: Committee on Women, p. 6.

parents, and experts. The breadth and depth of feelings on childcare was evident during the 1998 Senate Community Affairs References Committee hearings on Child Care Funding that received over 1000 submissions from across the political and civil realms. As Deborah Brennan notes, children’s services are now a staple of media commentary, are debated in parliament, are a focus at ACTU and employer conferences and feature routinely in federal election campaigns.\textsuperscript{76} All of this attention from actors both inside mainstream political decision-making and on the periphery of the political realm in both New Zealand and Australia makes childcare an issue ripe for discursive analysis.

Similarly in debates about unpaid work in both New Zealand and Australia there was involvement beyond women’s organisations and state sector actors. In New Zealand the issue of unpaid work is debated by the Public Service Association (the union of New Zealand public servants):

\begin{quote}
Women are assumed to undertake the duties of domestic worker, unpaid of course. If women did not perform these duties, real wages would have to rise to allow for the purchase of these services, or employers would have to supply them, with resulting loss of profits.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

Academics have also been part of the debates on unpaid work valuation and measurement. In a 1998 address former MP and academic Marilyn Waring discussed the issue of unpaid work and the drawing up of satellite accounts:

\begin{quote}
If you have been battling for years for the visibility of unpaid work, there is something very satisfying about these findings. The recognition not simply of the ‘magnitude and significance’ of the household sector, but of its economic paramountcy, gives rise to speculation about its confinement to satellite accounts. I have always suspected, that far form technical and measurement difficulties being the reason for non inclusion, the fact that this sector was so dominant would invite enormous policy dispute about redistribution and equitable investment.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
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There was involvement of academics in the unpaid work debates in Australia also. For example, Jill Matthews discussed work in the home in her contribution to “Working it out: All her labours”:

It is now generally accepted that women within the home do work, and have always done so. This work is still seen, however, as being distinct from and outside the mainstream, public or masculine economy, and much energy has been expended in trying to find a common economic language in order to sustain the separateness but nonetheless to link the two types and the two spheres of work.\(^\text{79}\)

The issue was also of interest to Australian churches. The Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission published “A Fair Go for Families” in which it argued society needed to recognise and respect the unpaid work carried out in the home “because of its value for the family and for society”\(^\text{80}\).

**From newsletters to parliamentary debates**

With the issues of childcare and unpaid work selected as the topics of analysis, the next step was to the select documents to be scrutinised. I agree with Fairclough that ‘text’ should be understood in a broad sense, “including spoken as well as written language, and combinations of language with other forms of semiosis including gesture and visual images.”\(^\text{81}\)

However in retrospect the only way to ‘observe’ the processes of debate taking place over a 30 year period is to examine ‘written’ documentation. This misses gestures and visual symbolism that would have been part of policy argumentation but as was noted, is more accessible for an analysis over long periods of time. The use of written documents in analysing the activity of coalitions within public policy debates is also necessary due to the detail of some aspects of policy debates, as has been noted by Sabatier:

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Given the rather technical nature of many secondary aspects and the focus on changes in beliefs over a decade or more, content analysis of government documents (e.g., legislative and administrative hearings) and interest-group publication probably offer the best prospects for systematic empirical work on changes in elite beliefs.\textsuperscript{82}

Some of the archived texts selected for analysis are transcripts of the spoken word. I chose to include in the corpuses Hansard Parliamentary Debates and Select Committee Hearings, as well as transcripts of speeches and presentations by academics, politicians, and activists.

As well as being forms of ‘written’ texts, the documents chosen were all from the ‘public realm’. The assertion that policy learning is the motor of change through which social movements and other collective actors bring discursive change makes it necessary to focus analysis on public texts (that is documents which had been part of the public realm of argumentation) rather than on internal memos and personal communications. While internal changes for organisations, including social movements, are important (See Chapter One) the focus in this thesis is on changes that occur in the public realm. As a result the texts chosen for analysis needed to have been accessible to a broad range of actors in order to be part of the processes of argumentation.

In looking at the influence of social movements and other collective actors over policy debates there is no necessity to look at every document ever written. What is important is to ensure that the texts selected cover an extensive time frame and a cross-section of actors from the policy subsystems being investigated. In each of the case studies I regularly took stock of the documents being selected to ensure there was a cross-section of both actors and document types for each of the three decades scrutinised. Included in the four case studies for analysis were government reports, press releases from both state agents and other organisations of society, submissions to Select Committees, presentations to public forums, speeches by politicians and activists, academic papers, pamphlets from women’s groups, and reports from state agencies and government departments between 1970 and 2000. Also scrutinised were women’s organisations newsletters and journals, and transcripts of

\textsuperscript{82} P. A. Sabatier (1993), \textit{op.cit.}, p. 33.
parliamentary debates in both New Zealand and Australia. As discursive change is likely to occur slowly it was adequate to look at regular ‘publications’ at three-yearly intervals. In New Zealand I carried out a discourse analysis of Parliamentary Debates and the feminist publication *Broadsheet* at three-year intervals from 1970. In Australia, a number of women’s organisation publications as well as transcripts from parliamentary debates in both the upper and lower houses were analysed for 1970, then every three year from 1972. I began the regular intervals from 1972 in Australia because several of the feminist publications selected for the discourse analysis began during this year and I felt it was important to examine the first of the publications put out by Australia’s women’s organisations.

In each case study I began by searching public databases and archives for texts on the two topics—childcare and unpaid work. These searches included scrutinising databases for synonyms of the main terms such as parental care, nurseries, early childhood care and education, and crèches within childcare debates, and in debates on unpaid work for texts containing terms such as housework, household chores, and women’s work. Once the initial searches within public archives and libraries were completed, my search for documents extended to include any documents repeatedly mentioned in other texts. This was done to ensure that the major writings of each of the four policy subsystems were captured. The method of collection resulted in the body of texts used for each case study varying in size. In Chapter Three 212 texts on childcare in New Zealand were scrutinised. The discursive analysis in Chapter Four was carried out on 110 documents about the valuation of unpaid chores in New Zealand. In Chapter Five I look at the discursive developments in three decades of childcare debates in Australia by examining 340 texts from a wide range of sources from the political and civil realms. The public argumentation on childcare in Australia was so extensive that a large number of documents on this topic have been left unexamined, however the regular stocktake of the texts selected for analysis demonstrated that 340 documents provided a cross-section of actors and document types in each of the three decades and allowed for distinct discursive patterns to be traced. In the last case study a total of 90 texts on unpaid work were scrutinised in order to analyse the discursive influences found in Australia on the topic of household work.
Operationalising discourse analysis

In each of the four case studies the first step taken was to carry out an analysis of the discourses used in the policy subsystems analysed in order to map the narratives around which coalitions were formed. I begin with analysis of what Fairclough calls the ‘micro’ aspects of discourse practice, the analysis of the texts themselves, before moving on to analyse social practice and argumentation. For this microanalysis I set out a checklist to be used when deconstructing each of the texts to ensure that all documents were treated as similarly as possible.

Before outlining the elements looked for in each text, I want to acknowledge that as a reader of the texts I bring my own values and belief systems to bear. While recognising this subjectivity, in the case studies I have attempted to maintain a level of rigour using a number of techniques. As has been noted, I used a checklist when deconstructing the texts in each case study, in order to ensure consistency of approach. During the microanalysis I read each of the documents ‘blind’ (that is without knowing who the author was). The aim of reading ‘blind’ was to avoid placing my own expectations on the type of discourse I would find associated with each of the different actors involved in the four subsystems scrutinised. Finally, I kept journals during the analysis in order to note my own beliefs during the process and any correlation or disjunction between my own ‘expectations’ and the evidence appearing from the textual analysis. Ideally, investigations into political discourses and discursive influence would have multiple researchers deconstructing, coding, and reconstructing discursive summaries and maps, however this was not possible for this project.

Developing a textual analysis checklist

The checklist of the elements important in each story line begins with analysis of common themes, phrases, and words. As noted earlier in this chapter, words do matter. A focus on language highlights that unpaid work has variously been labelled ‘shit work’, ‘housework’, and ‘household duties’. The language used within childcare debates included terms such as ‘mother’s work’, ‘early childhood care and education’ and ‘child minding’. This focus on the textual elements included

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83 N. Fairclough (1992), op. cit., p. 231.
metaphors and other rhetorical devices. Metaphors are rhetorical devices, deployed
to convince listeners or readers by putting the situation in a particular light.\textsuperscript{84} Each
linguistic turn is important and distinct, and as a consequence must be included in the
analysis.

The second element on the checklist was actors’ taken-for-granted beliefs. Dryzek
notes that in environmental debates, discourses embody notions of what is natural in
the relationships between different entities. \ldots Hierarchies based on gender,
expertise, political power, species, ecological sensibility, intellect, legal status, race,
and wealth are vigorously assumed in different discourses as are their corresponding
equalities.\textsuperscript{85} It is important to look for assumptions about natural relationships within
policy debates. The more one interprets the more one finds not the fixed meaning of
a text, or of the world, but only other interpretations. For example, in debates on
childcare it is often assumed that mothers provide superior care to day-care centres:

There is an urgent need to upgrade the status of mothers and draw
attention to the vital role she plays in society. Education programmes
should be situated using all the means of communication—radio,
television and the press—to upgrade and revalue the role of the mother
in the home, and to point to the undesirability of her taking on full-
time employment in the pre-school years—especially without continuity
of care from a stable mother-substitute for her child.\textsuperscript{86}

In unpaid work debates a common assumption expressed within texts was that
household chores should be carried out for love, not for money. These assumptions
on ‘natural relationships’ and the ‘normal order’ need to be laid as bare as possible
during discourse analysis.

The third of the elements looked for in texts was the use of common character
representations. For example, liberal feminists construct the state as a possible site
of liberation, while radical feminists see governments and their agents as hindering
women’s progress. And within the childcare debates of both New Zealand and
Australia, women are variously presented as ‘mothers’ and as ‘workers’, or
sometimes as both.

\textsuperscript{84} J. S. Dryzek (1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{ibid.} p. 16.
\textsuperscript{86} H. J. Brew (1975) Submission on the Extent of Discrimination Against Women in New Zealand to
the Select Committee. Wellington, pp. 4-5.
Finally, there was a need to look at any common ways of using pre-existing resources within each of the texts analysed. This reference to pre-existing resources was necessary to help locate whether the texts taken from the public realm were extensions of existing (and older) discourses, or whether they were a break from past narratives. The focus is on what Fairclough refers to as manifest intertextuality. "The objective is to specify what other texts are drawn upon in the constitution of the text being analysed, and how."\textsuperscript{87} For example, within New Zealand unpaid work debates many texts included references to Marilyn Waring's work on unpaid duties. The analysis of reference to pre-existing resources within texts is a way of helping to isolate out linguistic and policy legacies. The attention to common conventional resources also allowed identification of the impact of international discourses have on national debates.

To sum up, the same process of analysis and deconstruction was carried out on each text by applying the checklist outlined in Figure 2.1:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Figure 2.1}
\end{center}

\textbf{Textual analysis checklist}

\begin{center}
\begin{itemize}
\item Common textual patterns and features;
\item Common assumptions;
\item Common character representations; and
\item Common ways of using conventional resources.
\end{itemize}
\end{center}

After deconstructing each text it was possible to begin summarising the main themes that appeared in each of the policy arenas. The basic structure of the multiple discourses found in each of the areas of debate is set out in summaries that provide an overview of the ideas, words, characters, and assumptions that existed on each topic.

\textsuperscript{87} N. Fairclough (1992), \textit{op.cit.}, p. 233.
This reconstruction of the words and phrases required a decision on how to demarcate the different narratives found in each of the subsystems. As Fairclough notes discourses are seen to classify people, things, places, events etc.—and indeed other discourses. The central question is what sort of boundaries and ‘insulations’ are set up between discourses.\textsuperscript{88} I chose to draw these boundaries on the basis of the different normative assertions that were evident in each of the story lines, as different worldviews will generate different policies and policy outcomes. In investigations of women’s movement influence in the political realm it is tempting to begin by focussing on the expectation that analysis of a policy subsystem will reveal a feminist narrative competing against a patriarchal discourse. This expectation is due to the implicit belief in social movement literature that within public policy disputes there will exist a social movement narrative and the dominant discourse to which the sustained social protest is opposed. Rather than beginning with the assumption that I will find a feminist discourse and one other narrative in policy debates of childcare and unpaid work, I wanted the texts found in each policy realm to speak for themselves. Neither did I want to impose any limits on the number of discourses that were to be analysed in each of the policy subsystems. Sabatier asserts that each policy subsystem will contain a small number of coalitions—between two and four—a natural result of the fight to form coalitions that are competitive\textsuperscript{89} and certainly this belief is reflected in many of the investigations using ACF.\textsuperscript{90} As will be seen in the four case studies there was often more than two (and sometimes more than four) discourses on each topic during the 30 years analysed.

\textit{Mapping discourse coalitions}

The deconstruction of texts allows for the identification of the discourses found in a public policy debate but it does not identify whether a social movement was active or which actors were able to saturate the discursive terrain with their story line and institutionalise their social constructions. The next step is to group actors together in coalitions according to their use of a discourse. This step contextualises the discourses found in each policy subsystem in relation to institutional and social-structural shifts. As a result the analysis moves from the microanalysis of texts to

\textsuperscript{88} N. Fairclough (2000), \textit{op.cit.}, p. 179.
\textsuperscript{89} P. A. Sabatier (1993), \textit{op.cit.}, p. 26.
look at the processes of argumentation that took place over childcare and unpaid work.

Before looking to isolate out the influences on policy discourses it was necessary to identify if any of the narratives found in the four case studies were utilised by social movements. As already noted, I am not assuming that women's movements were active in the policy subsystems analysed nor over the time frame investigated, but identify any such activity by isolating out feminist discourses which exist and are utilised by actors who use unconventional tactics and forms (at least some of the time) in an attempt to bring about social change. Once I have located women's movement activity, their location within a discourse coalition (or coalitions), and which other actors were involved in the debates, I looked for any discursive influence of mobilisations in the argumentative process. Have social movements active within childcare and unpaid work debates been successful in having their discourses adopted by other actors, such as state agencies, the media, academics, and the general public? Has any social movement discourse been institutionalised as part of the rules of the game? Which of the discourse coalitions identified in a policy subsystem has achieved saturation and institutionalisation? As already outlined in this chapter, changes in the composition of the discourse coalitions found in childcare and unpaid work debates will provide evidence of the influence between actors involved in the processes of policy argumentation including the impact of any social movement activity.

Discursive co-option
In Chapter One I discussed concerns about the co-option of social movement actors by the political realm. It is important to note that narratives may also be appropriated by more institutional actors in order to close down public debate. One way of looking at whether co-option is taking place is to look at different levels of policy learning. Within policy literature the beliefs and ideas at the base of policies are frequently separated into two or three categories (See Figure 2.2).
### Figure 2.2

**Tiered Beliefs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sabatier(^{91})</th>
<th>Hall(^{92})</th>
<th>Berman(^{93})</th>
<th>Schon and Rein(^{94})</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Third-order</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Metacultural</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Core Beliefs</td>
<td>learning</td>
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<td>frames</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Policy Paradigm</strong></td>
<td>Near (Policy)</td>
<td>Second-order</td>
<td>Programmatic</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Core Beliefs</td>
<td>learning</td>
<td>beliefs</td>
<td>action frames</td>
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<td><strong>Policy Practice</strong></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>First-order</td>
<td>Policy</td>
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**Worldviews**
Normative beliefs/ideologies. Abstract and systematic ideas that provide an overarching framework. For example: gender as socially constructed vs. gender as biologically determined.

**Policy Paradigm**
Providing the guidelines for policy action. For example: work is paid employment and all else is leisure vs. work includes unpaid tasks, emotional labour, and paid employment.

**Policy Practice**
Detail of policy implementation. The administrative rules and budget allocations. For example: measurement of unpaid work will be carried out by women's agencies vs. measurement of unpaid work being mainstreamed.


The divisions within the advocacy coalition framework were necessary as Sabatier asserts some beliefs are more easily altered than others. While the focus of analysis in the case studies is on the story lines utilised by actors in policy debates, a division between normative assertions and policy claims can aid researchers in isolating discursive co-option within a policy arena. Real discursive victory for a social movement is achieved when state sector actors adopt all of the normative assertions forwarded by social movements. As a result in each of the case studies I will map the broad movement of actors in the discursive terrain based on normative assertions found within texts, before returning to the textual analysis of documents to determine any ‘lower-order’ changes that have occurred. In the case studies in New Zealand and Australia it was necessary to draw distinctions between ‘linguistic’ change and shifts in normative assertions. In the four case studies there was evidence of government actors picking up the language of social movements without changing the underlying normative assertions found within their narratives. For example, in the unpaid work cases state sector actors utilised the term unpaid work but at the same time assert that work consists only of those activities done for pay. Similarly, the case studies highlighted the fact that mass mobilisations and other actors frequently utilised the dominant language of the political realm during public debates without changing their worldviews.

Presenting the data

The final challenge was to find a way to present to readers the shifts that had occurred in the discourse coalition membership in each of the four case studies. Each case study covered 30 years of public debates and dozens of actors resulting in the final discursive terrain in each policy subsystem being complex. I wanted to show readers the differences in the breadth and depth of the discourse coalitions, to allow readers to see the changes in coalition membership, and to demonstrate which constellations had long-term and broad-ranging public sector support. This desire led me to develop visual representations of the coalitions that were active in childcare and unpaid work debates in New Zealand and Australia. In these representations, actors are brought together in 12 broad categories and plotted onto discursive maps (See Figures 2.3 and 2.4). The diagrams drawn up are not graphs

95 P. A. Sabatier (1993), op. cit., p. 33.
(there is no numerical value for the vertical axis) but are maps that allow readers to view actors in relation to each other and in relation to the time frame analysed. While there is no numerical value for the vertical axes of the discourse coalition maps, I have chosen to arrange actors from the least conventional to the most conventional. A map is drawn for each of the discourse coalitions found in each of the policy subsystems during the three decades scrutinised.

Two examples of the discursive maps are presented below. As already noted, the aim is to allow the reader to locate what type of actors were involved in a coalition, when the actors were involved, and to compare the composition of one coalition with another. The maps presented here show two of the discourse coalitions that formed in the New Zealand childcare debates. The first map provides an indication of the large number of actors who asserted that saw childcare as a necessity for working women. The second discursive map shows lower level support within the political realm for the provision of state-funded non-parental care to all women. The use of maps to illustrate discourse coalition membership is not a common tool but I believe it will help readers make sense of the thick descriptive analysis presented in each of the case studies.
When using the discourse maps the readers must be aware that at no time am I making claims about numerical weight of discourses. It is not important that a discourse is used multiple times in one year, it is instead the broad collection of actors around a story line over a prolonged time frame that is of interest. Winning discourses will be those narratives that attract support from a broad range of actors over a period of several years (or even several decades). A discourse coalition that encompasses individuals, government advisory bodies, social movement activists, unions, business, politicians, and public servants has been able to saturate the discursive realm on an issue. Though as will be seen in the forthcoming case studies very few discourses have support from such a wide group of actors.

This process of creating discourse coalition maps involved the conflation of different individual agents into ‘categories’ (See Figure 2.5) in order to ensure that the visual representations were workable. These categories began with grouping together all politicians together, no matter their political party affiliation. During inquiries I found no clear evidence of differences in the response of politicians from different political parties in New Zealand and Australia in terms of their reception to social movement discourses on childcare and unpaid work. The small differences that were found are noted in the thesis narrative and in the appendix of this thesis.

The next groupings were of state bureaucracies. A distinction was made between public servants from ‘mainstream’ policy bodies and those from the ‘women’s bureaucracies’ of New Zealand and Australia. Literature on feminists who work in the Australian Office of Status of Women present ‘femocrats’ as a distinct kind of public servant. The research indicates that the women’s bureaucracies will be more amenable to the ideas and beliefs of the women’s movement than other state agents. In New Zealand, the Ministry’s own mission statement makes clear its role in the public sector.

The purpose of the Ministry, as defined by cabinet is to:

i  advise the Minister of Women’s Affairs on the implications of Government’s policies, public sector plans and expenditure programmes in terms of their differential impact on women;

ii  monitor and initiate legislation and regulations in order to promote equality of opportunity for women.97

From its inception it was envisaged that the Ministry of Women’s Affairs would have an overt concern with the position of women in New Zealand society. Similarly with government advisory bodies I decided to draw boundaries around ‘mainstream’ advisory groups and those set up to consult on ‘women’s issues’ (such as the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women).

The next category used in the discourse coalition maps included actors who published their works in academic journals and publications. Individual companies and business organisations were grouped together, while unions and employee sector groups were conflated into one category in each of the policy arenas. Once unions and employee sector groups have been identifies, the next category is that of interest and pressure groups. A distinction is drawn between women’s interest groups with a feminist core, and all other interest or pressure groups. The final two categories were those of women’s movements and countermovements. The difference between the various interest groups and the two kinds of ‘movements’ identified is that interest groups had formalised structures, whereas the texts categorised as belonging to women’s movements and countermovements were from grass-roots and unconventional organisations. The movement category included feminist academics who had published their work in non-mainstream publications and conferences.

Figure 2.5

Categories for discursive maps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politicians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s bureaucracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government advisory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s advisory groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s interest groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countermovement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For readers concerned to see the detail of the categories, each discourse coalition map will have a corresponding table in an appendix to the thesis.

At the conclusion of the four case studies I will turn to compare the changes which have been noted. The comparative will look both at differences between the two nations—New Zealand and Australia—and the two issues chosen for analysis. The two countries were chosen as they have similar political heritages (Westminster parliamentary democracy and colonialism) and are relatively similar culturally. The two policy areas were chosen because of the differences between the policy types. The choice of unpaid work in an investigation of the discursive impact of the women’s movement is prudent as it is predominantly a battle over definitions and story lines. How people speak about unpaid work is central to most of the actors who debate the issue. The importance of cognitive resources is acknowledged by those involved in debates on unpaid work:

It is therefore essential that unpaid work is made visible, and accounted for, and that our language, and in particular the language of policy makers, is changed to reflect this reality.

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Every time I see a mother with an infant, I know that I am seeing a woman at work. I know that work is not leisure and it is not sleep and it may well be enjoyable. I know that money payment is not necessary for work to be done. But, again, I seem to be at odds with economics as a discipline, because when work becomes a concept in institutionalised economics, payment enters the picture.\textsuperscript{99}

In New Zealand we frequently equate "work" with "having a job". Work is commonly seen as any activity engaged in for monetary gain.\textsuperscript{100}

In contrast the issue of childcare contains a stronger redistributive element with actors frequently asserting there is a need for state resources for childcare (or discounting any such provision of tax payers' money for such purposes). The factors allowing for such comparative work will be further discussed in the Chapter Seven.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In order to measure the influence of social movements in the political realm it is necessary to look beyond current social movement research to investigations in the field of public policy. As has been noted, policy processes are increasingly being seen as processes of argumentation in which actors compete to gain discursive supremacy. The view of policy as an argumentative process provides a model for understanding the policy learning processes through which social movements and other collective actors can bring political and social change. The contestation of ideas can be monitored by looking at the discourse coalitions involved in policy debates and gauging which coalitions are able to achieve discursive saturation and institutionalisation. Though as the discourse coalition framework makes clear, any processes of learning will be influenced by historical and political contexts.

An investigation of discourse coalitions and the involvement of actors from the periphery of the political realm within these constellations begins with a microanalysis of childcare and unpaid work debates in New Zealand and Australia.

\textsuperscript{100} B. Disley and W. Wilcox (1994) \textit{What Have We Been Doing All Day?: Women's Work in New Zealand. What Does Work Do Our Mental Health}, Auckland: Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand.
where texts will be deconstructed and descriptions provided of the discursive terrain. Then actors involved in the policy debates will be grouped together in coalitions based on their adherence to a particular narrative. This level of analysis permits scrutiny of the processes of argumentation and policy learning in the four case studies. Looking at the discourses and coalitions that appear in public debates on childcare and unpaid work will provide ways to draw out social movement involvement influence in policy argumentation. Covering 30 years of debates will show whether the narratives of any women's movements active in New Zealand and Australia have been able to influence the narratives utilised by mainstream political actors. Did any women's movements activity in New Zealand and Australia generate support for feminist views on childcare and unpaid work? Were any social movements that were active in childcare and unpaid work debates between 1970 and 2000 able to achieve saturation and institutionalisation of their narratives? The next four chapters will look to analyse debates in New Zealand and Australia on childcare and unpaid work in an attempt to unravel these questions.
Chapter Three

Mothercare, education, and the needy: Childcare debates in New Zealand

From *Broadsheet*, April 1985

The provision of non-parental care has been the subject of extensive public debate in New Zealand over the past 30 years providing a rich argumentative terrain for analysis. Public debates have drawn out strong narratives on the roles of families, the state, employers, and communities in providing care for children and at times have seen the rights of children pitted against the rights of women. A discourse analysis of a cross-section of texts on childcare in New Zealand highlights five different narrative positions used in debates between 1970 and 2000. These discourses used to argue for and against non-parental care have waxed and waned over the 30 years but all five story lines must be examined in
order to investigate the influence of women’s movement activity in this policy subsystem. As the following chapter illustrates, the fight for discursive hegemony on the issue of childcare in New Zealand has seen limited influence by one of the two feminist discourse coalitions found to be active on the topic. But the ability of women’s movement activists to shape childcare as a right of working women was surpassed by the impact of other discourse coalitions that entered the argumentative terrain on childcare during the last three decades.

Before mapping the discursive terrain around childcare argumentation in New Zealand and investigating the impact of women’s movement activity on this issue, I will outline the boundaries drawn around the topic in order to select texts for analysis. Childcare is a concept that covers a number of forms of non-parental care of children. Boundaries around childcare are commonly drawn by contrasting services with other early childhood provision, such as kindergartens and playcentres. One division drawn between professional childcare and other pre-school facilities, centres on differences in the levels of parental involvement required for the services. Childcare is a service which is seen to require little parental involvement on a daily basis, in contrast to playcentres: “That part of pre-school care has always been an extremely sacrificial one, and it has been the role of parents—male and female parents—to give voluntarily of their time. Changing circumstances have meant that that model has been very hard to sustain—given present times—and there is a need to put in extra resources so that the model of pre-school care can continue.”1 Another distinction in debates on non-parental care in New Zealand centred on the separation of ‘care’ facilities, such as crèches, from ‘educational’ facilities, such as kindergartens. In the 30 years of debates scrutinised there were attempts to remove this distinction between care and education, making it difficult to separate discussions about nurseries and crèches, from those about kindergartens and playcentres. However for the purpose of this thesis childcare is defined as services provided for children by people other than their parents and teachers (including kindergarten and playcentre teachers). This focuses attention on texts which debate care provided in day nurseries, in factory crèches, in children’s own

homes, or in full day or part day facilities. Such childcare provisions encompass 'professional' care by trained childcare workers and nannies, as well as 'backyard' arrangements made for many children in which neighbours and extended family members take on the duty of care.

Also under the banner of childcare in New Zealand is the care of school-aged children before- and after-school, as well as in the school holidays. New Zealand legislation (like that in Australia), prohibits parents from leaving children under 14 years of age unsupervised, making forms of childcare essential for working families. While childcare argumentation encompasses care of school-aged children, childcare debates during the last three decades have focused on care for children under five years old (the age at which they attend primary school in New Zealand). The discourse analysis to follow in this chapter looks at how forms of non-parental care are justified or rejected in New Zealand.

**From women-centred narratives to targeting**

In order to trace social movement influence in New Zealand childcare debates, it is first necessary to establish whether any social movements were active in these policy discussions between 1970 and 2000. In order to trace such activity it is necessary to carry out a two-step process, as was indicated in Chapter Two, involving investigations of the discourses and the discourse coalitions found in policy argumentation. The first step is to investigate whether debates on childcare in New Zealand contained discourses of challenge based on feminist ideologies. From a textual analysis of 212 texts on childcare it was possible to build summaries of the various discourses utilised to argue for and against non-parental care in New Zealand. As was noted in Chapter Two the summaries were built by investigating the common assumptions, textual elements, character representations, and pre-existing resources found within texts on childcare.

**Childcare for all women**

Between 1970 and 2000 two distinct feminist discourses were evident in childcare debates in New Zealand. The first was based on demands for the state to provide universal and free childcare to *all women* in order that they might
have time out from child-rearing duties to work, rest, shop, and play (See the
discourse summary in Figure 3.1). This women’s rights discourse was
predominantly utilised by women’s groups such as the National Organisation for
Women, the Wellington Women’s Workshop, and the New Zealand Federation
of University Women, as will be seen when the discourse coalition surrounding
this narrative is outlined later in this chapter. The narrative asserted that
childcare was needed to free New Zealand women from childminding duties, a
view evident in texts from the 1975 United Women’s Convention and in a
submission to the 1975 Women’s Rights Select Committee:

We set out the reasons for the need for child care as being: the
need for relief from constant care, domestic emergency, paid
employment or voluntary work, study or absorbing interest, and
activities outside the home.²

Government should be responsible for the setting up of childcare
centres staffed by trained personnel of both sexes. This would
enable mothers to have time free of family responsibilities to
study, work or simply relieve the strain of coping twenty-four
hours a day, seven days a week with pre-school children.³

Childcare was seen to provide ‘real choice’ for women⁴ freeing them for paid
work and other activities. Texts also asserted that mothers needed time out to
relax, as was seen in a report by the Committee on Women which claimed
childcare centres were needed “... to provide relief from baby-minding for
mothers”.⁵

As was outlined in Chapter Two, the words, phrases, and assertions from the
texts were utilised to build a composite picture of the main elements of the
women’s rights discourse. This process is then repeated for each of the
discourses found in public debates on childcare in New Zealand between 1970
and 2000.

⁵ (1975) International Women’s Year New Zealand 1975: From the Committee on Women Newsletter No. 4, p. 5.
Figure 3.1

Women’s rights discourse summary New Zealand childcare debates

Normative and policy assertions
Motherhood is socially constructed
Women have a right to choice in life
Women need time out from care duties to work, rest, study, and play
Education campaigns are needed make it acceptable for mothers to take time out from child-rearing duties
Changes in fathering are needed so women can have equality in all spheres of life
The government and the whole community has a responsibility to provide quality, affordable childcare
Government should provide some funds to childcare centres to ensure quality staff and equipment, as well as fee subsidies to parents
Regulated childcare is better than backyard arrangements
Childcare facilities should be built in suburbs, workplaces, and shopping centres

The demands within the women’s rights discourse for state-funded childcare in order to give women time out from childrearing duties was seen as controversial even from those who joined women’s organisations in the 1970s. In 1973 ‘new feminist’ Barbara Morris spoke of the radical nature of childcare discussions:

At last—people who weren’t forever discussing the latest recipe, browsing through pattern books, going into ecstasies over yards of material. Instead, stimulating discussions and action on topics of current interest: the medical and social aspects of the role of women; industrial arbitration and agreements; education and employment opportunities; the contentious issues such as abortion, child-care centres...⁶

The calls for childcare provisions constituted a controversial narrative because they challenged family and gender roles in New Zealand. In the 1970s much of New Zealand’s employment and social policy was based on the male wage earner system⁷ a system founded on women remaining in the home and taking on unpaid housework and care duties. This challenge to prevailing views about gender roles will be discussed later in this chapter, as it is one of the conditions which signals women’s movement activity in New Zealand childcare debates during some of the three decades analysed.

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Childcare for working women

The women’s rights discourse was not the only ‘feminist’ narrative found in New Zealand childcare debates between 1970 and 2000. Alongside these calls for government-sponsored childcare for all women, were demands for access to non-parental care facilities for working women (See the discourse summary in Figure 3.2). The central assertion of the working women’s discourse was that women have a right to the economic independence that comes through paid employment. In written submissions to the 1975 Women’s Rights Select Committee there were numerous calls for childcare to be provided for working mothers (and fathers), such as the plea made by the Palmerston North Women’s Liberation Group:

For wives who do not want to work or who do not need to, kindergartens and play centres may provide an adequate addition to the child’s experience at home. However for many other families some form of day care is required. Solo parents, both male and female, and many wives need to work to ensure the economic survival of the family unit.\(^8\)

Working mothers were seen to have two problems, “finding satisfactory childcare, and then, even more difficult, being able to afford it”.\(^9\) As the Ministry of Women’s Affairs noted, childcare was about women’s economic equality.\(^10\) Within this working women’s discourse, a lack of affordable childcare and low wages for women were presented as interlinked barriers to economic independence:

Childcare costs get calculated against the female parent’s low wage so that the job becomes “uneconomic” and she stays at home with the toddlers.\(^11\)

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Working women with children must be able to afford the best available child-care and after school-care for their children. If their wages are insufficient they will be forced to skimp on these.\textsuperscript{12}

The working women's discourse included a demand that governments and employers pay some of the costs incurred by working mothers. As the Labour Women's Council\textsuperscript{13} put it, there needs to be a recognition that childcare is an essential expense for working parents and equitable measures for fee relief should be addressed through the taxation system.\textsuperscript{14} Within the working women's discourse it was often claimed that formal childcare arrangements were the preserve of double-income, professional parents.

Not only was non-parental care seen as essential for economic independence in the working women's discourse, childcare was seen as necessary so women could have real choice in life and it is on the question of the right to choice that the two feminist narratives converged. To put it simply as the National Organisation for Women did in 1975, "Women ought not to have to choose between motherhood and career".\textsuperscript{15} Or as Ann Hercus, then Minister of Women's Affairs, noted:

\begin{quote}
... We now want open choices.

We may choose to spend our adult lives as homemakers. That is an honourable career. So is unpaid community work.

We may also choose not to have children, or to have children and combine (just as men do) the dual roles of parenting and paid workforce participation. Equally honourable, in my book.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

The working women's discourse was evident throughout the three decades analysed and was seen in the 1970s in texts from organisations such as the


\textsuperscript{13} The Labour Women's Council is part of New Zealand Labour Party. It is important to note at this point that New Zealanders use the British form 'Labour', and the Australians use the American spelling of 'Labor' (as will be seen in subsequent chapters).

\textsuperscript{14} (1985) "Labour Women's Council: Submission to Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education". Wellington, p. 2.


\textsuperscript{16} A. Hercus. (1985) "Address to the Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education". From \textit{Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education}, 4-5 December 1985, Wellington, p. 4.
Society for Research on Women, the YWCA, and various women’s liberation groups.

Figure 3.2
Working women’s discourse summary New Zealand childcare debates

Normative and policy assertions
Women have a right to economic independence
Men and women should have equal places in the paid workforce
Women have a right to combine paid work and family roles
The provision of childcare is an equality issue
Women work to supplement family income and for fulfilment
The government and employers have a responsibility to provide childcare
Governments should subsidise childcare centres
Childcare should be tax deductible
Childcare centres should be built in places of employment
Unions must take the issue of childcare seriously
Crèche hours must be flexible

As was noted in Chapter Two boundaries are drawn around the various discourses found in each policy subsystem by looking at the points of divergence with regards to normative and policy assertions. The differences in the normative assertions of the women’s rights and working women’s discourses resulted in these two story lines being treated as separate narratives in New Zealand childcare debates between 1970 and 2000. While both discourses were broadly concerned with advancing the position of women in society, their aims and objectives varied markedly as can be seen when the two discursive summaries are put side-by-side (See Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

The two women-centred narratives diverged on who they constructed as needing government-funded childcare. Universal childcare was constructed as the right of all women within the women’s rights discourse while in contrast; the second narrative focused on the childcare needs of women in paid employment. The narratives also contained differences on who should pay for the cost of childcare. Within the texts of the women’s rights discourse it was asserted that motherhood was social constructed and the community as a whole (including government) had to take responsibility for childcare, while the working women’s narrative saw childcare as a government and employer responsibility.
Both feminist narratives claimed 'equality' for women was their end goal, however, the arenas in which this equality was sought diverged. In the working women's discourse the emphasis was on equality for men and women within the public sphere and particularly within the paid labour market. A right to equality in the private sphere as well as in the realm of the labour force featured in the women's rights discourse. The different foci of the two feminist narratives were evident in the way that childcare expenses were to be funded. The working women's texts included demands that childcare be a tax-deductible expense, evidence of its focus on the realm of paid employment and working mothers. While the women's rights narrative demanded that government subsidies for childcare should go directly to parents, evidence of the attention given the private realm within this story line.

The lack of a single feminist discourse in New Zealand childcare debates highlights the internal tensions that exist within feminism. Does this divergence discount assertions of a 'women's movement' at work in New Zealand debates on childcare? Feminists have long argued there exists many feminisms (socialist-, radical-, liberal-, black-, eco-). Each is part of a larger meta-narrative but each is based on a worldview that varies in regards to what causes the oppression of women and how such subjugation will be overcome. Certainly within social movement literature there is a recognition that the collective identities at the centre of mass mobilisations are not static but are dynamic, altering when actors, their experience, community, politics, or movement narrative changes. What is central is that a movement has a collective grievance. As Catherine Eschle notes, movements aim to bring about social change. "The broad aspiration can encompass a variety of ideological positions and political strategies within and between movements, ranging from reaction to revolution." It is a common commitment to seeking some kind of better life for women as women that draws actors together in a feminist mobilisation.

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What is seen in New Zealand childcare debates are two feminist narratives aimed at changing the social position of women but diverging on the way this is to be done. The feminist texts analysed must not be viewed as an end in the processes of negotiation over meaning by these collective actors, nor the beginning of the process, they are part of the ongoing internal debates that movements undertake. This process of renegotiation of the messages at the heart of women’s movement activity is discussed by Kinser who notes that feminism is polyphonic. “Whether or not different feminist voices are concordant or discordant, they feed one another, inform one another, and help to shape one another.”

In carrying out the textual analysis and subsequent scrutiny of narrative coalitions, I have decided to disentangle the two feminist voices found in policy debates in the hope that this will provide greater understanding of when and how social movements achieve discursive influence. The move to disentangle the two women-centred narratives in debates also provides the opportunity to see the changes occurring in women’s movements during the time frame analysed.

The existence of the ‘feminist’ discourses summarised in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 on their own do not automatically signal the existence of active women’s movements in New Zealand. To be considered the base of women’s movement activity each women-centred narrative must be shown to be discourses opposed to the ‘status quo’ and must be used by organisations utilising unconventional forms and tactics to bring change. I will turn first to establish if the women’s rights and working women’s discourses were narratives of opposition by examining the other narratives found in New Zealand childcare debates between 1970 and 2000.

_Mothercare is best_

The existence of a broadly ‘patriarchal’ discourse within New Zealand childcare discussions moves investigations a step closer to identifying women’s movement activity in childcare debates between 1970 and 2000. The

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'mothercare' discourse saw childcare as bad for children and the 'family' (read mothers) as the paramount means of care for pre-schoolers in particular (See the discourse summary in Figure 3.3). This view was evident in a 1973 press release from the office of the Minister of Social Welfare. The media release asserted that the basic principle of the Government’s policy on childcare was that normal family life should remain the paramount unit for looking after children in the community:

“Only when the family cannot perform this function itself, or where special circumstances make it better for the child to be in day care apart from the family, is assistance from the community for day care justified”, the Minister said... Mr King said that the scheme was not designed to encourage mothers to go out to work merely to augment an already adequate family income.21

Viewing mothers as natural carers meant that day-care outside the home was seen as applicable only for those families with 'special needs'. As the Department of Labour noted in 1987, childcare was allowed for sick mothers, solo mothers, and families where women worked due to financial pressures on the family.22

This narrative was strongest during the 1970s in New Zealand, with politicians and public sector employees asserting the superiority of mothercare during the first of the three decades scrutinised. It is important to acknowledge that the 'mothercare' narrative is a continuation of sentiments from the 1950s, sentiments noted by Anne Frizelle: “In the late 50’s some New Zealanders awoke to find their neighbours looking after people’s children. Not just the friendly playcentre or neighbourly minder, but large groups of infants whilst their neglectful mothers went out to work.23

Figure 3.3

Mothercare discourse summary New Zealand childcare debates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normative and policy assertions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The family is the paramount means of childcare in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women have been given childbearing functions and it is their duty to rear children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governments should pay mothers a wage or provide tax incentives so they can stay at home and care for dependants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers only work out of economic necessity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a mother works then she must find alternative care for her children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare should only used when families fail in their duty of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare outside the home is bad for young children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal childcare should be provided by voluntary agencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The existence of this mothercare discourse establishes the two feminist narratives found in New Zealand childcare debates as oppositional discourses meeting the first of the conditions for a social movement. As was noted earlier, social movements are collectives of individuals and organisations based on a discourse of challenge and involving actors using unconventional tactics and forms to bring about social change. However, the mothercare and feminist narratives were not the only discourses found within New Zealand childcare argumentation. A further two discourses were evident in debates on non-parental care between 1970 and 2000.

Educating young New Zealanders

While the two feminist narratives presented state-sponsored childcare as a necessity in protecting the rights of various groups of women, New Zealand debates on non-parental care also contained a narrative asserting the need to protect the rights of children. The education narrative combined a concern for the welfare of children with the desire to provide better educational standards for pre-school and school-aged children (See the discourse summary in Figure 3.4). These concerns were intertwined from the 1980s in New Zealand within the label “educare”. This concept predominantly covered the education and care of under-fives, though there were attempts to widen out discussions of childcare to encompass out-of-school-hours care programmes and ensure facilities for children of school age encompassed both ‘baby-sitting’ and educative elements.
The philosophical view underlying the education narrative was that early childhood care and education belonged with general education. This philosophy saw the Labour Government move the administration of childcare from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education in 1985:

There is still a lot of misplaced criticism of parents who place their children in childcare centres. This is partly because the word 'childcare' has come to assume unpleasant connotations and is even sometimes associated with children being dumped on others to suit the convenience of their parents. To help counter this obstacle to progress the government is, next year, transferring childcare services from the Department of Social Welfare to that of Education so that all early childhood care and education services are under one roof. This is the proper place for these services, for all care of young children inevitably involves an educational element and education in centres has a caring element.

As will be seen later in this chapter, the education narrative was used in New Zealand by politicians, educational sector groups, and unions, particularly during the 1980s. For these actors equity of access was seen as essential for 'early childhood care and education' just as in all areas of education in New Zealand:

... funding for early childhood should be directed to services rather than users. Fee subsidies and taxation benefits as a means of funding childcare have a place only until there is full salary funding from the state, and equitable funding for capital and training needs. Funding via fee and taxation relief does not achieve equity of access.

Over the years there have been continuing discussions about the desirability of establishing an integrated early childhood care and education service to overcome the arbitrary separation of care and education and to ensure equality of access and provision.

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The education narrative dismissed claims that non-parental care was bad for children. In contrast to the mothercare discourse that saw childcare as a welfare issue for families in crisis, the 'educare' discourse saw childcare as being part of the educational advancement of all young New Zealanders.

**Figure 3.4**

**Education discourse summary New Zealand childcare debates**

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*Normative and policy assertions*

- Care and education are bound together
- All children have a right to quality early childhood care and education
- Childcare is part of the education sector
- Government has a responsibility for education
- Government must equitably fund childcare services with other education services
- Childcare subsidies must go directly to childcare centres to ensure quality of staff and facilities
- The Department of Education should administer childcare
- Government must regulate childcare centres
- Childcare workers must be properly trained

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*Targeting state-funded childcare provisions*

The final discourse to emerge in the 30 years of childcare debates analysed focused on minimising the role of New Zealand governments in childcare provision (See the discourse summary in Figure 3.5). In this narrative any financial assistance for families was to be targeted to those in need, a long way from the demands within the women’s rights discourse for universal childcare. The demands for targeted childcare were stated by politicians such as Jenny Shipley:

> In the Budget the Government announced that it would be looking at further targeting of low-income families for early-childhood assistance.  

While the education and working women’s discourses argued for the state to play a major role in funding childcare as an ‘equity’ measure, the targeted childcare narrative saw only a limited role for government in pre-school care.

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and education. The texts asserted that governments should limit their involvement in childcare to providing establishment grants and leave ongoing costs of non-parental care to be met by users. This view was expressed in a 1985 discussion on childcare centre provision for state employees:

The arrangements for administering the scheme for providing child care facilities for use by public servants have not been finalised. However, as indicated in the recently announced outline of the proposal, the employer will contribute the capital cost of land and buildings and the users will manage the facilities and meet the operating costs.²⁹

One of the stated aims within the targeted childcare discourse was to encourage actors from outside the state to take responsibility for childcare operating costs. Government agencies, such as the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, sought private business support for childcare costs³⁰ as part of the move to minimise state responsibility in this subpolicy.

Not only was childcare provision seen as being a responsibility of private businesses, the discourse included an affirmation of family and individual responsibility for the care of children. This focus on individual responsibility resulted in the targeted discourse linking financial assistance for non-parental care to the willingness of recipients to take on paid employment and become economically independent. The link between childcare provision and economic independence was evident in speeches by MPs Peter Gresham and Georgina Te Heuheu:

What I will confirm is that Government made changes in order to target the child-care subsidy according to the original intention, which was to assist people who were endeavouring to improve themselves through gaining work or gaining education.³¹

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³⁰ Ministry of Women’s Affairs (1990) op. cit., p. 16.
Mostly, Government wants to be assured that our responses to
education, social and labour market issues are responses that

Figure 3.5

Targeted assistance discourse summary New Zealand childcare debates

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Normative and policy assertions}
\item Government funds are limited
\item Government funding must be targeted to low-income families, particularly those trying to better themselves through work or study
\item Childcare should be tax deductible for low-income families
\item Childcare helps solo mothers and families achieve economic independence
\item All adults have an obligation to take on paid employment
\item Provision of childcare by employers should be a tax-deductible expense
\item The government must encourage the market and employers to provide childcare facilities
\item Users should pay ongoing/day to day childcare costs
\item Parents should be assisted in learning the skills needed to educate their own preschoolers
\end{itemize}

\section*{From childcare narratives to discourses coalitions}

Until now, I have only identified the actors involved in childcare debates in a cursory fashion focussing instead on outlining the broad discursive terrain of childcare debates in New Zealand between 1970 and 2000. The chapter now groups actors involved in childcare debates into coalitions according to their use of one of the five discourses outlined. As was noted in Chapter Two, a discourse coalition is the ensemble of a set of story lines, the actors that utter these story lines, and the practices that conform to these story lines, all organised around a discourse.\footnote{M. A. Hajer (1993) \textit{op. cit.}, p. 47.}

As well as mapping the membership of the discourse coalitions, I will look to see which constellations included actors using unconventional tactics and forms to bring about social change. Were any of the five discourses utilised by unconventional actors during the 30 years scrutinised? Were the two women-centred discourses at the base of women’s movement activity? Which discourses survived throughout the 30 years scrutinised? Which discourses
were able to elicit support from existing political elites such as politicians and public servants? Which of the discourses were institutionalised into the laws and customs of New Zealand society? These questions are aimed at gauging which narrative constellations were ‘winning’ in debates about non-parental care provision. As was noted in Chapter Two, a discourse coalition can be said to dominate a given political realm when central actors are persuaded by, or forced to accept, the rhetorical power of a new discourse (condition of discourse saturation); and when this is reflected in the institutional practices of that policy realm.\textsuperscript{34} As the interest is in gauging the influence of any women’s movement activity in childcare debates, I will turn first to map the coalitions based around the women’s rights and the working women’s discourses.

\textit{Coalitions on the periphery}

During the 30 years scrutinised the women’s rights discourse coalition was dominated by organisations from the periphery of the political realm such as the Wellington Women’s Workshop, feminist conventions, and feminist publications such as \textit{Broadsheet} (See Figure 3.6). The involvement of grassroots actors in the women’s rights narrative coalition was evidence of women’s movement activity in New Zealand childcare debates. As was noted in Chapter One, social movements are \textit{collectives of individuals and groups who share a common message of opposition to dominant norms, and who use unconventional action and structures (at least some of the time) to bring about social change.}

Along with the involvement of actors utilising unconventional tactics and forms to push for social change, a number of more formal women’s interest groups in New Zealand called for state-funded childcare to be made available to \textit{all women}. This involvement of conventional political actors reached its height in 1985, with a broad cross section of public sector actors calling for universal childcare provisions. Despite this brief period of support from conventional political actors, the women’s rights discourse coalitions remained on the periphery of the political realm for most of the three decades scrutinised.

\textsuperscript{34} ibid., p. 47-48.
Further evidence of women’s movement activity in New Zealand childcare debates was found in mapping the membership of the women’s rights discourse coalition. Actors from the periphery of the political realm, including the Palmerston North Women’s Liberation Group, Auckland Women’s Liberation, the United Women’s Convention, and the feminist magazine *Broadsheet*, utilised the working women’s discourse coalition (See Figure 3.7). These grassroots organisations used unconventional tactics and structures to challenge patriarchal norms in New Zealand.

The working women’s narrative was found predominantly in the texts of grassroots feminist organisations in the 1970s, but in the following two decades there was a significant broadening of actors who asserted the need for childcare for working mothers. The working women’s discourse coalition was able to achieve a level of saturation of the discursive realm in a graduated fashion. Of particular note was the movement of public sector actors into the working
women's discourse coalition in the 1980s and 1990s. During the 1980s the working women's discourse coalition encompassed not only women's organisations and grass-roots activists, but female politicians, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and its Minister, and a number of vocational units charged with improving the employment rates of women in New Zealand. During this decade there was also support from the Labour Party and its Women's Council. In the 1990s the working women's discourse coalition broadens even further to include the New Zealand Prime Minister, the Secretary of Education, the Human Rights Commission, and the Department of Labour, as well as the women politicians, femocrats, and feminist organisations.

As can be seen from Figure 3.7, it is not only public sector actors who join the working women's discourse coalition. Alongside the politicians and public servants who adhered to the working women's discourse coalition were unions and sector groups.35 The acceptance of the working women's discourse by unions and sector groups was evidence of the discursive influence achieved through women's movement activity. The analysis of public documentation showed no sector group involvement in childcare discussions during the 1970s and little union activity in this constellation. In this first decade investigated, the only union document to mention childcare was the Working Women's Charter. This charter was put together by female unionists and could in fact be considered a document of the women's movement. In the 1980s and 1990s unions and sector groups took a significant interest in childcare debates.

New Zealand unions and education interest groups may have used the working women's discourse when arguing for state-sponsored childcare but they were also part of the education discourse coalition between 1970 and 2000 (See Figure 3.9). There was also textual evidence of one union's opposition to women's rights. The Federation Caretakers', Cleaners, Lift Attendants and Watchmen's Industrial Association of Workers was part of the mothercare discourse coalition (See Figure 3.8) and argued against childcare in order to protect the male wage-earner system. This division between three discursive

35 The category of unions and interest groups includes all education unions, and educational and parent interest groups.
positions highlights a lack of a coherent discursive position held by unions and sector groups in childcare debates in New Zealand. This lack of coherence may be linked to the varied memberships and diverse goals of New Zealand unions. An analysis of discourse coalition composition shows that the more feminised unions (such as the Public Service Association and a number of finance sector unions) were found to be part of the working women’s coalition, while education sector groups were predominantly found in the education discourse coalition during the 1980s and 1990s.

The multiple discourses utilised by unions’ highlights the difficulty of conflating categories in discursive analysis and the importance of immersion into texts by researchers carrying out discourse analyses. For readers concerned to see the subtleties found in each of the discourse coalitions, each coalition map has a corresponding table in the appendix of this thesis (as was noted in Chapter Two).

While conventional actors joined the women’s rights and working women’s discourse coalitions in the 1980s and 1990s, scrutiny of the more in-depth tables in the Appendix indicate a waning of activity by actors utilising unconventional tactics and forms. While in the 1970s and 1980s there is significant action from the periphery of the political realm in both the women’s rights and working women’s discourse coalitions, by the 1990s these constellations are made up of actors who sit within the political realm. Feminist Sandra Coney discusses this waning of feminist activity in the 1990s. “The movement was silent because there is no movement—only isolated groups working on specific issues.”

36 S. Coney. (1993) “Why the Women’s Movement Ran Out of Steam”. In Heading Nowhere in a Navy Blue Suit and other Tales from the Feminist Revolution, p. 54.
The involvement of unions, interest groups, and public sector actors in the working women’s discourse coalition was evidence that this constellation achieved a level of saturation in childcare debates however, there was no evidence of institutional changes in line with the narrative’s normative assertions. Instead three other discourse coalitions found in New Zealand childcare debates achieved both discourse saturation and institutionalisation between 1970 and 2000.

*The changing institutional narratives*

As was already noted, the mothercare discourse was the institutional narrative of childcare debates in the early 1970s. However only a small number of texts proclaimed mothers had a duty to care for children and that non-parental care was bad for children (See Figure 3.8). Despite the low level of support for the narrative, government policy in New Zealand was based on the ‘family’ as the normal mode of care in society. Legislation in both employment and social
policy arenas constructed the care of children as a mother’s duty, while male partners were assigned the responsibility of wage earning. The institutionalisation of the mothercare narrative was reflected in the Minister of Social Welfare’s involvement in this discourse coalition in the 1970s and the fact that childcare was administered as a welfare issue until 1985.

The strength of the mothercare narrative can also be inferred from its impact upon the texts of women’s organisations in New Zealand. A number of studies by women’s groups recognised that the fight for childcare outside the home challenged attitudes that dominated society in the 1970s. For example, the National Organisation for Women was concerned with the attitudes of politicians towards mothers and surveyed MPs for their views about the care of preschool children.  

**Question:** Do you feel mothers with preschool children should be encouraged to stay home?  

**Table 8:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National %</th>
<th>Labour %</th>
<th>Both Parties %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While a study from the Society for Research on Women noted that social pressures affected the numbers of women taking on paid employment:

Current attitudes discouraged mothers with pre-school children from working, but encouraged them once the children went to school.  

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Even in 1991 the Secretary of Women’s Affairs Judith Aitken claimed that patriarchal attitudes still existed in New Zealand: “It is still assumed that on the whole women will be financially dependent on men for their incomes, especially where the two are bonded in a specific relationship such as marriage.”

While the mothercare narrative coalition was institutionally strong in New Zealand in the 1970s its dominance waned in latter decades. By the 1980s there was little support for the claim that “a woman’s place is in the home” and by the 1990s the corpus scrutinised did not contain any texts utilising the mothercare discourse.

The cessation of the narrative proclaiming biologically determined roles for men and women in society may have been a reaction to the appearance of the two

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39 J. Aitken, *op. cit.* p. 3.
women’s movement narratives found in New Zealand childcare debates. The view that mothers must care for children was unacceptable to New Zealand feminists. An example of this rejection of gender roles was evident in the labelling of a proposed housewife’s wage as reactionary and harmful: “Payment reinforces the concept of the nuclear family and the work will continue to be reserved to women.”

The two ‘feminist’ discourse coalitions that signalled women’s movement activity in New Zealand childcare debates sought to broaden the roles of women in New Zealand society. A close analysis of texts can not provide firm evidence that the appearance of the feminist discourse coalitions put an end to patriarchal views on childcare, all that can be done is to note this correlation between the decline of the mothercare discourse in the body of texts analysed and the appearance of narratives of challenge from the two arms of the women’s movement. The influence of the women’s movement’s varied demands for state-subsidised childcare is best traced by looking at the changing membership of the women’s rights and working women’s discourse coalitions as had already been done.

The rise of educational concerns and neo-liberalism

While the constellation around the mothercare narrative waned from the early 1980s, the education discourse coalition was able to generate broad public sector support in this decade. As can be seen from Figure 3.9 the education discourse coalition gained a level of discursive saturation in the 1980s. Included in the constellation were public sector actors such as the Minister of Education, the Social Advisory Council, and various individual MPs. The constellation was also occupied by unions and a small number of women’s organisations.

The high point of the education discourse coalition came in 1985 with the transfer of childcare administration from the Department of Social Welfare to Department of Education. This transfer of administrative duties signalled that the coalition had achieved a level of institutionalisation, as well as saturation of the discursive realm.

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40 Wellington Women’s Workshop, op. cit.
The influence of the education discourse coalition may have led to institutional change in childcare arrangements but by the 1990s a new narrative began to dominate the texts of state agents—targeted assistance (See Figure 3.10). The narrative asserting the need to target government support for childcare entered public debates in New Zealand in the mid-1980s and by the late 1990s its centrality with politicians was evident.

This move towards a discourse of targeted assistance fits with the neo-liberal principles adopted by successive New Zealand governments, though the rise of neo-liberalism as a paradigm in New Zealand policymaking and the rise in the use of the targeted discourse in childcare debates did not coincide precisely. The rise of neo-liberalism in New Zealand is associated with the election of the
Fourth Labour Government. While this Government began neo-liberal reforms when it took office in 1984, it was not until the second of its two terms in office that it began to reform the area of ‘social policy’ under which childcare was administered. During its first term the Fourth Labour Government had concentrated on the deregulation of the economy and public sector reform. This lag may explain why demands for targeted childcare assistance rose to prominence in New Zealand debates from the late 1980s and not earlier. The targeted assistance discourse coalition was made up predominantly of politicians and government advisory bodies from 1985 to 2000.

Of particular note is the involvement of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs in the neo-liberal constellation in the 1990s. As was seen in Figure 3.7 the Ministry was a supporter of the working women’s discourse in the 1980s. This shift from the working women’s discourse coalition into the targeted assistance constellation by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs may be an example of strategic use of narratives or rhetoric, an issue I will look at further in the comparative chapter that will follow the four case studies. Alternatively the acceptance of neo-liberal assertions by New Zealand’s women’s bureaucracy may have been due to the strength of neo-liberalism. The pervasiveness of the targeted childcare story line can be seen in its use in an article in the feminist publication Broadsheet in 1997. The Women’s Information Network (WIN) Broadsheet article on poverty alleviation called for increased childcare subsidies to all families on low incomes and for more support so that those on the DPB, Widows and Invalids Benefits have greater access to training and upskilling. These ideas expressed by WIN matched neo-liberal calls for targeted assistance for individuals attempting to ‘help themselves’.

41 As noted in the introduction neo-liberalism in this thesis is being used as a convenient shorthand for a range of ideas, practices and approaches to the conduct of government that are associated with a normative preference for small states and reliance on market mechanisms to determine economic outcomes. See M. Beeson and A. Firth, op. cit., p. 215.
As well as achieving a level of discursive saturation, the targeted discourse was institutionalised during the 1990s. This institutionalisation was evident in changes to eligibility rules for those seeking childcare subsidies, changes to funding arrangements for childcare centres, and in the move by government departments to actively encourage employer involvement in childcare provision.

**Lower order change in New Zealand childcare debates**

Before discussing tentative conclusions about the major changes that occurred in New Zealand childcare debates between 1970 and 2000, it is important to look at any lower order learning that occurred in childcare debates. One lower order change is worth noting—the movement of actors towards the use of economic rhetoric in the 1990s. As was noted in Chapter Two, there was evidence within the four case studies of a disjunction between the normative assertions of some actors and the language used to make their claims. Analysis of childcare
debates in New Zealand provides clear evidence of such a disjunction. During the 1990s, texts from actors across the political realm are seen to contain references to markets, costs-benefit analyses, and economic viability. For example in the 1990s, cost benefit analyses were applied to day-care provisions by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs with the aim of selling childcare to employers and business leaders:

The Ministry of Women’s Affairs hopes this document will encourage employers to consider the benefits of childcare assistance and determine which are applicable to them. The Ministry looks forward to a positive assessment of the benefits, leading to an increase in employer-assisted childcare initiatives in New Zealand. This will improve the ability of parents with childcare needs to participate fully in the labour market.  

It costs money to lose trained staff, it costs money to train new recruits. Childcare centres can save banks money.  

This use of economic justifications for childcare came even though many of the actors asserted that working women had a right to childcare provision on equity grounds. The use of economic rhetoric may be evidence of the pervasiveness of neo-liberalism and the closing down of alternative rhetoric in childcare debates. Or the use of economic justifications for childcare may have been evidence of the strategic use of language by collective actors. In the 1990s, women’s organisations and bureaucracies may have found that to be involved in policy argumentation on childcare they needed to use economic justifications for childcare, rather than relying on the rhetoric of rights and equity. It is impossible to know the motivations of actors when carrying out textual analysis of 30 years of debates, however it is important to note this disjunction between normative and policy assertion and the language used by actors. In Chapter Seven I will look in more depth at the issue of strategic language use. For now I will explore tentative conclusions about discursive influence of women’s movement activity in New Zealand childcare debates.

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44 Ministry of Women’s Affairs (1990) op. cit., p. 16.
Achieving discourse saturation and institutionalisation

The separation of actors into coalitions according to their adherence to a particular childcare narrative provides evidence of some discursive influence as a result of women’s movement activity in New Zealand. However as was seen from the discourse coalition maps, there was little movement of political elites (such as politicians and public servants) into the women’s rights discourse coalition found in childcare debates and for most of the 30 years the feminist narrative occupied a position on the periphery of the political realm. The second women-centred discourse coalition, which was based on the rights of working women to state-funded childcare, was able to saturate the discursive realm between 1970 and 2000 but it did not achieve institutionalisation of its claims for state-funded childcare for working mothers. At no time did New Zealand legislation or policy documents reflect the demands for childcare for working women. It was two discourses initiated by mainstream political actors that achieved both saturation and institutionalisation during the 30 years analysed. Why were the education and targeted childcare discourse coalitions so influential in New Zealand childcare debates from 1970 to 2000?

Two factors may have been behind the discursive influence achieved by educationalists in the 1980s and neo-liberals in the 1990s. The first centres on the role of the narratives themselves, the second on the type of the alliances found within the five discourse coalitions. Conclusions about the conditions under which women’s movements were able to successfully challenge dominant cultural codes will be discussed further in Chapter Seven when I compare the results of the four case studies carried out in this thesis. For now, I will draw tentative conclusions by looking at the different levels of saturation and institutionalisation achieved by each of the five discourse coalitions found in New Zealand childcare argumentation.

Coalitions of ‘radicalism’ and reform

The importance of the content of the message forwarded by discourse coalitions was illustrated by the different levels of discursive influence by the two feminist discourse coalitions found in New Zealand childcare debates between 1970 and 2000. As was noted in the discourse coalition analysis, the women’s rights
coalition attracted fewer adherents than the constellation formed around the working women’s discourse. From the beginning of the time frame, the struggle faced by the women’s rights discourse was evident. The dominant discourse coalition in the early 1970s emphasised the centrality of family care in its narratives—a family consisting of a male breadwinner, female caregiver, and dependants. This view was found in the texts of the Minister of Social Welfare in 1973:

Let me make it clear once again, that the Government does not intend this scheme [the provision of subsidies to voluntary childcare agencies] to in any way undermine family life, which much remain the paramount means of child care in the community.46

In contrast, the women’s rights constellation had emphasised communal responsibility to care for children and increased involvement of fathers in caring duties:

It is therefore essential that the rearing of children and caring for the home can no longer be considered only women’s work.47

The gap between these two discourses in the 1970s resulted in the women’s rights discourse being viewed as ‘radical’48 from its inception as it challenged deep-rooted beliefs about gender roles in society. This challenge was acknowledged by many of the actors involved in childcare debates, including academic and activist Helen Cook who noted that the politics of childcare is ultimately caught in debates focusing on what people believe the roles of men and women should be.49

While the women’s rights narrative called for ‘radical’ change to the New Zealand family, the working women’s narrative was presented as a message of ‘reform’. The working women’s discourse coalition did not directly challenges

48 Discourses from social movements will be treated as ‘radical’ if they seek to completely change existing societal norms on an issue. Within the feminist movement ‘rights-based’ groups would not be seen as radical, however my concern is the way they are constructed by other political collectives.
family structures in its texts, instead non-parental care was presented as a
pragmatic response to a changing world. For example, the United Women’s
Convention recognised that “the great social change now taking place in New
Zealand whereby a two-worker, two-income household is becoming the norm
rather than the exception.”\textsuperscript{50} Or as Marilyn Waring stated in an article in
\textit{Broadsheet}:

The whole trend of women into the work force will probably see
us into the next decade with at least 10% of the women between
15 and 65 taking an active part in the workforce, and many of
those women will have children. There will just have to be
adequate child care facilities.\textsuperscript{51}

Within the working women’s discourse coalition it was often claimed women
were protecting their families economically by taking up paid employment,
such as in the YWCA submission to the Women’s Rights Select Committee:

If a woman has to work owing to economic necessity she must
have adequate day-care for her children.\textsuperscript{52}

This ‘pragmatic’ discourse used in women’s movement activity in New Zealand
childcare debates received greater public sector support than the calls for
childcare as the right of all women.

The education and neo-liberal discourse coalitions also attracted more political
elites than the women’s rights constellation and again these were narratives that
left the ‘family’ unchallenged. Educationalists presented quality early
childhood care and education as a right of all children and as complementary to
‘family’ life. The institutionalised targeted childcare discourse not only left
unchallenged the family and the role of mothers within these institution, it
reinforced the concept that it was up to parents’ to make childcare arrangements.
“The way in which workers and employers negotiate conditions of employment
has a significant impact on the extent to which these are tailored

\textsuperscript{50} J. Cush (1975) “Women in Employment”. \textit{In United Women’s Convention 1975}, Wellington:
Convenors United Women’s Convention, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{51} M. Waring (1976) “Feminism is bigger than any political party consideration”.
\textit{Broadsheet}(44), p. 17.
\textsuperscript{52} YWCA (1974) “Submission of the YWCA of New Zealand to the Select Committee on the
to those workers’ varied needs and preferences—for example, the special needs of women with, or planning, children.” An example of the move to reaffirm parental responsibility can be seen in the Government’s “parents as first teacher” policy of the 1990s. In comparing membership of the various discourse coalitions, it appears that discourses that fundamentally challenged the institution of the family were the narratives least able to attract the support of public sector actors.

This comparison of discourse saturation indicates that the less radical a discourse, the more easily it attracts support and is able to saturate the discursive realm. As has already been noted, social movements are by very definition collectives based around a challenge to ‘dominant cultural codes’. This was certainly the case in New Zealand childcare debates, where women’s movement activities around the two feminist discourses challenged a number of existing constructions of ‘family’ and ‘gender roles’. The discourse coalition analysis indicated that this position of challenge made it difficult to attract adherents. Feminists themselves recognised the difficulties of raising ‘radical’ claims:

32. Women Against Women’s Lib This workshop expressed fear of the aggressive image and opposition to childcare and motherhood that might be created by extremists within the feminist movement.  

Not only was the working women’s discourse coalition less radical than its counterpart, the women’s rights narrative constellation, some of the rhetoric within the working women’s discourse aligned with neo-liberal claims made in the 1980s and 1990s. Within the working women’s rights discourse there was an assertion that women needed childcare so they could have economic independence, as can be seen in a text from the United Women’s Convention:

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54 (1975) International Women’s Year New Zealand 1975: From the Committee on Women Newsletter No. 4, p. 12.
One group felt that insufficient publicity has been given to the tax concessions available to working women with dependent children and that further concessions may be needed to encourage these women to remain members of the work force rather than to become social security beneficiaries.\(^55\)

This assertion of the need for economic independence aligned with the neo-liberal narrative in which state-sponsored childcare was provided for families to ensure they could stand on their ‘own two feet’.

Along with rhetoric about economic independence, the targeted and working women’s discourses both contained assertions about the pragmatic need for women to work to ensure ‘economic survival’ for families. For example in 1997 NACEW noted the importance of paid employment for families in its childcare survey:

> Over the past 30 years New Zealanders have witnessed substantial change in the relationship between women and paid work. The 1966 census showed 33% of working age women to be in paid employment. By 1996, this proportion had grown to 52%. Many of these women were mothers of young children. For most, paid employment has been necessary to maintain family income levels.\(^56\)

This view of economic survival was used by the targeted discourse coalition to justify subsidised childcare for New Zealand’s poorest working families.

In attempting to gain discursive saturation and institutionalisation, two interlinked elements seemed to have been at work. First, discourses of reform appear to more easily attract adherents than the more radical narratives. Secondly, discourses that align to other narratives are more likely to find supporters. In the comparative section of this thesis I will look at these issues, including discussions on narrative resonance, discursive legacies, and path dependency, in order to explain why discursive influence varies for different coalitions.


Coalitions and existing political networks

As well as the type of narratives utilised by a discourse coalition, the very composition of the coalition was a factor in the ability of the constellation to achieve discursive influence, presenting a ‘catch 22’ for social movements. While the women’s rights discourse coalition lacked significant public sector support between 1970 and 2000, there was an increase in support from politicians and bureaucrats for the working women’s constellation during three decades. As has been noted, in the 1980s, women’s bureaucracies and female politicians joined grass-roots activists in the working women’s coalition. Then in the 1990s the coalition’s support base broadened to incorporate other public sector actors, such as the Prime Minister, the Labour Party, and the Secretary of Education. The involvement of the women’s bureaucracies and female politicians within the working women’s discourse coalition may have provided a bridge between the actors on the periphery of the political realm and the more conventional political actors that joined the constellation in the 1990s. No such bridge existed within the women’s rights coalition.

The importance of alliances when seeking discursive influence can be further advanced by looking at the two narratives that were institutionalised, the education and targeted childcare discourses. The education discourse coalition contained unions that had strong links to the Labour Party in the mid 1980s. The neo-liberal constellation contained politicians from both the Labour and National Parties during the late 1980s and 1990s that helped ensure institutionalisation of the targeted assistance narrative. This link to the centre of power was aided by the use of neo-liberal narratives in Treasury. The power of the Treasury as a propagator of new-right thinking was noted by Cheyne et al: “Their ability to be the most powerful influence over policy-making was confirmed by successfully presenting even more dramatic reform packages after the 1984, 1987, and 1990 elections as the only path available (see Treasury, 1984, 1987, and 1990).”

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58 See C. Cheyne, et al. op. cit., p. 42.
The importance of political alliances for discursive coalitions seeking saturation and institutionalisation will be investigated further in the comparison of the New Zealand and Australian women’s movements as the allegiances formed by activists on the two sides of the Tasman vary significantly. However, if this first case study is an indication of the factors affecting discursive influence by women’s movements, then discourse coalitions may be helped (or hindered) by pre-existing networks in the political realm.

Conclusion
The close analysis of childcare debates in New Zealand from 1970 to 2000 showed that the narrative terrain on this issue was not stable. Political elites moved from a discourse coalition based on patriarchal assertions in the 1970s, to a narrative constellation seeking to defend childcare as an education issue in the 1980s. Finally in the 1990s political elites moved to a coalition arguing that government provision of childcare assistance needed to be targeted working families in most need and to ensure the nation as a whole benefited economically. Despite this lack of stability in the discourses of the public sector, women’s movement activity in New Zealand achieved only limited results. A women’s movement active in New Zealand childcare debates achieved limited saturation of the political realm with a discourse calling for state-funded childcare for working mothers, but it was never able to institutionalise its demands for such childcare provision. A second more ‘radical’ women’s movement discourse lacked any real discursive influence and remained on the periphery of the political realm throughout the 30 years analysed. The differences in the acceptability of the women’s rights and working women’s discourses to public sector actors is an indication that the content of a coalition’s message will effect its influence in public debates. Not only does message content have a bearing on discursive influence, alliances formed in the political realm also affect final outcomes.

The varied levels of discursive influence will be analysed further in the comparative chapter of this thesis. For now I will turn to see if New Zealand women’s movement activity between 1970 and 2000 led to influence on the
topic of measuring and valuing unpaid work. As was noted in Chapter Two, the
two topics were selected as childcare is centred on the redistribution of public
funds, while unpaid work is a debate focused on changing language and ideas,
rather than redistribution of public monies.
Chapter Four

Work, duties, and leisure: Unpaid work debates in New Zealand

Supermum, you're wonderful, but very underpaid.

Supermum, you're cook and cleaner, handy-man and maid.

If you put in a bill for all the work you do,
There'd be an awful lot of wages due.

Words and music Sandra Kerr

This chapter investigates New Zealand debates on the valuation and measurement of unpaid work. Even without reading texts from unpaid work argumentation it is apparent that there has been a substantial change to domestic labour over the past 100 years. Our domestic lives are markedly different to those of our grandmothers and grandfathers, and even our mothers and fathers. No more coppers to heat. No necessity to sew our own clothes. We have pre-packaged meals in the freezer. Our oral histories indicate a change in the nature of unpaid domestic tasks. But has there been a change in the way society has debated the issue of unpaid work?

In 1985, Statistics New Zealand noted that there had been public discussion for some time about the value of unpaid work in the home, with some groups in society arguing that it should be treated as work and measured in the census. These groups had argued that the omission denigrated the value of unpaid work compared to that done for pay. Have these calls for recognition of unpaid work been heeded? Is the Ministry of Women's Affairs right when it claims that "since the 1970s, there has

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been a growing recognition that unpaid work in the home and community represents a large but invisible part of a country’s economy, and efforts have been made to develop methods for measuring the value of this work and including unpaid production in national accounting systems.”

A close analysis of three decades of texts on unpaid work provided evidence of changes within debates on how to best value unpaid work in New Zealand. But demands by an active women’s movement for the inclusion of domestic tasks in mainstream measures of productivity have been only partially accepted by New Zealand’s political elites.

Before mapping the discursive terrain of unpaid work debates I will revisit the discussion in Chapter Two of the definition used to select texts for analysis. The labels used for unpaid work in New Zealand have included: unpaid household labour, invisible work, unwaged work, emotional labour, non-market production, domestic duties, shitwork, and housework. Surrounding these labels is the concept of services and productive activities outside the formal economy that could have been done by a third person without changing their utility to members of the household. This definition encompasses a range of tasks:

The ‘basics’ of unpaid work in families are housework (cleaning the toilet) and caring work (holding someone while they are being sick down the toilet, then deciding to ring the doctor.)

Our definition of a household productive activity is any activity which produces goods or services for members of the household, which one can buy or hire someone else to do, even if pay is not involved.

Excluded from this concept of unpaid work are tasks performed outside the home for charities, clubs, and other organisations. This common distinction was used to ensure the analysis in this chapter focused on debates about unpaid work in the

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6 E. Richardson, op.cit., p. 22.
home, however, some of the documentation selected simultaneously weighed in on debates about voluntary labour outside the home. For example, the interconnectedness was evident in the work of academic Robin McKinlay:

> It is the work that is done by people, mainly women, in the home and community, without which families and communities would cease to function, but for which no money is earned.⁷

Focusing on texts about unpaid tasks in the home resulted in the selection of 110 New Zealand ‘published’ documents for analysis. The documents chosen do not encompass everything written on unpaid work in New Zealand during the last 30 years of the twentieth century but they do provide a cross-section of texts from conferences, newsletters, media releases, Parliamentary Debates, Select Committee hearings, and academic publications. The texts come from a wide range of actors, a necessity when mapping the discourse coalitions that existed in policy debates as coalitions are made up of actors from multiple organisations. Included in the corpus are publications from government departments; the work of economists and political scientists; the texts of women’s organisations; the speeches of politicians; and a number of self-help and populist books.

As with all four case studies, the analysis focused on texts from 1970 to 2000 but it is important to acknowledge the legacy of earlier debates on unpaid work argumentation. For example, as MP Margaret Shields noted in 1996: “The introduction of the Old Age Pensions Act 1898 was the first indirect recognition of the fact that both men and women contribute to society and are therefore worthy of the support of the state.”⁸ Consideration of the impact of discourse found in unpaid work debates prior to 1970 were possible due to the fact that pre-existing resources were one of the four elements in the textual analysis. While discursive legacies from public debates prior to 1970 are considered when drawing conclusions about the influence of any women’s movement activity between 1970 and 2000 in New Zealand and Australia, the texts analysed must fit within the time frame selected.

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The attention to pre-existing resources also allowed for the acknowledgement of texts and narratives from outside New Zealand that were utilised in the nation’s unpaid work argumentation. As well as drawing time boundaries in the case studies, I drew territorial boundaries around the texts selected for analysis with the corpus chosen for this case study including only those texts ‘published’ in New Zealand. Within household work debates this resulted in a somewhat artificial boundary being drawn around the corpuses of both the New Zealand and Australian unpaid work cases, as unpaid work was a topic debated on the international stage. The measurement and valuation of unpaid household tasks is debated at numerous international forums such as the ILO, United Nations, and OECD. The execution of time-use surveys is even one of the strategic objectives in the Platform for Action adopted at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women.9 As will be garnered from reading this chapter (and the one focused on Australian unpaid work debates), international discussions on the valuation of productive household work are extensive and penetrate domestic argumentation. The significance of global discourses on unpaid work valuation will be discussed later in this chapter and in the comparative section of this thesis where the bearing of global discourses on both New Zealand and Australian unpaid work debates can be examined simultaneously. For now, I will turn to map the discursive terrain of unpaid work argumentation in New Zealand using the words, assumptions, character representations, and pre-existing resources identified within the texts analysed.

**Care work, paid work, and work obligations**

As with Chapter Three, the first step in the analysis was to outline the discourses found in debates by using phrases and elements from the texts analysed. There were three discourses evident in unpaid work debates in New Zealand between 1970 and 2000. One was centred on assertions that work was paid employment and ‘wives’ did not work; in the second narrative every woman was considered a ‘working woman’ whether in the home or in the paid workforce; and in the third discourse found in the texts analysed it was asserted that paid employment was the primary role of all adults (both male and female). In this final narrative work was seen as

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paid employment and unpaid tasks were included in mainstream statistical and
economic analysis predominantly when they impacted upon individual
employability. Boundaries have been drawn around each of the discourses according
to normative assertions, such as representations of gender, work, and statistics.

A natural order
In the 1970s, unpaid work debates in New Zealand contained a patriarchal discourse
in which a male breadwinner/female homemaker dichotomy was presented as natural
(See discourse summary in Figure 4.1). Within this discourse it was asserted that
men performed work in the public sphere and ‘housewives’ carried out activities in
the home. The assertion that women rightly belonged in the home was evident in a
submission to the Women’s Rights Select Committee in 1975 from the National
Advisory Council on the Employment of Women:

Women in their role of mothers demand a special place of respect and
privilege from the whole community. Nothing should be allowed by
law, or encouraged by custom, to erode a mother’s position and status.
Indeed the Council stated in its 1970 submission to the Royal
Commission on Social Security that “in general, the mother ought to
look after her own young children, and that the woman who is able to
give her full-time attention to her pre-school children is laying a sound
basis for future family relationships”.

The narrative asserted the importance of ‘women’s work’ and it was often suggested
that monetary recompense should be granted to women to encourage them to remain
in the home and perform their ‘natural’ caring duties. Calls for payment of a
mother’s allowance or mother’s wage were found within the texts of the Plunket
Society and the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women:

The New Zealand community values the contribution of the mother
who cares full-time for her children during the formative years of early
childhood and most mothers consider this a priority. If the community
wishes to conserve this it should be prepared to recognise this by some
material gesture such as a mother-at-home allowance—this is not meant
as payment for having children, but to encourage and help mothers to
stay at home when the pressure of economic advantages brought about
by equal pay may sway her decision.


The Council believes an allowance of this type to be the most socially desirable way in which the contribution of parents to the development of their children can be recognised by society, and it should help to avoid the situation where mothers of very young children would enter paid employment only because of financial need.\textsuperscript{12}

This suggestion of a payment to ‘housewives’ is recognition that women were increasingly taking jobs outside the home. The change in attitudes behind this move in itself indicates an erosion of the patriarchal norms found in unpaid work debates.

The arguments for keeping women in the home were frequently based on claims that children were adversely affected by non-parental care. This view was espoused in a letter to the 1975 Women’s Rights Select Committee:

Mr. Prime Minister,
WELLINGTON

Sir:

As I see it—there will have to be another Industrial Revolution. One hundred years ago the children suffered, because they went to work, and there was an Industrial Revolution. Now they suffer because Mum goes to work.

“The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”

Leave an animal alone, and it will go wild. Exactly what is happening to the children today. The mothers are dragged from their homes producing an abundance of things we do not really need for love, peace and happiness. I am in the position of being able to see the community problem from all angles.

Can something be done before a worsened situation occurs.

Yours faithfully,

J. M. R. Wood\textsuperscript{13}

Figure 4.1

Patriarchal discourse summary New Zealand unpaid work debates

Normative and policy assertions
A woman’s place is in the home
Household chores are a responsibility (not work)
Work is paid employment
Women perform an important function in the home
Women do activities that complement the important work of men in society
Money should be given to married couples to ensure women stay at home
The opposite of work is leisure
Statistics provide snapshots of reality and societal characteristics
Some activities are not measurable in statistics

While the patriarchal discourse included the call for a ‘mothers-wage’, activities in the home were considered to be very different from activities in the paid labour force. The difference is illustrated in the following extract from the 1981 Census\(^\text{14}\) where household duties were set apart from the categories established for those considered to be in ‘gainful employment’:

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|}
\hline
\text{16. HOURS WORKED PER WEEK}\(^\ast\): & \\
\hline
\text{• This question refers to usual hours at present worked for wages, salary, other financial reward, or as an unpaid relative assisting in business (farm, shop, etc.) including part-time and overtime hours.} & \\
\text{• Except for hours worked as an unpaid relative assisting in business (farm, shop, etc.) no hours worked in unpaid jobs are to be included in your answers to this question.} & \\
\hline
\text{SPECIFY:} & \\
\text{(a) Number of hours worked PER WEEK in main job:} & \\
\text{(b) Number of hours worked PER WEEK in second job (if any):} & \\
\text{(c) Number of hours worked PER WEEK in any other jobs:} & \\
\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED PER WEEK IN ALL JOBS:} & \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|}
\hline
\text{17. EMPLOYMENT STATUS}\(^\ast\): & \\
\hline
\text{IF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 16(D) WAS 20 HOURS OR MORE, TICK BOX WHICH APPLIES TO YOUR (MAIN) JOB:} & \\
\text{Employer of labour in own business or profession} & \\
\text{Working on own account} & \\
\text{Working for wage or salary} & \\
\text{Relative assisting in business (farm, shop, etc.) and NOT receiving wage} & \\
\text{OTHERWISE, TICK BOX WHICH APPLIES:} & \\
\text{Unemployed and looking for work} & \\
\text{Unemployed and NOT looking for work} & \\
\text{Retired} & \\
\text{Full-time student} & \\
\text{Housewife (mainly housework)} & \\
\text{OTHER\(\text{SPECIFY, e.g., student}\)} & \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

\textit{Every woman is a working woman}

In contrast to the patriarchal narrative found within New Zealand unpaid work debates there existed a ‘feminist’ storyline (See the discourse summary in Figure 4.2) which asserted that women had always been active and productive in society:

Women have always worked. Some women get paid for their work.
Some women, mainly housewives, do not.\(^\text{15}\)


\textsuperscript{15} Vocational Training Council (1983) \textit{Women at Work: a kitset for use with groups on a wide variety of topics connected with employment for women and girls}. Wellington: Vocational Training Council, p. 28.
The household has always been a productive unit and it was only with the advent of industrialisation that it ceased to be viewed as such.\textsuperscript{16} The women-centred discourse asserted that the economic value of work carried out in the home was ignored by society. For example, the Public Service Association noted that: "Women are assumed to undertake the duties of domestic worker, unpaid of course. If women did not perform these duties, real wages would have to rise to allow for the purchase of these services, or employers would have to supply them, with resulting loss of profits."\textsuperscript{17} The narrative highlighted the economic value of unpaid household work but at the same time challenged what it saw as an existing link between wages and worth:

Much of the work of women has not been defined as "work" in an economic sense because it has traditionally not been paid.\textsuperscript{18}

Paid work counts as something. Unpaid work, on the other hand, tends to be devalued or undervalued, is not considered an economic activity and is frequently viewed as 'leisure-time' pursuit.\textsuperscript{19}

The feminist discourse criticised definitions of work used in policy debates in New Zealand between 1970 and 2000. As academic and former MP Marilyn Waring noted: "Cooking, according to economists, is "active labour" when cooked food is sold and "economically inactive labour" when it is not. Housework is "productive" when performed by a paid domestic servant and "non-productive" when no payment is involved."\textsuperscript{20} In challenging definitions of household duties the women-centred discourse sought to improve the status of the work carried out in the home:

\textsuperscript{16} E. Richardson, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{17} Epicene Women (1983) "Presenting the Waikato Women's Magic Lantern Lecture on Women in Society, the Economy and the Workforce: Epicene Women", p. 3.
\textsuperscript{19} W. Craig (1989) "Women, Unpaid Work and the Welfare State". From \textit{Women's Studies Association Conference}, August 1990, Christchurch: Lincoln University Printery, p. 52
Official recognition of the value of their services will reduce the feeling of worthlessness and disillusionment many mothers feel. If parenthood and the care of dependents can be esteemed by our society, then dependent-minders and mothers especially will value themselves, and a contented and satisfied parent is more likely to provide a stable and loving home.\(^{21}\)

The women-centred discourse called for women’s unpaid work to be recognised as valuable while simultaneously demanding that men take up more of the burden on the ‘home front’. It challenged assertions about gender roles and this resulted in calls for the recognition of the importance of these ‘home’ duties on a number of levels: “At a most basic level women want recognition that unpaid work is real work, highly skilled and demanding work, and work which is vital to the functioning of the economy. Women want that recognition expressed in practical sharing of responsibility for unpaid work within their households, and everyday support from their immediate family and whanau. Women want recognition that the paid economy is dependent on their work, just as much as they are dependent on having some income”\(^{22}\)

Figure 4.2

**Women-centred discourse summary New Zealand unpaid work debates**

*Normative and policy assertions*
- Women have a right to choice
- The world is patriarchally dominated
- Work is all productive activity
- Women have always been economically active and have always worked
- The paid economy is dependent on unpaid work
- Unpaid work should be assigned monetary value and statistical significance
- It is important to recognise the economic contribution of women in society
- The opposite of paid employment is unpaid work
- Women spend more time on unpaid work than men
- The burden of unpaid work should be shared between men and women

The interest in unpaid work often centred on debates about equality in society and the policy implications for families, governments, and employers if there was a rearrangement of the way the paid and unpaid work intersected:

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No matter how many hours they spend in paid work, women are still responsible for most of the unpaid work as well.23

I had started wondering if it were common that the woman did twice as much housework as the man. ... I wanted to wail plaintively 'It's not fair!'24

The centrality of paid employment

The third discourse found in unpaid work argumentation between 1970 and 2000 was centred on the assertion that all New Zealand adults have an obligation to take jobs in the paid workforce (See discourse summary in Figure 4.3). This narrative included limited recognition that ‘other’ forms of work take place in society but paid employment was seen as central both to New Zealand as a whole and to individuals. The importance of ‘paid work’ was evident in the language and categories used in New Zealand Censuses. For example, there was a distinction drawn in Censuses between those working in paid jobs and those doing unpaid work:

How many hours did you work last week?
Do not include any unpaid work you did other than that in a family business.25

Within this narrative, work and unpaid work were viewed as very different activities. In the 1991 Census, questions on work related to employment in the paid labour force while looking after dependants and carrying out housework were categorised as “activities”.26

1991 Census question

Which of the following activities did you do last week?

Tick the box or boxes which apply to you.
University students should tick box 48 or 49 if attending this year.

- 45 Looked after children at home
- 46 Looked after other dependants at home
- 47 Housework
- 48 Attended full-time study or training course (including job training for unemployed persons)
- 49 Attended part-time study or training course
- 50 Took part in physical recreation or sport
- 51 None of the above activities

Technical justifications were used in the paid-work discourse to keep ‘work’ and ‘activities’ separated within statistical evaluations. These technical justifications were found in a text from Statistics New Zealand after it trialled a census question on unpaid work:

When respondents were required to break down the time spent into specific categories, such as housework, gardening, home maintenance, more difficulties occurred. Many activities overlapped or were carried out simultaneously making time allocation difficult and inaccurate. There were variations between respondents estimates of the time involved in childcare. Some included all the time they were with the children, while others counted only the time they spent in actively caring or supervising. These difficulties confirmed the belief that this topic is too complex to be measured in a census.²⁷

While household work was excluded from mainstream statistics an exception was made in this narrative in regards one form of unpaid work—voluntary labour outside the home. A distinction between ‘formal’ unpaid work and ‘informal’ unpaid work²⁸ saw Census questions on unpaid voluntary labour constructed in a similar manner to those asked of individuals in the paid labour force:

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... Hours worked per week
This is the total hour including part-time and overtime hours worked during the week preceding the census by persons aged 15 years and over in all jobs for wages, salary or other financial reward. Hours worked in unpaid jobs are excluded except where a person is working without pay in a family business (farm, shop, etc.).

... Hours worked per week in unpaid voluntary work
Refers to the number of hours of unpaid voluntary work persons did during the week preceding the census.

Time spent doing housework in one's own home is excluded. Similarly, time spent working in a family business without pay is excluded.\(^\text{29}\)

Unpaid work in the community was seen as distinct due to its impact upon social service delivery. "Voluntary work makes a significant contribution to the total provision of social services. The inclusion of the question in successive censuses should enable changing patterns and levels of participation in voluntary work to be monitored. These trends are of considerable importance to those planning the effective delivery of social services."\(^\text{30}\) Voluntary work was also viewed differently from household tasks for its potential as a stepping-stone to paid employment. This distinction between household and third sector work suggests that it is not the fact that it is unpaid work that makes housework invisible but the connection with the private sphere that affects its valuation in the public realm.

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Figure 4.3
Paid-work discourse summary New Zealand unpaid work debates

*Normative and policy assertions*
Work is paid employment
All adults should be in employment that involves financial gain
Unpaid work is difficult to measure and should not be part of mainstream statistics
Voluntary labour is a step towards paid employment
Women should be in the labour force, except when caring for very young children
Statistics are facts
National accounts calculate economic production in society
Censuses provide accurate statistics on which accurate pictures of society can be established
Statistics must be comparable both internationally and over time

The paid-work discourse contains many of the assumptions of the neo-liberal narrative found in New Zealand childcare debates in the previous chapter. In particular the assertion that adults should take their ‘rightful place’ in the paid labour force and ensure they had financial independence (at least from the state) was argued in both childcare and unpaid work debates. This common link indicates that the paid-work discourse found in unpaid work debates was part of the meta-narrative of neo-liberalism found to dominate New Zealand policy from the mid-1980s. The strength of neo-liberalism over New Zealand policy debates will be discussed further in the comparative section when its influence will be compared with the impact of new right ideologies in Australia, for now I will turn to map which actors subscribed to each of the three discourses found in unpaid work argumentation in New Zealand.

**New Zealand’s unpaid work discourse coalitions**
I will turn first to establish whether the ‘feminist’ discourse found within unpaid work debates was used by actors from the periphery of the political realm. In order to be classified as a social movement a collective must form around a discourse challenging the status quo and include actors who use unconventional forms and tactics at least some of the time in their attempts to bring about social change.

**Feminists and unpaid work coalitions**
As can be seen by comparing the three discourse summaries, the call for mainstream valuation of unpaid work in the women-centred narrative challenged many of the assertions within the patriarchal and paid-work discourses (See Figures 4.1, 4.2, and
4.3). It is the challenge over the definitions of work that sets the feminist narrative in
direct competition with both the patriarchal and paid-work discourses found in
unpaid work argumentation in New Zealand. The women-centred narrative saw all
productive activity as ‘work’, while in the patriarchal and paid work narratives
‘work’ was any activity done for pay. There were also substantial differences in the
way the discourses constructed ‘roles’ for women. The feminists asserted that choice
was essential for women, the patriarchal narrative saw women as first and foremost
‘mothers’, and the paid-work narrative defined all adults primarily as workers.

In challenging the patriarchal assertions of the 1970s, the women-centred narrative
fulfils the first part of the social movement definition—the existence of a challenge to
the status quo. As was discussed in Chapter Three, New Zealand’s economic and
social policy in the 1970s was based on protecting the male-wage earner and the
institutionalisation of the patriarchal discourse on unpaid work was in line with this
meta-narrative. Not only does the women-centred narrative challenge the status quo,
throughout the 30 years analysed the ‘feminist’ discourse coalition contained actors
from the periphery of the political realm including the Wellington Women’s
Workshop, the feminist magazine Broadsheet, the United Women’s Convention, and
a number of other grass-roots feminist bodies (See Figure 4.4). The involvement of
these actors signalled activity by a women’s movement concerned to raise the public
profile of domestic work.
From the 1980s the women-centred discourse was picked-up by actors from within the political realm such as politicians, bureaucrats, unions, academics, and interest groups. Was the women-centred discourse coalition a ‘winning’ constellation? As was discussed in Chapter Two, a discourse coalition can be said to dominate a given political realm when central actors are persuaded by, or forced to accept, the rhetorical power of a new discourse and when this is reflected in the institutional practices of that policy realm. There was evidence of the feminist discourse coalition saturating unpaid work debates from the late 1980s as it included a cross-section of actors from the most conventional (politicians) to the least conventional (social movement activists).

Public sector support for the women-centred narrative came predominantly from the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and its Minister (See Figure 4.4). As was discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs is a state agency.

established in New Zealand as an advocate for women.\textsuperscript{32} The production of statistics on unpaid work was directly related to the role of this women’s bureaucracy: “The efforts of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to introduce a gender approach to public policy making would be enormously enhanced if policymakers had a body of reliable data from which to proceed.”\textsuperscript{33} For this reason the Ministry’s acceptance of the measurement and valuation of unpaid work was unsurprising and cannot be seen as an indication of a wider public sector acceptance of the need to change definitions used within statistics gathering exercises. The discourse analysis of documentation on unpaid household production provided evidence of the lack of support from other government departments for the measurement of unpaid work activities. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs noted that it was unable to secure funding to carry out time-use surveys during much of the 1990s:

> Through the 1990s the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Statistics New Zealand and other government agencies explored various avenues for funding a full time-use survey. A group of 10 government agencies pledged financial support, but the pledged funds did not cover the cost of the proposed survey. Additional funding was not forthcoming because of other priorities at the time.\textsuperscript{34}

The women-centred discourse coalition achieved partial saturation of the political realm with its acceptance in the texts of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs but did it meet the second condition of a winning coalition—institutionalisation of its narrative? In 1996 the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Statistics New Zealand carried out a time-use survey, indicating a level of institutionalisation of the women-centred discourse. However, as had already been noted, most of the state support for the time-use survey came via the Ministry of Women’s Affairs with reluctance by other government departments to be involved in the measurement and valuation of unpaid work. Statistics New Zealand was involved in the collection of the time-use data but much of the documentation from this bureaucratic organisation indicated that the measurement of unpaid work was viewed as peripheral to the collection of data on paid employment. The position of Statistics New Zealand is further developed in the

\textsuperscript{32} Ministry of Women's Affairs (1985?) First Term Report: Women's Affairs, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{33} M. Shields. (1996) \textit{op.cit.}, p. 5.
discussion of the paid-work discourse coalition. Leaving this topic with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs meant valuation of unpaid work was seen as a ‘women’s issue’ and not part of mainstream economic statistics and policy making. This denied the women-centred discourse coalition institutionalisation of its demands for the mainstream measurement and valuation of unpaid work.

If the ‘feminist’ discourse coalition was only partially influential in unpaid work debates in New Zealand, were there any networks that achieved saturation and institutionalisation of the discursive realm?

Coalitions formed around patriarchal and neo-liberal narratives
In the early 1970s it was the patriarchal discourse that was institutionalised in societal norms and public policy. The patriarchal discourse was used by Statistics New Zealand in the 1970s (See figure 4.5). This government department could be considered the core actor in the area of statistical evaluation as it is the main collector of data for the state. The narrative’s assertions of gender roles and of work as paid employment shaped the way unpaid work was viewed in Census documents, in legislation, and in state-funded benefits. For example, under the Accident Compensation Act 1972 women carrying out unpaid work in the home were denied compensation payments if they were injured:

Under the Accident Compensation Act 1972, women are entitled to the same benefits and on the same terms as men. Many housewives who suffer personal injury by accident do not receive periodic compensation because they are not in receipt of a wage upon which earnings related compensation can be based. Any change is therefore dependent upon the much broader question of whether housewives should be entitled to a weekly wage.35

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Despite its institutional strength the patriarchal narrative was utilised by a narrow group of actors and for a limited time frame, as can be seen in Figure 4.5. The assertions about a ‘natural order’ in relation to gender roles and unpaid work were not found in texts beyond the early 1980s. This disappearance of the patriarchal narrative within unpaid work argumentation was similar to the change found within New Zealand childcare debates between 1970 and 2000. The rise of an active women’s movement and its challenge to ‘gender roles’ correlated to the disappearance of the patriarchal assertions from public debates. But as has already been noted, the feminist discourse coalition was unable to fully institutionalise its narrative in unpaid work argumentation in New Zealand, that influence lay with the paid-work discourse coalition.

The institutionalisation of the paid-work constellation from the mid-1980s was primarily due to the involvement of Statistics New Zealand (See Figure 4.6). The texts of Statistics New Zealand carried the implicit assertion that mainstream
statistical gathering should be centred on the labour force and paid work. The view that unpaid work was best left out of mainstream surveys reached a climax in 1998 when a question on unpaid work was removed from the Census. At this time Statistics New Zealand argued that information on unpaid work was best collected in time-use surveys.\textsuperscript{36}

Figure 4.6

![Diagram of paid-work discourse coalition]

The paid-work discourse coalition was a domain occupied almost exclusively by Statistics New Zealand. As can be seen in Figure 4.6 this coalition did not saturate the political realm despite its institutional strength. The ability to achieve institutionalisation without discursive saturation is not found in Hajer’s work on discourse coalitions. While institutionalisation is seen as an enduring resource for social movements and other collective actors, the lack of discourse saturation by the paid-work discourse coalition may indicate that there are still opportunities within unpaid work debates for new narratives to shape future debates. Or the lack of

saturation may indicate that Statistics New Zealand did not feel that it was necessary to convince other actors of its discursive position, given that it is the gatekeeper of state statistical measurement. A textual analysis of debates does not provide an answer to the questions of actors’ motivations. One possible way to uncover the motives behind the changes in actors’ rhetoric and policy assertions would be to interview those who were part of the debates being analysed. Though this still may fall short. Even if actors involved in unpaid work argumentation were interviewed it would be unlikely they could accurately remember every motivation behind their use of terminology during 30 years of public discussions under scrutiny.

Discourse coalition analysis showed statisticians clinging to their categorisations in a domain they saw as under their control. But outside the realm of censuses and labour force statistics there was evidence of changing views and attitudes. While the women-centred discourse coalition was unable to attract Statistics New Zealand fully into its constellation, it was able to attract actors such as politicians indicating some influence over the topic of unpaid work.

The discourse analysis of unpaid work debates provided evidence of a move from a patriarchal to a more ‘neo-liberal’ narrative in the texts of government statisticians in New Zealand. This move was based on the normative assertions found in discourses, in particular on the way public sector actors defined work, the definition of statistics used, and on how gender roles were constructed. Was this discourse analysis also able to pick up any lower-order policy learning that occurred during unpaid work debates in New Zealand between 1970 and 2000? Changes in the language used by actors or in policy assertions may help track evidence of discursive co-option or of strategic action by actors involved in policy debates.

**Lower order change in New Zealand unpaid work debates**

The lower order changes found in unpaid work debates were at the textual level and in character representations. Changes in the language used in public argumentation are significant. As was noted in Chapter Two, languages are seen to restrict or authorise, prioritise and distribute the ideas and beliefs that policy makers can think
and in doing so, partly delimit the policies they can pursue. While the concern in this thesis is to look more broadly at the discourses used to make sense of the world, this includes examining the textual elements of the language found within these discourses.

From home duties to unpaid work

In the first decade of debates analysed it was common for actors to discuss the activities performed by ‘housewives’, as well as debating ‘caregiving duties’, ‘household chores’ and ‘women’s work’. It was in the 1970s that the patriarchal discourse coalition held discursive hegemony, with frequent textual reference to ‘housewives’ and ‘women’s work’. Through the 1980s there was a change in the language used in unpaid work debates and increasingly actors utilised the term ‘housework’ and began to discard the label of ‘housewife’. By the late 1990s it was difficult to find the earlier descriptors within argumentation on household production and there was growing usage of the term ‘unpaid work’.

While acceptance of the label ‘unpaid work’ appeared to signal the attainment of feminist demands for greater recognition of the activities carried out in the home, there was no evidence that the change was due to direct pressure from women’s movement activity in unpaid work debates. Grass-roots feminist organisations did not use the term unpaid work for many of the 30-years scrutinised. The term ‘unpaid work’ was initially found in the 1980s in academic writings, the texts of MPs, and in documents from the Ministry of Women’s Affairs.

Even though grass-roots women’s organisations avoided use of the term unpaid work, these women’s groups did see tasks in the home as work. This connection of the concept of ‘work’ to household tasks becomes stronger in the 1970s. For example, in 1975 the National Organisation for Women noted that the “job of child-rearing and caring for the home has a very low rating both socially and economically.”

37 A. S. Yee, op.cit., p. 95.
The women’s movement actors involved in unpaid work argumentation may not have introduced the term unpaid work but they do adopt the term later in the time frame. The adoption of the term ‘unpaid work’ by the women-centred discourse coalition may have been a strategic action by this constellation. In unpaid work debates in New Zealand from 1970 to 2000, the most successful discourse was that which conformed in some way to existing assertions about work as paid employment. Feminists may have decided that the way to progress debates on the valuation of household tasks was to formulate ‘economic’ arguments. Within unpaid work debates there was acknowledgement by feminists that they utilised economic frameworks:

While I know there are pitfalls in translating all feminist concerns into economic-speak, I think that this work can help redefine the economic paradigm more on our terms, and give us a stronger voice in the economic policy debates of the 90’s.  

As has already been noted, it is not possible to identify with certainty the motivations of actors in discourse coalitions when carrying out a retrospective discourse analysis, however it is important to note the changes in language.

The adoption of the phrase unpaid work may also be evidence of the maturing of the women’s movement in New Zealand. The textual analysis of the unpaid work debates highlighted a division between the language of the more formal organisations involved in the women-centred discourse coalition and the less conventional actors. The more formal organisations such as women’s bureaucracies and women’s interest groups utilised the term ‘unpaid work’. In contrast, the grass-roots organisations talked about household tasks or housework. By the 1990s there was a much less diverse range of organisations active in the women-centred discourse coalition with this constellation dominated by academics and women’s interest groups. The change from unconventional structures to more formal interest group structures, and the closer ties this provided to conventional political organisations, may have prompted a change to a more ‘formal’ language. As such, the difference in the usage of language between formal and informal women’s organisations may also indicate the importance of context for shaping the language actors utilise. MPs, bureaucrats, and

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women’s interest groups lobbying the public sector may have felt compelled to utilise more ‘technical’ and ‘economic’ language than their grass-roots counterparts.

The change in the language of the women’s movement actors may also be evidence that even social movements are susceptible to external messages and texts. As was noted in Chapter Two, it is the interaction between multiple actors in policy arenas that provides an opportunity for social movements to persuade other actors to change their discourses and adopt the movement’s own narrative. Likewise this process of argumentation provides an opening for public sector actors to influence the discourses used by women’s movement activists. Policy learning is an iterative process to which all actors are susceptible. In the comparative chapter I will discuss further, the strategic use of language, particularly in relation to the repeated use of ‘economic’ language in both the childcare and unpaid work debates of New Zealand.

The women-centred discourse coalition was not the only grouping to change its terminology around housework. Along with the shift in normative assertions between 1970 and 2000, Statistics New Zealand also changed the terminology it used and adopted the label unpaid work. This shift was evident when comparing the language used in the 1986 Census and the 1996 Census:

A separate question on Main Work or Activity will be included and it will contain the categories household duties—looking after dependants and household duties—not looking after dependants.\(^{40}\)

The question comprises 3 types of activity outside the paid work force, and includes unpaid work in the home, full or part time study or training and physical sport or recreation.\(^{41}\)

The adoption of the term ‘work’ in association with household tasks signalled a victory for the women-centred discourse coalition wanting to lift the public profile of home duties, however, it hid the underlying stability of the discourses used by conventional political actors. As was noted there was a continuing institutionalisation of the idea that work was paid employment, despite the use by

\(^{40}\) Department of Statistics (1985) *op.cit.*, p. 78.

\(^{41}\) Department of Statistics (1991)*a, op.cit.*, p. 15.
Statistics New Zealand of the term ‘unpaid work’. The use of the term unpaid work by Statistics New Zealand may be an example of the strategic use of language to close down the challenge raised by the women-centred discourse coalition.

From payment of unpaid work to its measurement

A second change found within debates centred on whether to pay for unpaid work or whether to raise its status through economic valuation and measurement. Texts within the women-centred discourse diverged on whether household duties needed payment in order to be valued or whether formal statistical acknowledgement was enough. For some, only monetary payment would lead to the valuation of housework and caring duties:

In a society in which money determines value, women are a group who work outside the money economy. Their work is not worth money, is therefore valueless, is therefore not even real work. And women themselves, who do this valueless work, can hardly be expected to be worth as much as men who work for money.42

THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD URGENTLY CONSIDER THE INTRODUCTION OF A WAGE FOR MOTHERS CARING FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN (i.e pre-school children).

This would give tangible acknowledgement to the contribution women at home make to society and also would immeasurably increase the esteem in which they are held in the community and more importantly their own self-esteem.43

Within the women-centred narrative, the calls for payment of a caregivers/homemakers wage were strongest in the 1970s. The demand was found in texts from National Council of Women, the Society for Research on Women, and other women’s interest groups. But not everyone who sought to improve the public status household and caring work agreed with a payment being made to ‘housewives’ and ‘mothers’. Often the idea of payment was rejected because the motivation for performing caring tasks were not economic:

43 ibid, p. 15.
For the women who do unpaid work for other people, the central reason is not because it keeps the whole economy going, but because you love them.\textsuperscript{44}

Another issue is that household work incorporates some qualities that are not present in market work. Caring for people we love can be self-fulfilling. Some suggest that equating domestic work with wage work is reductionism as it omits the dimensions of love and fulfilment\textsuperscript{45}

By the 1980s and 1990s it was more common within the women-centred narrative to find an assertion that work in the home was best valued through inclusion in statistics and economic indicators. The aim was to ensure unpaid works was visible to society. "We women are visible and valuable to each other, and we must, now in our billions, proclaim that visibility and that worth."\textsuperscript{46} This assertion was found in texts from groups as divergent as the Federation of University Women, the Public Service Association, and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. The call for valuation in statistical reports was also made by MPs, academics, and was found in articles from the feminist magazine \textit{Broadsheet}.

The move away from demands that women be paid for unpaid household tasks within the women-centred narrative may be further evidence of the strategic use of language by actors. The change from calling for the payment of a wage to the valuation of unpaid work in national statistics, removed the possibility of confusing calls for payment within the feminist narrative with the patriarchal claims that families should receive financial assistance to ensure women remained in the private sphere. As has already been noted the patriarchal discourse had also called for payments to be made to women performing caring and household work, though the intention of the payments diverged. The ‘feminist’ narrative sought payment to lift the public view of unpaid work and to provide women with choice about whether to enter the paid workforce or remain in the home, or both at the same time. In contrast the patriarchal discourse focused on the payment of a wage to married women in order to keep them in their roles of housewives and mothers. The importance of the

\textsuperscript{44} A. Else (1996) \textit{op.cit.}, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{45} R. Fleming and A. Spellerberg \textit{op. cit.}, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{46} M. Waring (1999)\textit{a, op.cit.}, p. 264.
strategic use of language will be discussed in greater depth in the comparative section of this thesis.

*The construction of women's roles*

The final lower order change worth noting centred on the way women were represented in New Zealand unpaid work argumentation. In the early 1970s, with the dominance of the patriarchal narrative, the accepted role for women was that they remain in the home carrying out unpaid household tasks. This view was part of the patriarchal discourse that dominated legislation and policy during this decade. By the 1990s the texts of Statistics New Zealand asserted that *all adults* should be engaged in paid jobs, even women. This shift in the roles assigned to women did not reflect the demands made by the women's movement. As has been outlined, the 'feminist' discourse coalition wanted women to have the choice of whether to work in the home, in paid employment, or both. This change in the character representations of women from 'mothers' to 'workers' was part of a shift to a neoliberal paradigm in New Zealand from the mid-1980s.

*Influencing unpaid work debates*

The women's movement activity within New Zealand unpaid work debates lifted the profile of household work between 1970 and 2000, but it did not lead to feminist messages being adopted wholesale by other actors in the political realm. As was done in Chapter Three, tentative conclusions on discursive influence are drawn by comparing the different levels of saturation and institutionalisation achieved by the various discourse coalitions.

*The importance of pragmatism and familiarity*

When the influence of the women-centred discourse coalition was compared with the institutionalisation of the patriarchal and paid-work narratives the importance of the narrative at the heart of discourse coalitions were apparent. As has been discussed the main shift in unpaid work debates was from the institutionalisation of a patriarchal narrative to the institutionalisation of a paid-work discourse. This institutionalisation was due to the way Statistics New Zealand constructed debates. The influence of the paid-work discourse coalition within unpaid work debates may
be due to its ability to align with the earlier assertions of the patriarchal discourse. In contrast, the lack of influence by the women-centred discourse coalition may be due to its adherence to a narrative of challenge. As in Chapter Three, it seems the very nature of social movements may hinder attempts to achieve widespread acceptance of its message. The women-centred discourse at the base of women’s movement activity in New Zealand unpaid work debates between 1970 and 2000 challenged norms about work, family, and statistical measurement during the 30 years analysed. Each of these challenges will be discussed individually and the influence of the women’s centred narrative coalitions compared with that of the paid-work and patriarchal constellations.

As can be seen in Figure 4.2 the women-centred narrative sought to redefine the concept of ‘work’ in order to encompass all productive activity and this set the discourse up as a challenge to the institutional definitions of work in the 1970s. In contrast the paid-work discourse coalition that appeared in the 1980s did not challenge existing definitions of work in the same way as the ‘feminists’. While the label unpaid work was found within texts of the paid-work discourse coalition, work was still defined in the narrative primarily as paid employment.

The paid-work narrative also aligned with the patriarchal discourse of the 1970s on assertions about statistics. The view of statistics within unpaid work debates varied from those who saw statistics as facts, to those who thought statistics were fact but their usefulness depends on the questions asked, and finally those who wanted definitions, language, and statistics challenged. The two institutionalised discourse coalitions asserted that statistics were facts and Statistics New Zealand was seen as the appropriate gatekeeper of statistical measurement and valuation. For example, in

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its publications Statistics New Zealand stated: “Today, the Department of Statistics carries on a tradition of 130 years of objective non-political service as the chief information-collector of the country.”

This view of statistics as facts encouraged stability in the questions asked from one survey to the next. Statistician Phillip Morrison discussed the issue of stability in statistics. He noted that in order to study change, social sciences needed an instrument that did not change, an instrument such as a questionnaire that asked the same questions in the same way over a broad time span:

Yet, this very stability in questionnaires required to measure change is often neither desirable nor possible. Questions must change in order to be relevant, and relevance implies adaptation to the very changes that the data is trying to capture.

Statisticians did reassess the content of public questionnaires, such as Censuses, but balanced calls for change in the definitions of concepts such as work, against the ability to ‘fit’ them into the type of data collection known to work in past New Zealand Censuses.

As well as the legacy of previous censuses and surveys, Statistics New Zealand sought to ‘fit’ its data into international definitions in order to ensure comparability with studies around the world. The discursive influence of international debates can be seen in discussions about the ‘accepted’ definition of work:

The International Labour Organisation provides a definition of what “hours worked” should include and exclude. The definition corresponds closely with the conventional understanding of “hours worked” within the community.

While the patriarchal and paid-work discourses saw statistics as fact and asserted that collection needed to be strictly executed, the women’s movement disputed the idea of statistics as fact and challenged existing categories used to determine economic worth. The women’s movement active in New Zealand unpaid work debates sought to change the categories used in both the system of national accounts and the

categorisations found in censuses. In doing so, the women’s movement was fighting both entrenched definitions and language and an entrenched gatekeeper—Statistics New Zealand. The continuity in the rhetoric and assertions of the two institutional narratives in unpaid work debates indicates that discourse coalitions more easily achieved influence when using a message that aligns with earlier institutional narratives.

*From mothers to workers*

Even though there was a fundamental continuity in policy assertions of the institutional narratives, there was one difference between the patriarchal and paid-work discourses of New Zealand unpaid work debates—the way these narratives constructed the roles assigned to women. As can be seen from Figures 4.2 and 4.3 both the women-centred and paid-work discourses challenged existing constructions of gender roles. The concept of a ‘family wage’ and ‘normal’ gender roles were challenged by the feminist discourse coalition:

> “Normal family life” means the mother at home caring for the family and the father out at work, and, while this may be the most convenient arrangement for the community, it is becoming increasingly obvious that it is less than satisfactory for many women.\(^5^4\)

Setting up a homeworkers’ wage system could mean a total reorganisation of all wage-systems throughout the country—many of which are still heavily contaminated with the Victorian belief that a working man’s wage should be sufficient to provide for his wife and family. This is anachronistic in view of changing social patterns.\(^5^5\)

The paid-work discourse also challenged gender norms and sought to have all adults defined primarily as paid workers rather than ‘mothers’ and ‘male bread-winners’. Within the paid-work discourse that was institutionalised in the 1980s and 1990s, women were expected to work outside the home unless they were caring for very young children. For example, the assertion that all adults should take up paid employment was implicit in policy changes directed at sole parents in the 1990s.\(^5^6\)

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Though the women-centred and paid-work discourse coalitions both challenged the patriarchal discourse’s claims about gender roles, these narrative groupings did not directly align with each other. Overall, the paid-work discourse coalition’s assertions aligned more closely with embedded ideas of the patriarchal narrative. The women-centred narrative on the other hand challenged the basic assertions of the patriarchal narrative of the 1970s. Its very position challenging the status quo impacted upon the level of influence of women’s movement activity in New Zealand debates on unpaid work. This position of challenge was recognised by actors involved in the women’s movement discourse coalition:

The radical changes required to change the status of women would be tantamount to threatening the structure of society as we know it in New Zealand. Recognising this, we can only hope that small concessions which will make the discrimination against women less blatant will be automatically made, and that women’s rights such as the control over their own bodies will be instituted rapidly.  

Conclusion

As has been noted there was little indication of the full acceptance of a feminist narrative in New Zealand unpaid work debates, but there were changes in the debates scrutinised. In the first decade the institutional discourse asserted women should remain in the home caring for their families. By the close of the time frame analysed it was the paid-work narrative that dominated the texts of Statistics New Zealand and all adults (even mothers) were encouraged to take up paid employment. There was also a change in the labelling of household tasks, from ‘chores’ or ‘women’s work’, to the use of the word ‘work’ in connection with unpaid household tasks.

While the time frame analysed was restricted, it seems likely that women’s movement activity (with the support of a small number of female politicians) was responsible for initiating calls for economic and statistical valuation of women’s unpaid work in the home. This influence within unpaid work debates by the women-centred discourse coalition and its women’s movement actors led to the New Zealand

57 New Zealand Federation of University Women (1975) “Submission of the New Zealand Federation of University Women: Women’s Rights Select Committee”. Wellington, New Zealand Federation of University Women, p. 3.
government carrying out a time-use survey, but there is a caveat on this success. The measurement of unpaid work became a central tenet of the ‘feminist’ watchdog in the New Zealand state, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, but Statistics New Zealand sought to isolate unpaid work measurement from the valuation of paid work. In doing this, public sector actors kept unpaid work as a ‘women’s issue’ despite the feminist attempts to ensure unpaid work was considered in mainstream statistics and economic measures.

While Statistics New Zealand maintained its role as the gatekeeper of state statistics, it was a solitary voice defending the separate valuation of the measurement of unpaid work. The fact that this government department was unable to convince other actors to keep unpaid work and paid employment in separate categories may leave the door open for future changes in this area of debate.

As well as mainstream acknowledgement of work at home, the feminist discourse coalition also sought regular surveys and reports into the amount of unpaid domestic tasks carried out in New Zealand. “Regular time-use surveys in the future, hopefully at least every five years, could give us a better way of monitoring changes in this productive and reproductive work.” Despite assurances in the 1990s of regular time-use surveys, successive New Zealand governments have failed to order any further measurement of the work carried out in the home.

Finally, the feminist discourse coalition wanted all forms of unpaid work valued within mainstream statistics. By the end of the 1990s detailed questions on the activities of the ‘voluntary’ sector were part of mainstream surveys, but work in the ‘fourth’ sector of the home and family were left to one side. The influence of the feminist discourse coalition and its women’s movement actors came at a cost. The cost was continued marginalisation of the issue into satellite statistics and accounts that were easily ignored by mainstream political actors. In 1998 Marilyn Waring spoke of the fact that unpaid work had been sidelined to satellite accounts:

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58 M. J. Malcolm (1992) op.cit. p. 15.
I have always suspected, that far from technical and measurement difficulties being the reason for non inclusion, the fact that this sector [unpaid household work] was so dominant would invite enormous policy dispute about redistribution and equitable investment. The patriarchs, who profit from the current system, could not and would not countenance this competition.\textsuperscript{59}

New Zealand’s feminist discourse coalitions involved in childcare and unpaid work debates from 1970 to 2000 encountered difficulties in their attempts to challenge entrenched definitions of family and work. The next two chapters moves to look at the activity of the Australian women’s movement, in order to provide further room for comparing the conditions under which social movements exert discursive influence. Were any Australian women’s movements involved in childcare and unpaid work argumentation any more influential than their New Zealand counterparts?

Chapter Five

For women workers and the needy: Childcare debates in Australia

**Position Vacant: HOUSEWIFE**

Applicants are invited for the position of manager of a lively team of four demanding individuals of differing needs and personalities. The successful applicant will be required to perform and co-ordinate the following functions: companion, counsellor, financial manager, buying offer, teacher, nurse, chef, nutritionist, decorator, cleaner, driver, child care supervisor, social secretary and recreation officer. . . .

**House of work:** All waking hours and a 24-hour shift when necessary.

**Pay:** No salary or wage. . . .

The women’s movement activity in Australian childcare debates yielded the most discursive influence of all the social movement efforts investigated in this thesis. For around a decade, actors from the periphery of the political realm were able to shape childcare as an industrial issue. However, the influence of women’s movement activity between 1970 and 2000 in Australian childcare debates was mediated by the introduction of a new discourse on non-parental care, one based on neo-liberal beliefs.

The discursive terrain investigated in this chapter is complex, with a broad range of narrative positions used to argue for and against state-sponsored non-parental care. As was discussed in Chapter Two, the discursive positions on childcare in Australia were identified by drawing boundaries around narratives based on their normative and policy assertions. Between 1970 and 2000 this resulted in a total of seven different discourses on non-parental care being identified. The Australian childcare
case study runs contrary to Sabatier’s assertion that the process of discursive
competition will result in each subsystem containing a small number of coalitions
(between two and four). However, it is important to note that not all seven
discourses found in Australian childcare argumentation were actively used
throughout the 30 years scrutinised. As had happened in the New Zealand childcare
debates, there was a waxing and waning of narratives during the three decades
scrutinised.

Among the discourses found in Australian childcare argumentation were two
explicitly women-centred narratives that sought state-funded childcare provision—one
called for childcare for all women, a second concentrated on the needs of working
mothers. The discourse coalitions that developed around these ‘feminist’ story lines
included actors utilising unconventional tactics and forms, signalling activity by a
social movement. Alongside the women-centred narratives were three rights-based
discourses used to justify demands for state-funded childcare. These included a
narrative which argued that childcare was the right of all working parents; one that
sought to protect the rights of children; and a third which defended the rights of all
parents (those in and out of the paid labour force) to state-funded non-parental care.
Within Australian childcare debates there were also two narrative positions that
raised levels of opposition to state-funded childcare.

Before outlining in detail the changing landscape of Australian childcare debates I
will briefly recap the definitions used to select texts for the analysis. The labels used
in childcare debates in Australia were diverse, corresponding to the diversity of
children’s services provided. They included: centre-based day care, family day care,
long day care, multi-functional centres, informal paid care (for example with in-
home nannies), community childcare, private day care, and nurseries. Despite the
multitude of labels and services under the title childcare, at the heart of each of the
texts selected for analysis was a debate about the care of children by adults other than
their parents and teachers. Within Australian childcare texts much clearer
boundaries were drawn around childcare than was seen in the New Zealand case. In

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1984, Reproduced from the NSW Women’s Advisory Council Booklet: Occupation Housewife, p. 2.
New Zealand there was a continual blurring of lines between early childhood education and non-parental care provisions. While childcare in Australia was often seen as part of a range of family and children’s services it was usually separated from the more educational service of pre-school. This separation can be seen in the Economic Planning Advisory Commission’s Childcare Provision Task Force report and in a text from the Women’s Electoral Lobby:

Paid child care is much more important for children aged four or under. Around one-third of this group, or more than 400,000 children, receive some formal care. About 60 per cent of four year olds, and some three year olds, attend pre-school. Most pre-school services are provided separately from paid child care arrangements.4

WEL claims a crisis situation exists in the lack of provision of day-care and after school care facilities. Child-care should take precedence over pre-school programmes, which would only be a part of a range of day-care services.5

Mapping the discursive terrain

As was done for the previous chapters, the identification of the level of discursive influence achieved by women’s movement actors begins by outlining the narratives at the heart of each of the competing discourse coalitions. In this chapter a total of 340 texts on childcare were analysed in order to identify the common textual elements, assertions, character representations, and pre-existing resources of discourse used in Australian childcare debates. The words and phrases of the texts scrutinised were used to build a summary of each of the discourses found in Australian childcare argumentation between 1970 and 2000, beginning with an outline of the components of two women-centred discourses.

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3 It is important to note here some differences in the terminology between Australia and New Zealand. Pre-school in Australia is usually understood as a year of ‘formal’ education for children when they turn four to prepare them for primary schooling. At five, Australian children attend kindergarten, the first year of primary school. In New Zealand pre-school is a term commonly used to refer to all provisions for children under five, and kindergarten a form of pre-school provided for children from the age of 3.5 years aimed at helping prepare children to attend primary school at five.


Childcare for all women

The right of Australian females to life choices was central to the first of the women-centred discourses outlined—the women’s rights discourse (See the discourse summary in Figure 5.1). This stance was found in Beryl Beaurepaire’s address to the National Council of Women Conference in 1979:

I’m under attack at present, being told I want all women to be in the outside workforce and all babies put in crèches. This of course is rubbish: what I want, and I’m sure what you want, for Australian women is equality of opportunity to reach their full potential in whatever is their chosen occupation—and I mean chosen—not automatically expected to be a wife and mother, nor automatically expected to be in the outside workforce.\footnote{6}{B. Beaurepaire (1979) “National Council of Women of Australia Triennial Conference—1979 Address by Beryl Beaurepaire, Convenor, National Women’s Advisory Council.” The Changed Roles in Society—Where Next? 16-21 October 1979, Adelaide: National Council of Women of Australia, p. 7.}

‘Gender roles’ were viewed as socially constructed within the women’s rights narrative and governmental action was seen as essential in ensuring gender equality in all spheres of life. These claims can be seen in texts from the National Women’s Advisory Council and the YWCA:

Ready access to satisfactory child care which is appropriate to the needs of both children and parents at a reasonable cost is fundamental to the wellbeing and independence of women. It is of equal importance to a woman who is a full-time homemaker as it is to a woman who is in the full-time or part-time paid workforce.\footnote{7}{National Women’s Advisory Council (1982) National Women’s Advisory Council Annual Report 1981-82. Canberra: National Women’s Advisory Council, p. 4.}

In any study of women, the issue of child care must not be avoided. In society today, a woman’s life is closely tied to the lives of her children and the availability, acceptance and use of child minding facilities can be regarded as one means she has of reducing some of the restrictions placed on her in her role of a mother. Not only does the lack of suitable childcare facilities prevent mothers at home with young children from participating fully in the community, but it also prevents many women who would like to work from doing so, and can cause severe stress to mothers of young children who have to work for financial reasons.\footnote{8}{R. Anderson and S. Ward (1975) Leisure—an inappropriate concept for women? Canberra: Young Women’s Christian Association of Australia/Department of Tourism and Recreation, p. 22.}
Within the women’s rights discourse, responsibility for funding community childcare centres was seen to rest with the government. The state was also seen as responsible for ensuring the quality of childcare and texts within the women’s rights story line frequently argued for the provision of ‘formal childcare’ that was regulated by government and staffed by trained professionals. It was claimed that mothers would only feel comfortable using regulated, high quality childcare. Professional non-parental care was also seen as necessary for the sake of children:

While the Government has said that it supports all families’ childcare choices, the Democrats believe that it is crucial to differentiate between children who are cared for by trusted relatives or friends and those who are being cared for by carers who are completely unchecked and unregulated.

We stringently oppose the continued growth of the latter form of unregulated, backyard care. This practice must be stopped as soon as possible both to protect the safety of Australia’s children and to ensure that there is a viable future for high-quality, formal childcare in this country.⁹

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**Figure 5.1**

**Women’s rights discourse summary**

**Australian childcare debates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normative and policy assertions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender roles in society are socially constructed and must be challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women have a right to equality and choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-parental care ensures women have economic and social independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society should provide free 24-hour community-based childcare to all mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare should be managed by parents and funded by government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should provide fee relief directly to community childcare centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare centres must employ professionals and be regulated by government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated formal childcare is best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and women must share childcare and domestic work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Childcare for working women**

While the women’s rights discourse called for state-funded childcare for all mothers, the second feminist narrative found in Australian childcare debates concentrated on the provision of non-parental care to ensure that women were able to enter the paid workforce on an even footing with men (See the discourse summary in Figure 5.2).

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The working women’s discourse was used throughout the three decades scrutinised in the texts of women’s organisations, public sector agencies, and federal politicians. This discourse centred on a concern for gender equality in the public sphere and argued that access to childcare was necessary so that women could take on roles in the labour force if they chose to.

The costs of childcare services constitute a barrier to full participation in the workforce for many women. In the case of a couple in which both parents work and are therefore likely to be ineligible for fee relief, the high costs may prompt one parent either to reduce working hours or temporarily drop out of work. Given social expectations concerning childbearing roles and their generally lower pay, it is most often women whose employment is disrupted.  

The object is not to coerce those females who are content with a full-time ‘non-market’ role into entering the labour market. But just as they should have the right to exercise their preference, the alternative category of ‘career-oriented’ females should be perfectly free to opt for a full-time uninterrupted market role. If we can achieve such a freedom we will have created a better society for men and women—and for their children.  

Social legislation which enables women to combine child-bearing with a career plays an important role in women’s labour force decisions. However, Australia lags behind many other developed countries with respect to such legislation, despite the fact that the cost of providing such services is small.

Within the working women’s narrative childcare was seen as an industrial issue and it was asserted that the state had to ensure there was adequate non-parental care provision if women were to have equality of opportunity in the paid labour force.

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Childcare may still not be considered an industrial issue by the Arbitration Commission. But it is an industrial issue where it counts most – on the shop floor, in factories, shops and offices and in the homes of the many thousands of women who would take on paid employment if they could make arrangements for their children.\(^{13}\)

Where women leave the work force because their child care is unaffordable, the community loses their skills and experience. In real terms, women simply do not have equal opportunity to participate in the work force if the determining factor which prevents them is unaffordable childcare.\(^{14}\)

The working women’s discourse also claimed that there needed to be an increase in the number of non-parental care places available to working mothers in Australia. For example, the Economic Planning Advisory Commission’s Childcare Taskforce noted the shortage of childcare places:

Unmet demand has many negative consequences. One such consequence is that many families must turn to a ‘patchwork’ of care arrangements for children during the day. The need to package care arrangements can be stressful for both the parents and the child, and there is a greater likelihood that child care arrangements break down.\(^{15}\)


Figure 5.2

**Working women's discourse summary Australian childcare debates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normative and policy assertions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender roles in society are socially constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women have a right to paid work and equal employment opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women need childcare to ensure they have economic independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free 24-hour community-based childcare is needed for all working women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare is an industrial issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government and employers should help fund childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare must be planned by governments, unions, employers, and working parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The women’s movement must force unions to play a role in advocating for childcare provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals should be able to claim childcare as a tax-deductible expense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated formal childcare is best and childcare centres must be professionally staffed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The provision of childcare must be backed up with family friendly work practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boundaries were drawn around the two women-centred discourses because these narratives made claims on behalf of different constituencies. As was noted in Chapter Two, in discourse analysis a question is what sort of boundaries and ‘insulations’ are set up between discourses. I chose to draw these boundaries on the basis of different normative assertions that were evident in each of the story lines, as different worldviews will generate different policies and policy outcomes. In Australian childcare argumentation, the women’s rights discourse concerned itself with the rights of all mothers, while the working women’s discourse focused on the rights of working mothers. This division between the women’s rights narrative and working women’s discourse was similar to the narrative divisions found in New Zealand childcare debates and these similarities will be discussed in the comparative section of this thesis. The different constituents being advocated for were not the only points of divergence between the women’s rights and working women’s discourses in Australian childcare argumentation. Another difference was on the question of who should fund childcare provision. While the women’s rights discourse called for governments to provide universal childcare, the working women’s discourse asserted that the cost of childcare was the responsibility of both governments and employers.

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One issue where the working women’s discourse and the women’s rights narrative converged was on the preferred type of childcare facilities. Both women-centred narratives asserted that childcare centres needed to be run by trained staff. The women’s rights and working women’s narratives also converged on the assertion that childcare centres receiving government funding should be community based. The claim that community childcare centres needed government support was evident in a speech made during the Child Care Legislation Amendment Bill 1996 debates by MP Peter Andren:

The government’s rationale is that the marketplace will deliver, that the playing field must be levelled to offer the same opportunities to private providers that are available for community centres. The level playing field has now reached the playground and again it is not level.17

**Childcare for working parents**

Australian childcare argumentation not only contained a narrative that sought childcare for working women, there was also a discourse which asserted non-parental care was a right and need of *all working parents*, both male and female (See the discourse summary in Figure 5.3). Like the women-centred narrative, the workers’ rights discourse saw childcare as an industrial issue. However, within the workers’ rights narrative there was no explicit consideration of gender and a person’s right to state-supported childcare was determined by their labour force status and whether they had children.

When Figures 5.2 and 5.3 are compared it is evident that the working women’s and workers’ rights narratives shared a number of normative and policy assertions. Despite these common elements there are a number of differences in the normative assertions of the workers’ rights and working women’s discourses that made it is necessary to distinguish between the two narratives. As has been noted throughout this thesis, it is normative and policy assertions about characters and roles in society that are used to draw boundaries around each of the discourses. While the feminist discourse focused on the rights of women to childcare, the parental rights narrative was gender-neutral in its approach. This neutrality can be seen in texts from the
Women’s Bureau of the Department of Employment Education and Training in 1988 and from MP Ian Macphee in 1984:

**Workers with family responsibilities**

- increase the number of child care places and develop new models where appropriate for all working parents and particularly the disadvantaged.\(^\text{18}\)

So ultimately the ready availability of quality, cost-effective child care is crucial to the ability of parents to exercise their rights as individuals to equality of opportunity. I stress the word ‘parents’ because early childhood development and child care are the responsibility of parents, not simply mothers as is commonly supposed.\(^\text{19}\)

Much of the use of gender-neutral language came into childcare debates in the 1990s through use by political elites, such as politicians, and relates to the ratification of the gender-neutral ILO 156 on equal employment for workers with family responsibilities.

The two narratives linking childcare to labour force status also diverged on who was responsible for childcare provision. Within the workers’ rights discourse, childcare was seen as the responsibility of governments, employers, and unions. As was noted earlier, the working women’s discourse saw childcare funding as the responsibility of government and employers only. However, the narratives did converge on one issue—the assertion that government funding should go to professional childcare services. The assertion of the need to provide professional facilities can be seen in a 1999 submission to the Community Affairs References Committee:

> Affordability, supply and quality are the three main objectives of the children’s services program. NACBCS SA hold a strong belief that all families have a right to access affordable quality formal child care, and that the federal government have a responsibility to Australian families in regard to ensuring this.\(^\text{20}\)


Figure 5.3

Workers’ rights discourse summary Australian childcare debates

Normative and policy assertions
All adults have a right to work
Childcare is an industrial issue
Working parents both need and have a right to affordable and flexible childcare
Childcare is needed so parents can work and ensure the economic survival of their families
Employers, unions, and governments should work together to plan and provide childcare
Government funds for work-related childcare should not be capped
Childcare should be tax deductible
Government must regulate childcare
Work-related childcare facilities should be nearer to places of employment
Childcare must be flexible and meet the needs of shift workers and casual employees, as well as staff working normal office hours

The rights of parents
A second gender-neutral narrative was found in Australian childcare debates between 1970 and 2000. In the parental rights discourse a concern for the well-being of all parents was used from the 1980s to justify government involvement in childcare in Australia. The parental rights discourse shared some common assertions with the women’s rights discourse, but as with the workers’ rights story line childcare was not presented as a ‘women’s issue’. The parental rights discourse focused on the rights of parents, both male and female, to broad life choices and government backed childcare was defended by combining the rights of parents to time away from their dependants with children’s rights to quality care (See the discourse summary in Figure 5.4).

The parental rights narrative not only diverged from the earlier discourses outlined on the issue of who should receive state-funded childcare assistance, they differed on the issue of which childcare services should receive financial assistance from the state. While the women’s rights, worker’s rights, and working women’s discourses all asserted that only those childcare centres with properly trained staff should receive government funding, the parental rights discourse asserted that financial
support from governments should go to care centres with professionally trained staff and to family day care.\textsuperscript{21}

The method of funding called for within the parental rights discourse also set it apart from the three childcare narratives outlined so far. The women's rights narrative wanted childcare funding to go directly to care facilities; the worker's rights and working women's discourses asserted that financial assistance should go to parents via tax relief as well as to childcare centres directly. The parental rights discourse asserted that funding should go directly to parents to provide them with choice about the types of services they opted to use. The rhetoric of choice reverberated throughout the parental rights narrative, as did calls for flexible childcare provisions to meet the varied needs of families:

Parental care may be preferred by many parents; but various combinations of informal and formal, centre- and home-based care are already in demand. Whatever the choice, parents want to be assured of the quality of the care for their children.\textsuperscript{22}

We support the provision of flexible child care, responsive to the needs of children and parents, including the need for occasional child care for parents at home caring for children.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{21} As P. Abelson and G. Jones noted, family day care is provided in the carer's own home for up to five children, including the carer's children. Hours of care are usually flexible and may include evening and weekends. These services are generally organised by a community based co-ordination unit. P. Abelson and G. Jones (1996) "Public Financing Options for Future Child Care Provision in Australia". In Child Care Task Force Interim Report: Commissioned Studies. Economic Planning Advisory Commission Child Care Task Force. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Services, p. 51.


Figure 5.4

Parental rights discourse summary Australian childcare debates

Normative and policy assertions
Families have a right to government support
Childcare is a parental issue
Parents need childcare to work, study, train, and for respite
Childcare subsidies are justified as they support the economic and social needs of families
Childcare should be supported through fee subsidies to parents
Parents and children have a right to quality and affordable childcare
Formal childcare regulated by government is best
The government must plan childcare after consultation with parents
Parent committees should manage childcare centres
Parents are responsible for and should have choice over the type of childcare options used
Community childcare and family day care are acceptable forms of non-parental care

Protecting the rights of children

While the rights of mothers and fathers as individuals was central to the parental rights discourse, children as individuals were the focus of the children’s rights discourse found in Australian childcare debates between 1970 and 2000. The concern for the welfare of children was evident in a series of petitions from Australian citizens:

That the Federal Government should continue to demonstrate its real and proper concern for the welfare of children through its continuing assistance to the provision of good quality community day care facilities.24

The rights of children were important to many of the actors involved in Australian childcare debates, with most of the seven discourses found asserting the need for quality childcare provisions in order to protect young Australians. However, in the discourses outlined so far, children’s rights appeared to be ancillary to the rights of ‘mothers and fathers’. It was only within the children’s rights narrative that the rights of children were seen as paramount and separate from the needs of adults (See discourse summary in Figure 5.5). The children’s rights discourse not only demanded high quality care for young Australians, it asserted that formal childcare was required to provide for the educational and developmental needs of children.

For example, Eva Cox noted the importance of childcare for child development in a report to the EPAC Childcare Task Force:

Type and quality of care become part of the issue. If children are to spend a substantial period of their early years in the care of others, we need to recognise that the experiences of children with other adults and children, as well as the activities they are involved in care, will be major formative influences.\textsuperscript{25}

The children’s rights discourse was utilised by women’s organisations in the first two decades scrutinised and more mainstream actors in the 1990s. But as will be seen later in this chapter there was only limited support for this story line during the three decades scrutinised.

\textbf{Figure 5.5}

\textbf{Children's rights discourse summary Australian childcare debates}

\begin{tabular}{l}
\textit{Normative and policy assertions} \\
Children have rights \\
Children need childcare to develop socially and educationally \\
Education and care are interdependent \\
Government should subsidise the running of childcare facilities \\
Government must regulate childcare to ensure it of a high quality \\
Childcare must be planned by education experts \\
Trained professionals should care for children \\
\end{tabular}

\textit{Targeting state-funded childcare assistance}

All of the childcare discourses summarised so far asserted that governments had a responsibility to provide and fund childcare in Australia. In contrast, a targeted assistance discourse found in Australian childcare debates between 1970 and 2000 asserted that state involvement in and funding of childcare should be restricted. This discourse asserted that the level of government funding available for childcare was limited and as a result should go to families on low income or those with special needs (See the discourse summary in Figure 5.6). These assertions were evident in the arguments of Senator Grimes in 1984:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
We have had the problem that some of the fee relief procedures used by some children's services have not, in my view and that of the Government, been aimed at giving maximum relief to low income earners but rather at giving relief in an unbalanced way so that in some cases high income people have received considerably more relief than was necessary.  

The targeted assistance discourse was not opposed to childcare per se but was against 'excessive' government involvement in this area of service provision. This narrative contained the assertion that childcare provision should be left to the market whenever possible.

Mr DONALD CAMERON; ... Everybody who has observed what is going on is saying to the Minister that public child care services are too costly to administer and that there is a more efficient way of doing things. We on this side of the House are about providing the most efficient means of administering services and a means by which more child care services can be provided at the same cost.

It was claimed that targeting was always intended in Australian childcare policy and the texts of the targeted assistance discourse denied the calls for 'universalism' found within other narratives. The history of childcare as a state-sponsored program to help the 'needy' was outlined in documentation on the Child Care Payments Bill 1997:

The involvement of the Commonwealth Government in child care has grown from very modest beginnings in the early 1970s to being a substantial area of public policy in the 1990s. Originally designated as a limited program to help needy women and families it has become a multi-billion dollar industry formally caring for almost 600 000 children aged under 11 years of age. The paid child care sector now accounts for 0.5% of GDP with governments providing approximately 60% of the costs involved with providing this care.

The targeted discourse surfaced in Australian childcare argumentation in the 1980s in the texts of politicians, government departments, and interest groups.

Figure 5.6

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Targeted assistance discourse summary Australian childcare debates

Normative and policy assertions
Government funds are limited and should be distributed once equity and efficiency criteria are considered
Childcare is a social justice and social welfare issue
There is a hierarchy of needs that can be identified
All adults must be engaged in paid work
Childcare is needed so people can be economically independent
Parents with access to government-funded childcare must work and be self-sufficient
Parents, employers, and governments at all levels must fund childcare
Capped childcare funding should be redistributed via the tax system and some gap fees
Government funds should go to special needs families (low income, aboriginal, disabled children or parents, migrant families)
Childcare is an industry that should be left to the market whenever possible

A number of normative and policy assertions set the targeted assistance discourse coalition apart from the narratives outlined so far. This story line saw non-parental care provision as a welfare issue in contrast to the working women’s discourse and the workers’ rights narratives that claimed childcare as an industrial issue. As a result, the targeted assistance childcare discourse asserted that non-parental care provisions should be made available so that families could be self sufficient and avoid having to accept state-funded benefits.

The targeted assistance narrative also differed from other discourses found in childcare debates in Australia with regards to whom was responsible for non-parental care. For example, in a speech by Senator Chaney, childcare was seen as a parental (not governmental) responsibility:

I would also like to say that I think most Australians would accept that the primary obligation for the care of children rests with parents and that the role of government is to intervene and to assist in those cases where, for a variety of reasons, the parents themselves may not be able to meet their obligations. 29

These attempts to shift back to parents the responsibility for care (unless extreme circumstances prevailed) was noted by other actors involved in Australian childcare debates. In debates on the Child Care Legislation Amendment (High Need Regions) Bill 1999 Senator Rosemary Crowley noted:

It becomes clearer and clearer that the intention of this government is to withdraw funding and to reduce child care so that only a few can get it. More and more, it is encouraging a parent-one parent-to be at home with the children. It is social engineering by allocation of service dollars.\textsuperscript{30}

The targeted childcare discourse also sought the involvement of businesses and employers in funding non-parental care facilities. For example, the 1988 Commonwealth Government National Child Care Strategy strengthened efforts to encourage private businesses and employers to provide childcare services in order to expand the number of childcare places.\textsuperscript{31} These attempts to widen the base for childcare funding and provision found in the targeted assistance discourse was questioned by feminists. In particular feminists questioned whether employers would take responsibility for non-parental care provision:

Currently, employers are likely to provide child care only if they see a market incentive to do so. Because of this economic rationale behind the supply of child care by employers, it is ironic that employer-provided care is often referred to as ‘non-profit child care’-indeed, only if it is perceived as profitable for an employer to provide such care, will they provide it.\textsuperscript{32}

Mothercare is best

The final discourse to be outlined in this chapter also challenged assertions that governments should take responsibility for childcare. Like its New Zealand counterpart, the mothercare narrative in Australia saw child-rearing as a woman’s duty and gender roles in society as biologically determined. The narrative sought to preserve ‘traditional’ gender roles and asserted differences between men and women defined the spheres of life in which each gender should operate (See the discourse summary in Figure 5.7). In the mothercare discourse women who demanded

\textsuperscript{32} A. VandenHeuvel, op.cit., p. 5.
childcare were branded as selfish while women who remained in the home caring for their own children were glorified. This division resulted in childcare debates being presented as a battle between working mothers and stay-at-home mothers:

But because of preferences set by this Government and the Office of Child Care, child care centres are filled with children from two-income families, and no subsidised child care places are available for the parent who works in the home, the traditional mother caring for the family’s pre-school aged children.\(^{33}\)

The rhetoric of ‘choice’ can also be seen within the mothercare narrative, where it was claimed women should be able to choose to remain in the home caring for children:

Those who wish to stay at home-mothers in particular-and care for their young children should be free to do so and not be coerced by financial or ideological regimes into having to put their children into care.\(^{34}\)

The mothercare narrative frequently turned to ‘scientific’ studies to illustrate that non-parental care was harmful to children and should be avoided, a view expressed in the 1973 publication of Family Life Movement of Australia:

Some liberationists seem prepared to deny the opinion of most psychologists that continuity of mothering for the first three years is essential. They expect an infant to adjust to constant changes of environment in the forms of a succession of baby-sitters. But too frequent change can produce a form of shock that permanently damages the child’s nervous system. The need for continuity exists on the child’s side, and the desire to satisfy it exists on the mother’s side.\(^{35}\)

Childcare was presented as being so harmful to children it caused problems such as slow development and juvenile delinquency:

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If the number of working mothers continues to increase then the number of problem children will also increase and their problems will need more and more study, especially when we consider the large number of juvenile delinquents (aged 12-16 years) before the courts. There were 5,000 last year and the number is steadily increasing.\textsuperscript{36}

As will be seen in the discourse coalition breakdown later in the chapter, there was limited support for the narrative’s assertions of strictly defined gender roles in society. However, the mothercare narrative assertions did not disappear in Australia as they had in New Zealand childcare debates between 1970 and 2000 and several organisations utilised this narrative in the 1990s.

\textbf{Figure 5.7}

\textbf{Mothercare discourse summary Australian childcare debates}

\textit{Normative and policy assertions}
There are inherent differences between men and women
There are natural divisions between the private and public spheres
Children should be cared for in the home by their mothers
Government should reduce tax on families so only one parent (the male breadwinner) needs to work
Governments should provide funding so women can care for their own children
Women working and using childcare causes child behavioural problems
Women only work out of economic necessity
Government should only intervene in the care of children in case of extreme need

\textbf{Discourse coalitions and Australian childcare debates}

With the seven competing narratives found within Australian childcare debates outlined I will turn to investigate which actors utilised the various discourses. An analysis of the seven discourse coalitions active in Australian childcare debates demonstrates that women’s movement activity in childcare debates led to discursive change. However, the two ‘feminist’ discourse coalitions found in the argumentation were not the only constellations during the 30 years analysed that gained the support of ‘central actors’ such as politicians and public servants.

Chapter Five

The first step in gauging women’s movement influence in Australia’s childcare debates from 1970 to 2000 was to ascertain whether there was involvement from actors utilising contentious political tactics or unconventional structures. As was noted in Chapter One, a social movement is a collective of individuals and groups based on a narrative of challenge and involving actors who utilise unconventional forms and tactics at least some of the time to push for social change. Before looking at the composition of the two women-centred discourse coalitions to see if they contained actors utilising unconventional tactics and forms, it is important to establish whether the groupings were based around challenges to the status quo. As the previous section illustrated, a mothercare narrative was used in Australian childcare debates from 1970 to 2000 and within this narrative caring for children was seen as a woman’s duty and non-parental care was represented as being harmful to children. The two feminist discourses challenged this narrative position and its assumptions about predetermined gender roles. However, social movements must not only be based on discourses of challenge but a discourse challenging the status quo. Was the mothercare discourse the narrative that shaped policy and cultural norms at the opening of the time frame analysed?

It was difficult to find direct evidence that the mothercare narrative dominated the political realm between 1970 and 2000, as the coalition formed around this story line did not achieve discursive saturation of childcare debates (See Figure 5.8). Only a small number of actors involved in childcare argumentation in Australia during the three decades scrutinised asserted that mothers alone should care for children. This lack of discursive saturation may be due to the time frame analysed, as the mothercare narrative may have achieved discursive saturation in the decades preceding 1970 and by the 1970s it held a place as the institutional narrative.
The mothercare discourse coalition in Australian childcare debates may not have achieved discursive saturation between 1970 and 2000, but the narrative constellation did have institutional strength in the 1970s. Social norms of the 1970s were based on the male wage-earner system in Australia, much as in New Zealand. At the opening of the time frame analysed in this thesis childcare policy was based for the most part on the assumption that care of children would be carried out in families (by mothers) and that non-parental care would only be provided in exceptional circumstances to needy women and children. The institutional strength of the mothercare discourse is evident in the texts of women's organisations in the early 1970s. For example, the 1976 conference of the National Council of Women of Australia advocated the protection of a woman’s place in the home:
There is a great need for strengthening the family unit in today’s society. The two-parent stable family is still the greatest factor for the development of healthy, mature and balanced people.\(^{37}\)

Another indication of the institutional strength of the mothercare discourse came from the reaction to the narrative’s normative assertions. There were many actors within the women-centred narratives that vehemently argued against the idea of biologically determined roles in society.

The institutional strength of the mothercare narrative confirms the two women-centred discourses found in childcare debates in Australia as narratives opposed to the status quo. But were these story lines utilised by unconventional actors fulfilling the second part of the social movement definition? As was done in the two New Zealand case studies the analysis now moves to identify the actors involved in the women-centred discourse coalitions to establish if either constellation included actors who utilised unconventional actions and forms to challenge the status quo.

**Discourse coalitions from the periphery**

During the three decades under scrutiny the women’s rights discourse coalition remained predominantly a constellation of grass-roots organisations and ‘feminist’ academics\(^ {38}\) (See Figure 5.9). The public sector support that was enlisted by the women’s rights discourse coalition between 1970 and 2000 came predominantly from state organised advisory groups that had been established to consult with Australian women, including agencies such as the National Women’s Consultative Committee. As was noted in the New Zealand case studies, the support of women’s agencies or bureaucracies for feminist narratives in policy debates must be considered unsurprising as these agencies were established to advance the position of women in society. Saturation of the political realm for a feminist discourse coalition

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\(^{38}\) Women academics that were published by mainstream publishing houses were not included as part of the women’s movement, while ‘feminist’ academics who published in alternative ‘women’s movement’ publications were considered to be part of the grass-roots activity. This division has its limitations, as many women academics publishing with mainstream publishing houses consider themselves part of the women’s movement. However, drawing boundaries on the basis of place of publication was the only option open when there are no interviews carried out with the women academics on whether they consider themselves a feminist or not.
would occur through attracting a wider range of public sector actors, not just the involvement by women’s agencies. Only in the 1980s in Australian childcare debates did the women’s rights discourse coalition gain support across the political realm.

**Figure 5.9**

The women’s rights discourse coalition achieved limited saturation of the discursive realm between 1970 and 2000 in Australia, but failed to achieved the second condition of a ‘winning’ coalition, institutionalisation. The normative assertions from the women’s rights discourse, such as calls for universal childcare, community based centres, and full government funding, were not embedded into the nation’s policies and practices on non-parental care. While the women’s rights constellation achieved only limited acceptance from conventional political actors, women’s movement activity in Australian childcare debates brought greater levels of discursive influence through the working women’s discourse coalition.
Shaping childcare narratives

As is evident from Figure 5.10, the working women’s constellation achieved a greater level of discursive saturation in childcare debates between 1970 and 2000 than its feminist counterpart. The working women’s discourse coalition included women’s bureaucracies, such as the Office of Status of Women, but it also managed to draw in other public sector actors including politicians, the Department of Immigration, Department of Employment Education and Training, and government advisory bodies. This inclusion of conventional political actors was evidence that the working women’s discourse coalition was able to achieve a level of discursive saturation in Australian childcare debates from the 1980s. When compared with the other six discourse coalitions the working women’s discourse coalition was the broadest and longest lasting constellation found in Australian childcare debates during the three decades scrutinised.

Figure 5.10

Working women's discourse coalition
Australian childcare debates 1970-2000

- Politicians
■ Public service
▲ Women's bureaucracy
● Government advisory
▲ Women's advisory groups
× Academics
+ Business
× Unions
○ Interest groups
□ Women's interest groups
▲ Women's movement
○ Countermovement
Alongside politicians and public sector employees, the working women’s discourse coalition also contained actors from the periphery of the political realm. This provided further evidence of a women’s movement at work in Australian childcare debates, as the working women’s discourse coalition was based on a narrative of challenge and included actors utilising unconventional structures and tactics to bring about social change. In the first decade the majority of the actors who called for state-funded childcare for working women came from the periphery of the political realm. By the 1980s the discourse analysis shows involvement in the working women’s constellation of more conventional political actors, such as politicians and bureaucrats.

Childcare as an industrial issue

Before looking at whether the working women’s discourse constellation achieved institutionalisation of its claims for state-funded childcare for working mothers, I will examine the composition of the workers’ rights discourse coalition. The workers’ rights discourse coalition was not as long running or as broadly supported as the working women’s discourse coalition but it did contain a cross section of actors from both inside the political realm and from the periphery (See Figure 5.11). The public sector support for claims of state-funded childcare for all working parents was strongest from the mid 1980s.
As was noted earlier, the working women’s and workers’ rights discourse coalitions both asserted that childcare was an industrial issue but the narratives were set out as separate discourses due to their diverging views on who should receive financial support from the state. When the membership of the two discourse coalitions are taken together on the basis of the assertions about childcare as an industrial issue, it is evident that non-parental care came to be viewed as an industrial issue in Australia from the 1980s (See Figures 5.10 and 5.11). It is important to note that in comparing the two discourse coalition maps, that public sector support for the working women’s discourse comes earlier than the support for the workers’ rights discourse. This timing of discourse use may indicate that the second narrative position supporting the rights of all workers (men and women) to state-sponsored childcare was an extension of the claims of women’s movement activists for childcare for working women.

Assertions that childcare was an industrial issue saturated the Australian political realm, but were the working women’s and workers’ rights narratives reflected in
institutional practices and childcare policy? The first institutional recognition of childcare as a need of working ‘parents’ came with the introduction of the Child Care Act 1972. In this Act, the Government pledged funds for non-profit organisations to operate centre-based day care facilities for children of both working parents and sick parents. However, this early link between childcare and paid employment was about families where ‘women’ had to join the labour force due to exceptional circumstances, such as a sick husband or because she was a sole-parent. Most women in 1972 were expected to remain in the home and care for their own children. It was the 1980s with the expansion of childcare funding by both Commonwealth and State governments that there was evidence of the institutionalisation of childcare as an industrial issue for a broader range of women. From 1983 to 1985 this extra funding saw 5000 new centre-based long day care places established and 1120 new outside school hours places established in the system.\(^{39}\) The focus on services needed by working parents, such as on long day and outside school hours services, was evidence of the strong link between paid employment and childcare. As was noted in a government report in 1993: “Since the mid-1980s provision of child care has expanded rapidly and child care policy has been linked more closely than ever before to labour market and social security policies.”\(^{40}\)

Further evidence of the strength of the working women’s and workers’ rights discourse coalitions can be inferred by the response of critics. The demands for government-funded childcare for working women and working parents drew criticism within Australian childcare debates. For example, in 1998 the Family Choice Association noted:


Unfortunately those who sought to improve the economic and social position of those with child-rearing responsibilities did so selectively; that is, without due regard to the needs of those in the sector. They argued, and it has been accepted quite wrongly, that child care is a work-related expense. It is not.\textsuperscript{41}

Discourse coalition analysis provides evidence that the working women’s constellation was influential in shaping childcare policies and debates, particularly in the 1980s and early 1990s. The discursive saturation and institutionalisation achieved through women’s movement activity in Australia was challenged at the end of the time frame analysed by the emergence of the neo-liberal narrative seeking to target childcare provision to those in most need.

\textit{The rise of the targeted assistance discourse coalition}

The discourse coalition based on targeting of childcare assistance began to achieve discursive saturation in the 1990s. As can be seen from Figure 5.12 politicians, bureaucrats, and government advisory bodies all utilised the assertion that childcare funding should only go to those in ‘need’. Public sector calls to target childcare support were first evident in policy argumentation in the 1980s and reflected the movement in Australia to adopt more neo-liberal social and economic policies. As Sabina Leitmann put it: “Although the common rhetoric offered by governments is about the need for efficiency, effectiveness and equity, a closer examination of the practices of privatisation, commercialisation and contracting out paints a more complex picture. The agenda is driven by a belief in small government, the superiority of the market in distributing all goods (including social goods) and simple cost cutting.”\textsuperscript{42}


The strength of the targeted discourse coalition initiated by public sector actors and neo-liberal think tanks was evident in its ability to draw in other actors. When looking for women’s movement influence I have searched for evidence that actors from the periphery of the political realm have been able to attract the support of public sector actors. In the targeted discourse coalition it was politicians that were joined by other actors—first by women’s bureaucracies, then advisory groups, and finally unions and interest groups. The broadening of support for this neo-liberal based discourse was evidence of the targeted assistance discourse coalition’s strong position in Australian childcare debates by the late 1990s.

As well as saturating the discursive realm, the targeted discourse was institutionalised during the time frame analysed. The institutional strength of this discourse was reflected in the way the state framed childcare in a major childcare taskforce set up in the late 1990s. The normative assertions of the targeted assistance discourse had dominated the reports of the Economic Planning Advisory Commission’s Childcare Task Force in 1996:
We have established two key principles that underpin our approach:

- that government support should be targeted to those most in need of assistance; and
- that government efforts to ensure the quality of care and development for children should be applied evenly across all forms of child care.43

*The parental rights and children’s rights discourse coalitions*

The final two discourse coalitions to be mapped did not achieve the level of discursive saturation and institutionalisation of the targeted constellation, however, analysis of childcare texts showed that the parental rights discourse followed a similar developmental time-frame as the neo-liberal story line. Both discourse coalitions gathered momentum in the 1980s (a decade after the feminist discourses arose in the Australian childcare debates) and during the early 1990s the narratives’ assertions were adopted by a broader group of public sector actors. As can be seen in Figure 5.13 there was some saturation of the discursive realm by the parental rights discourse coalition in the 1990s but the discourse analysis of childcare texts provided no evidence of the institutionalisation of calls for state-funded childcare for *all* parents.

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The coalition based on the rights of children to quality childcare also received only minimal support in Australian childcare debates between 1970 and 2000. The discourse analysis provides evidence of two patterns of usage of the children’s rights story line. In the 1970s and early 1980s the narrative was used in Australia by women’s organisations in attempts to counter arguments about maternal deprivation. In the 1990s the value of childcare to protect children’s rights was argued by actors directly involved in childcare provision. At no time did this discourse coalition saturate the political realm or achieve institutionalisation of its assertions for childcare as a right of all children.

The varied approaches to childcare and its link to early childhood education will be one of the Trans-Tasman differences explored in the comparative chapter. As was seen in the chapter on New Zealand childcare argumentation there was a high level of support for claims that childcare was about the education of young children. But
as Figure 5.14 has shown this was not the case for Australian actors arguing that childcare was about educating young children.

Figure 5. 14

Within Australian childcare debates there was a shift from the mothercare discourse dominating argumentation, to the working women’s narrative saturating debates, and finally, to a targeted assistance story line being institutionalised. Before looking at tentative conclusions on how ‘winning’ discourses coalitions were able to bring influence to bear on Australian childcare debates I will look at any lower-order learning that took place.

Lower order changes in Australian childcare argumentation

In the Australian childcare debates there were few lower order changes. However, one worth noting was a change in the type of childcare services actors saw as worthy of receiving government funding. In the 1970s actors, utilising the women-centred narrative asserted that only community childcare care centres with trained staff should receive government support. As the time frame progressed, the textual
analysis showed that some of the discourse coalition’s actors relented on this assertion and began to align more closely with the claims of public sector actors. The feminist actors moved to agree with bureaucrats and politicians that (subject to quality control) all economically efficient forms of non-parental care should receive financial assistance, whether they were community facilities or commercial child-minding centres or family day care.

Another lower order change found was in the language used to defend government-funded childcare. In the 1990s a large number of government advisory bodies began to link childcare with claims about economic sustainability and the benefit it would bring to the national economy. Earlier, these advisory bodies had utilised normative assertions that were centred on the universal provision of government-backed childcare and had not linked the provision of services to economic justifications.

Both lower order changes were linked to the adoption of the language and policy assertions of the neo-liberal discourse, further highlighting the strength of the targeted assistance discourse coalition in Australian childcare debates. This change in the language used to argue for state-funded childcare may be evidence that in Australian debates actors were willing to use the dominant language of the policy realm in their attempts to gain discursive influence. The strategic use of language will be discussed in the comparative chapter that follows the case studies.

From the rights of working women to targeted childcare
Tentative conclusions on how coalitions achieved influence will be drawn by comparing the varied levels of discursive saturation and institutionalisation achieved by the seven discourse coalitions active in Australian childcare debates (just as was done in the previous two chapters). Before moving to discuss the variations in the influence of the discourse coalitions active in Australian childcare debates it is worth noting similar patterns of impact were found in both New Zealand and Australian childcare debates. In both nations, narratives of state-sponsored childcare for working women were the most successful of the claims forwarded by actors on the periphery of the political realm. Though as will be advanced in the comparative chapter, the Australian women’s movement was more influential in arguing childcare as a working woman’s right than its New Zealand counterpart.
The appeal of pragmatic narratives

The three discourse coalitions that achieved the greatest levels of discursive saturation and institutionalisation in Australian childcare debates between 1970 and 2000 were arguably the most ‘pragmatic’ narratives advanced by actors. The workers’ rights, working women’s, and targeted discourses all represented their proposed policies as pragmatic responses to changing societal factors. The worker’s rights and working women’s discourses claimed that non-parental care was a necessity because ‘mothers’ were working in the paid labour force in greater numbers. The targeted discourse took this one step further, arguing that childcare was in fact a necessity to ensure ‘women’ took paid employment and reduced dependency on state-funded benefits. The targeted discourse coalition also contained the assertions that concentrating financial assistance to those families in most needs was pragmatic, as government funds for services were limited.

While the three narratives’ claims varied, none of the discourses that achieved institutionalisation in Australian childcare argumentation between 1970 and 2000 challenged assertions that the family had a major role to play in caregiving. In contrast, the discourse coalitions that received lower levels of support from public sector actors and that had failed to institutionalise their childcare demands, all contained assertions of the need to radically alter the vision of society presented in the mothercare narrative on which childcare was based in the 1970s. The women’s rights discourse challenged the institution of the family by demanding women be relieved of full-time caring responsibilities; the parental rights discourse presented childcare as a community responsibility not just a parental role; and the children’s rights narrative sought to re-label childcare as an ‘education’ issue. These three narratives therefore substantively challenged the assertions found in the mothercare discourse in which childcare was seen as being primarily a parental responsibility and any assistance given to families done to protect the welfare of children. In Australian childcare argumentation, discourse coalitions that radically challenged embedded societal norms found it more difficult to ‘win’ policy argumentation than those seeking less radical policy reforms.
The importance for groups seeking discursive influence of a reformist discourse can be seen when comparing the two women-centred discourse coalitions found in Australian childcare debates. The most ‘radical’ of the two narratives was forwarded by the women’s rights discourse coalition and it was this discourse coalition that was unable to gain discursive influence in childcare debates. Feminists arguing for universal state-funded childcare demanded major changes to society’s structures. Even the language used within women’s rights texts was ‘radical’:

*Freedom From Domestic Slavery*

Free 24 hour child care centres catering for children from infancy to adolescence and controlled by those using the centres.\(^{44}\)

The working women’s discourse by contrast was presented as a more pragmatic approach in childcare argumentation between 1970 and 2000. Actors in the working women’s discourse coalition often noted that women *were* taking paid jobs in increasing numbers and that made childcare a necessity:

The social and economic implications of the need for child care in a society in which it is less and less possible for a family to survive on one income must be realised by governments, employers and unions. There is an urgent need to investigate ways to provide child-care facilities that meet the needs and preferences of migrant women workers.\(^{45}\)

The working women’s discourse coalition was able to achieve a level of discursive saturation and institutionalisation for its message of reform. In Australian childcare debates (just as in the New Zealand case) it seems that the more challenging a discourse put forward by a social movement, the more difficulty it had in gaining the support of political elites. This has implications for social movements which by very definition are collectives challenging the status quo.

*Discursive legacies*

The influence of discourse coalitions that left unchallenged pre-existing institutional definitions of the family was evidence of the importance of discursive legacies in Australian childcare argumentation. Further evidence of the importance of aligning

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\(^{45}\) D. Storer (1975) *But I wouldn’t want my wife to work here...*. Research Report for International Women’s Year, Victoria: Centre for Urban Research and Action, p. 116.
with past narratives was found in other parts of Australian childcare debates. The
development in the 1990s of a discourse based on help to those in "real need" echoed
narrative traits found earlier in the century which defended childcare provided by

Discursive legacies can also be seen in the way childcare was represented overall. In
the Australian debates between 1970 and 2000 there was frequent reference made to
childcare as a 'women's issue'. For example, this view was found 1975 in a
presentation to the Women and Politics Conference and also in a text from 1998
from the ACTU:

> If we go on to other areas of conditions, there's a whole host of
things that are particularly important to women that should apply to
women and that needn't necessarily apply to men, and that should
be obtained as basic standards of employment. I have in mind
certain night work restrictions, loadings in respect of particular
skills of females, the whole question surrounding day care and
child care, the questions relating to equality of education,
educational advancement, vocational training, the situation in
relation to wages brought about by gradings, equality of moving up
into gradings . . . . .\footnote{R. Goot (1975) "Wages and conditions". From \textit{Women and Politics Conference 1975}, Canberra: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, p. 88.}

> Women are the ones who mostly have to juggle working and
family lives in between getting the kids to child-care and worrying
what to do if a child get [sic] sick.

> Women are the ones who pay for child-care out of usually much
lower salaries.\footnote{J. George, ACTU (1993) "What's At Stake For Women". \textit{Inkwel}, Issue 1, February 1993, p. 6.}

This continuity of the assertion that childcare was a women’s issue came despite
attempts by some actors to introduce gender-neutral language into debates. Past texts
hindered attempts to alter current public debates, a factor referred to in debates of
non-parental care policies.
We have been witness to the highs and lows of child care—the high being when the Labor government came in and suddenly child care was given some life and some direction. Before that child care had been overlooked and somewhat shamefully treated as a place where people who did not really want their children around them all day, or who were sort of not really on the social scale, left their children so they could go off and work in factories and places like that.  

The influence of past discourses on narratives and on discourse coalition ‘success’ will be further scrutinised in the comparative chapter of this thesis.

Social movements utilising public sector language

As well as aligning to past narratives, the ability to utilise the language of the public sector may also assist discourse coalitions seeking to shape childcare debates in Australia. The policy assertions and language of the working women’s narrative often aligned with the neo-liberal rhetoric being espoused by state sector actors in the 1990s. Within the working women’s discourse it was argued that increasing government childcare was not only of benefit to women, but of benefit to the Australian economy. The working women’s narrative in this sense used economic reasoning to justify childcare provisions. In contrast the women’s rights discourse justified state-funded childcare on the basis of equal rights and life choices. Women’s organisations themselves, acknowledged that economic justifications were likely to have the best chance of swaying the government in favour of childcare provision. For example, the centrality of economic arguments was recognised by WEL report in 1972:

WEL would like to regard these measures as the first step on the way to free child care centres, but it is more realistic to view them in terms of stop-gap tactics designed to stifle complaints, and aimed at serving the economic demands of the work force, rather than the Government’s recognition that child care is a community responsibility.

This use of economic language by the working women’s discourse coalition was strongest during the 1980s and 1990s. On reviewing changes in Australian childcare

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policy, Eva Cox noted that “By the eighties, the language of policy had changed from equity to efficiency and so we [feminist lobbies] began using economic terminology. Our lobby was then couched in terms of child care being related to labour markets and the efficient use of skills.”

This assertion of economic benefit by the working women’s discourse coalition aligned with the targeted assistance narrative and may indicate that actors on periphery of political realm are most influential when they were able to match the content of their narratives to the story lines used by mainstream political actors.

**Strength of actors**

The strength of the neo-liberal discourse coalition may also be linked to the actors who foster this narrative. The targeted discourse coalition was the only narrative in Australian childcare debates that started within the public sector and free-market think tanks, and it is one of the institutional story lines during the three decades investigated. In childcare debates in Australia, narratives started by the most institutional actors appeared to have more influence over public policy debates than those started in grass-roots organisations. The connection between institutional position and discursive strength will be further examined in the comparative chapter.

**Conclusion**

As can be seen in the discourse analysis of childcare texts and the examination of discourse coalitions between 1970 and 2000 there was a shift away from calls for universal government-funded childcare for working women and working parents in the latter of the three decades scrutinised. Public sector actors may have accepted childcare as a work-related expense in order to provide women with economic freedom (and removed reliance on state income support), but by the close of the case study the original aims of the women’s movement activists to bring economic independence to women were converted into a narrow vision of childcare as part of a range of measures encouraging self-sufficiency of families. The change in the normative assertions used by public sector actors highlighted the ability of social movements to achieve agenda responsiveness to demands. But the Australian childcare case also provides evidence of the difficulty in ensuring any discursive

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gains are protected against alternative messages, as the women’s movement discourse coalitions were not able to ensure that their assertions on state-funded childcare for working women were accepted long term.

The targeted discourse coalition may have been the ‘winning’ constellation in 2000 but another change may be coming in Australian childcare argumentation. As was noted earlier the discourse coalition analysis provided evidence of the mothercare discourse being reintroduced into Australian childcare debates in the late 1990s. The reassertion of women as mothers (not workers) came from a small number of women’s organisations. For example, assertions were espoused by the Women’s Action Alliance:

\[ \ldots \text{we are not willing to bow down to the accepted wisdom that child care is the best quality care we can have for children. Small amounts of child care can be valuable to the very young children but not long day care. We do not perceive it is very good for young children at all. In fact the best price is at home with one of their parents, and most Australian children are – thank God.}^{53} \]

The re-emergence of this narrative may be evidence of a ‘countermovement’ emerging in Australian childcare sub-policy, that is a movement from grass-roots organisations in direct opposition to existing social movement activity. The re-emergence of the mothercare narrative did not occur until the 1990s and its discursive strength in childcare argumentation will only be evident in another decade or more. Though indications of the institutional strength of a neo-conservative narrative in Australia are already beginning to show with the introduction of a ‘baby-bonus’ payment by the Howard Government in 2002.

These tentative conclusions on the discursive influence of women’s movement activists will be further tested by comparing them with the New Zealand cases and with conclusions drawn in the next chapter on Australian unpaid work debates. For now I will turn to examine Australian unpaid work debates and feminist attempts to redefine ‘work’ and gender roles.

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Chapter Six

Women’s work and men's work: Unpaid work debates in Australia

“Non-Working” Housewives
There would be a minimum weekly earnings figures of $50 for people who did not work—such as housewives.

From the *West Australian*

This final case study looks at the argumentation in Australia over the measurement and valuation of unpaid work. The debate around unpaid work ranged from discussions about the statistical measurement of household work to the gendered differences in time spent on household tasks; from the payment of a ‘housewife’s wage’ to the inclusion of ‘homeworkers’ in national compensation schemes. It is the attempts by women’s organisations in Australia to redefine unpaid household tasks as ‘work’ and to have these productive activities included in mainstream measurements of productivity that are the focus of this chapter. The analysis of the discourse coalitions involved in Australian debates on unpaid work from 1970 to 2000 indicates influence by formal women’s organisations seeking to change views held about household labour. However, discursive legacies and concerns about the comparability of statistical measures hindered feminist calls for the inclusion of household activities in mainstream measures of productivity.

The central question of the debates being scrutinised in this chapter was summed up in a *Refractory Girl* article in 1984. The debate is about the “awful housework question. It is really work; should women be paid to do it, or should they be

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1 Quoted in *Vashti’s Voice*, Autumn 1975, p. 15.
encouraged to get our of the house altogether?" The definitions of unpaid work used in Australian debates between 1970 and 2000 covered a wide range of activities including caring for children, preparing food, washing clothes, cleaning and doing voluntary work in the community. While community work was often encompassed under the label unpaid work in Australia, texts were selected for analysis in this chapter due to their discussion of household duties. The chosen focused on household tasks of a particular kind:

A widely accepted principle for determining the scope of total unpaid work is the "third person" or "market replacement" criterion originally stated by Reid ... Under this criterion a household activity would be considered as unpaid work if an economic unit other than the household itself could have supplied the latter with an equivalent service.

Similar to the New Zealand case study, there were claims in Australia that progress had been made on the topic of unpaid work. For example, in 2000 the Australian Bureau of Statistics noted:

Increased efforts have been made by statistical agencies to provide estimates of the value of unpaid work associated with household unrecorded production in recognition of the fact that there can be important shifts between market and household unrecorded production.

Does a discourse analysis of argumentation on unpaid work show an increased acknowledgement of the value of unpaid work? And is any such increased acknowledgement due to agitation by women’s organisations for the measurement and valuation of the unpaid work carried out in the private sphere?

As was noted in the New Zealand case study on unpaid work, this topic is the subject of international debates. This international component is set aside in this case study, as I wanted to focus on the 'domestic' debates on the topic of household labour. This boundary between international and domestic debates is somewhat artificial and the

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similarities in the progress of the unpaid work argumentation on both sides of the Tasman will illustrate the level of policy transfer\textsuperscript{6} that has gone on in this policy subsystem. The impact of international debates on measuring and valuing unpaid work will be discussed in the tentative conclusions drawn in this chapter and more fully in the comparative section of this thesis.

**Feminists, technocrats, and value free statistics**

The analysis of discursive influence in Australian unpaid work between 1970 and 2000 begins with a textual analysis of 90 written documents in order to identify the narratives used to argue for or against the measurement and valuation of unpaid work. As was done in the three previous case studies, each text was read to identify common textual patterns, assumptions, character representations, and pre-existing resources. These common traits were then utilised to develop discourse summaries with boundaries drawn according to the worldviews promulgated in each narrative. The textual analysis of Australian argumentation on the measurement and valuation of unpaid work resulted in the identification of four different narrative positions. There was a discourse which dismissed all calls for the public measurement and valuation of household tasks; a story line which asserted that the measurement of unpaid activity should be done through specialised surveys; a discourse seeking the inclusion of unpaid domestic work in mainstream statistical measures; and a discourse calling for the payment of unpaid productive work to bolster ‘traditional’ gender roles in society. I will turn first to outline the women-centred narrative that called for the mainstream measurement and valuation of unpaid work.

*Wanting to redefine ‘work’*

A broadly ‘feminist’ discourse was found in Australian unpaid work debates from 1970 to 2000 (See the discourse summary in Figure 6.1). In this narrative it was argued that women’s ‘work’ in the home had wrongly been left out of discussions about economic productivity:

I think it is time we looked seriously at some formal recognition of unpaid work by what is generally called the invisible work force. At present we have no way of calculating the work done by the invisible work force because we simply ignore unpaid work. We do not take it into account when we calculate our gross domestic product or when we discuss national productivity.\(^7\)

The lack of attention given to unpaid work by the state and the Australian public was linked to ‘traditional’ gender divisions in society and patriarchal tools of analysis:

Dare we say that capitalism, as analysed by Marxists as well as monetarists, by political as well as orthodox economists, is a one-sided, masculine capitalism? That class analysis categorises only men? Insofar as we yet have no analysis of the economic order that can equally accommodate the housewife and the factory work, mothers and multinationals, my answer would be that, yes, we must dare.\(^8\)

As the bulk of unpaid work in developed countries is housework and therefore the de facto responsibility of women, its invisibility is part of the gendered value systems developed from male viewpoints. This is being slowly redressed as women in decision-making and lobbying roles succeed in putting unpaid work on the political agenda.\(^9\)

The feminist narrative asserted that the inclusion of the informal sector in mainstream economic calculations would lead to Australian society giving due recognition to the value of household work. It sought the inclusion of unpaid work in statistics collected by the ‘state’ and in national economic calculations due to the important role of statistics in policy-making.

Since the release of data from the 1987 Pilot Survey of Time Use, these surveys have proven to be an important indicator of the progress towards sexual equality, and a guide to policy makers.\(^10\)

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The information it provides about how men and women spend their time will provide a basis for estimating the value of unpaid household work and its contribution to economic activity in Australia. It will also assist the Government in developing and evaluating initiatives addressing the status of women.\textsuperscript{11}

The inclusion of unpaid work within mainstream statistics was also seen as essential due to the interconnectedness of the paid and unpaid realms. This view was evident in a report from MP Kay Elson and in a speech by Senator Meg Lees:

If we were to fully recognise that our market economy, and therefore all paid work, relies on unpaid work carried out in families, we may see a shift in the economic value we place on parenting, let alone its social importance.\textsuperscript{12}

When we talk of industry policy, we do not consider the home care industry and its unpaid workers. We do not consider their wages or conditions and whether they have insurance to cover themselves if they are injured on the job.\textsuperscript{13}

The women-centred narrative questioned how the state, employers, and families were going to deal with the intersection of spheres. Actors arguing that unpaid work should take its place alongside other forms of productive activity in national accounts and statistics often centred their reasoning on the continued oppression of women due to the devaluing of such work.

In this regard, women’s specialisation in home activities may, in part, be a response to labour market discrimination. In this sense the secondary effect that operates through the optimal time allocation will reinforce the basic discriminatory tendencies in the labour market, giving rise to a situation of circular causation.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} M. Lees, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 679.
The need to gain a series of public services such as public laundries, child care centres, catering and cleaning services. These are the initial steps towards social responsibility for the essential domestic and child rearing functions now carried out by countless women individually. Without these formal equality will remain formal.  

Actors arguing that unpaid work should take its place alongside other forms of productive activity in national accounts and statistics often asserted that the continued oppression of women was a result of the devaluing of work carried out in the private sphere. As well as questioning the value placed on unpaid work, the feminist narrative criticised the cult of domesticity seen to surround unpaid work in Australia.

The contemporary Australian ideology of femininity requires not only that women do the housework, but that they find it rewarding.

Increasingly after WW1 we see the work of domestic life being transformed from simple labour to an expression of the housewife’s personality of love of the family. . . . Much of the publicity and promotion for it has replicated the notions of the responsibility and duty of the good mother and wife and played on the guilt and forced emotional labour inherent in these traditional roles.

The women-centred discourse sought action from the state to ensure the public valuation of unpaid work but it also called on men to take up more of the burden in the home:

Attempts to improve the position of women in the Australian labour market through the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984 and the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act of 1986 . . . are unlikely to be wholly successful unless accompanied by changes in the household.

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Figure 6.1

Feminist discourse summary Australian unpaid work debates

Normative and policy assertions
Women are oppressed
Traditional gender roles lead to women’s work in the home going unnoticed
Gender roles are socially constructed
Society ignores the productive and economic contribution of women’s work in the home
Household and caring tasks are work
Unpaid work must be included in national accounts and measures of productivity
Questions on unpaid work should be part of censuses
Payment for caring work and household work would recognise the value of women’s contributions to society
Women do more unpaid household work than men
Men must take more responsibility for unpaid work in the home

Defending statistical ‘facts’

The feminist discourse was not the only narrative between 1970 and 2000 to assert that unpaid work was valuable. Australian unpaid work argumentation contained a ‘technocratic’ narrative that labelled household tasks as productive and that saw the need to officially measure work carried out in the home:

The wellbeing of many people depends on services undertaken by individuals, for which no money is exchanged. . . . Therefore some measurement of unpaid or non-market work, along with measurements of paid work and production, is necessary for a comprehensive picture of national production and consumption.  

In contrast to the feminist narrative that had sought inclusion of unpaid work in mainstream statistics and economic reports, the technocratic discourse asserted that the measurement and valuation of unpaid work should be kept separate from other measures of productivity. The complex nature of unpaid domestic work and varied perceptions about what constituted ‘work’ in the home were cited as the reason for separating the collection of data on unpaid work from data on paid employment (See the discourse summary in figure 6.2).

Individuals perceive the status of these activities differently. Some people would view the raising of children as unpaid work, while others would view it as something more akin to leisure. Some would argue that these caring activities should not be classified as work or leisure but something else—they are activities that satisfy biological and cultural codes of behaviour to ensure desirable outcomes of the whole society.\textsuperscript{20}

The September 1978 test included a main activity question for people not in the labour force. Some confusion was evident and this affected response rates. It is not possible to satisfactorily determine usual major activity using only one question.\textsuperscript{21}

This separation of paid employment and unpaid work in statistical measures was espoused by the ABS in discussions about the System of National Accounts. The ABS claims that because of these concerns, national accountants generally hold the view that broadening the accounts to include a wide range of non-market activity would produce a less useful tool for analysing overall economic activity.\textsuperscript{22}

The ability to link current statistics with past studies and with international measures of productivity was also used in the technocratic discourse to justify the moves to keep unpaid work measurement separate.

The ABS does not believe that there is sufficient justification to depart from labour force definitions. The ABS is unwilling to modify the labour force questions used in the 1996 Census in case there is some impact on the comparability of data with that from previous census or with that from the monthly Labour Force Survey.\textsuperscript{23}

The issue of statistical comparability was also found in New Zealand argumentation on unpaid work (See Figure 4.3). The technocratic discourse that asserted the need to separate unpaid productive activity from paid employment in statistical measures was predominantly used by statisticians and academics during the 30 years scrutinised.

\textsuperscript{20} D. Trewin, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 20.
Figure 6.2
Technocratic discourse summary Australian unpaid work debates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Normative and policy assertions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statistics are facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid work is valuable and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important to society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid work should not be part</td>
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<tr>
<td>of national accounts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions of unpaid work should</td>
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<tr>
<td>not be part of the census</td>
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<tr>
<td>The value of household work is</td>
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<tr>
<td>too hard to calculate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unpaid work can be measured in</td>
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<tr>
<td>time-use surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time-use surveys can be used in</td>
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<td>policy development</td>
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</tbody>
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As was noted in Chapter Two, the process of policy debate is seen as the motor of change through which social movements and other collective actors can bring change. A textual analysis of unpaid work debates in Australia provides evidence of this process of argumentation taking place. There are visible struggles between actors utilising the women-centred and technocratic discourses. For example, statisticians often directly answered requests by feminists to broaden census categories:

Consideration was given to the inclusion in the 1986 Census of a question on a person’s usual activity in which one of the response categories could have been ‘home duties’. However, it was decided that inclusion of such a question was not justified in its own right, in part because non-census data on this topic are available. Also, there are doubts that an adequate question could be developed for a census that would produce reliable data. The inclusion of a response category of ‘home duties’ as part of the labour force status topic was also considered but testing indicated that there were adverse effects on the data produced for labour force status if the category was added to one of the questions.24

Arguing for separate spheres

A third discourse was found to extol the value of household work in Australian unpaid work debates. While the feminist and technocratic narratives concentrated on the measurement of unpaid work in statistics in order to ensure its value to society was recognised, the ‘socially conservative’ discourse sought the payment of a ‘housewife’s wage’ to improve the public image of housework (See the discourse summary in Figure 6.3).

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Calls within the socially conservative narrative for payments to be made to household workers on the surface aligned with the assertions of a small number of actors in the feminist discourse coalition. However, the aims of instituting a ‘mothers-wage’ were quite different in the two story lines. The socially conservative narrative justified remuneration for household work as a way of maintaining the ‘natural’ division of labour in society while actors utilising the feminist discourse asserted payment was necessary to ensure economic independence for women. The differences stemmed from the divergent views about gender roles. While the socially conservative discourse presented gender roles as predetermined by biology, in the feminist narrative gender roles were presented as socially constructed (See Figures 6.1 and 6.3). The assertion that gender roles were seen as psychologically and physically predetermined were evident in a text from Babette Francis:

Men and women are equal but different, not equal and the same. Sex differences are not an oversight by the Almighty, but part of his plan.\textsuperscript{25}

While acknowledging that women worked outside the home, the ‘traditional’ roles of wife and mother were held up as the ideal for Australian women within the socially conservative discourse. The narrative sought public recognition of the important ‘work’ in the home performed by women:

We must never underestimate the value of the unpaid work that women perform daily or the unpaid work preformed by women who are in paid employment. I am confident that there are many men who attend training sessions in their employment who find it quite acceptable that they perform little if any of the tasks at home and reckon that their female workmates are simply whingers when they complain about the housework they have to do when they go home from work. Equally, I am confident that many men are totally unaware of the serious strain that is placed upon women who are not in a career but running the household smoothly and seeing to the needs of their children and their husband. Unpaid work by women needs to be evaluated and acknowledged. How one compensates women for this work is something that can clearly exercise the brilliant minds of others, but it can no longer be ignored by any of us.\textsuperscript{26}

The socially conservative narrative was used by women’s organisation in Australia but the story line did not fit accepted definitions of a social movement discourse. As noted earlier, social movements are collectives brought together by a common challenge to the status quo. In this respect I agree with Sara Dowse, who notes: “Thus we can view the women’s movement in much the same way as we do the trade union movement, and admit to the various conflicting and ideologically opposed factions within it, feminist and anti-feminist. Or we can take the term ‘women’s movement’ to mean only the various shades of feminism, as the ‘labour movement’ ranges over the spectrum of socialism. Because I believe the women’s movement represents a deeply felt groundswell for social change, I have chosen to use the term in its second sense, stepping forward rather than backwards.”

Juliet Mitchell took a similar view: I would not regard any women’s demonstrations, any women’s advocacy of anything that didn’t lead to social change as part of a women’s movement. The socially conservative discourse looked to maintain the status quo in society rather than challenge the traditional norms around gender roles. An antagonism towards feminism is evident in the socially conservative discourse where texts criticised women’s liberationists for ignoring the desires of women who wanted to stay in the home, and for ignoring the needs of children:

Financial recognition of the work done in the home would raise the status of all women. Freedom of choice must surely be the basis of liberation, but I do not hear liberationists holding up the right of a woman to choose the role of wife and homemaker. Their attitude is ‘Right, let her do that if she wants, but let her starve while she’s doing it.’

Women’s liberation wasn’t concerned for the children, only for freeing mothers from caring for them.

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30 ibid., p. 97.
These direct criticisms of feminists was further evidence of the discursive interaction that occurs in policy debate, interaction which provides social movements and other collective actors in society with the opportunity for discursive influence.

While the socially conservative discourse was not extensively used during Australian unpaid work debates from 1970 to 2000 its existence demonstrated the breadth of debates in about the valuing of household and caring tasks.

**Figure 6.3**

**Socially conservative discourse summary Australian unpaid work debates**

- **Normative and policy assertions**
  - Men and women are psychologically and physically different
  - Women are quite rightly carers and homemakers
  - Housework is socially and personally significant
  - Society ignores the productive and economic contribution of women's work in the home
  - Women must be paid for caring work and household work
  - Valuation means payment
  - The government must encourage families to have a full-time carer in the home

**Work as paid employment**

Alongside the three discourses that sought public recognition of the value of unpaid work, was a narrative that rejected public sector valuation of unpaid work. During the 30 years investigated there was repeated evidence that the ABS saw the statistical measures of paid work as central to its information gathering but that domestic ‘production’ should not be measured (See the discourse summary in Figure 6.4) The paid-work narrative in this regard made a clear distinction between ‘work’ in the paid sector and ‘activities’ in the private realm. These distinctions can be seen in the treatment of different forms of unpaid work in the 1996 Census. In this Census there was a clear distinction drawn between work for payment, unpaid work in a family business, other unpaid work, and not having a job. Those in unpaid work in a family business were directed to the same questions as people in paid employment. Those who carried out other unpaid work were categorised alongside those who had no job. Unpaid work valuation was not considered a high priority by the ABS:

The suggested study of time-use in households is considered by the Australian Statistician to be of lower priority than other topics for household surveys, such as family relationships, income studies, health conditions and household expenditure patterns. In any case, such a study would not determine the value of work done within households.\footnote{J. Howard (1981) “Question on Notice: Work Value of Household Work”, Canberra: Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 25 August 1981, 763.}

The low priority given to unpaid work measurement may have been a reflection of the neo-conservative discourse found in Australia in the 1990s, as well as reflecting the demarcation between paid and unpaid tasks.

Coupled with this assertion that paid work was the only type of productivity requiring evaluation by the state sector was an assumption that the paid workforce was the domain of men. Within the documentation analysed there were many indications that the ‘normal’ expectation for women was that they would remain in the home once married and perform household tasks. For example, within labour force data married women were seen as a special category in need of investigation:

\begin{quote}
The data provide benchmarks for assessing labour force changes and for making labour force projections. Because the census provides small area data, analysis of the economic condition of particular areas is possible. In addition, labour force participation rates can be determined for particular groups—married females, Aboriginals etc.\footnote{R. J. Cameron (1986) Census of Population and Housing, 30 June 1986: Preliminary ABS Views on the Content of the 1986 Census. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, p. 71.}
\end{quote}

In the paid-work narrative, statistics were viewed as ‘facts’ that are reliable and verifiable. This definition of statistics was used to justify the exclusion of unpaid work measures from state-organised surveys and reports. It was asserted that too many variables existed in unpaid work measurement and this was an adequate reason to leave household ‘activities’ aside when reporting on Australia’s productivity. Another factor which was used to justify the exclusion of unpaid work valuation was the cost of unpaid work analysis:
Ideally, this would be done based on studies of the various types of household activity. In the absence of pre-existing studies, it would be expensive to undertake such studies and it is highly unlikely that the expense could be justified.\textsuperscript{34}

Similar justifications are used to exclude unpaid work from mainstream statistics in both the paid-work and technocratic discourses. While the paid-work narrative denies any need to measure unpaid household tasks, the technocratic discourse sees measurement as necessary but wants unpaid work valued separately from other forms of production.

**Figure 6.4**

**Paid-work discourse summary Australian unpaid work debates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normative and policy assertions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statistics are facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is paid employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society must measure productive work/work with a market outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid employment details are needed to help in policy decisions and planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid work in a family business is work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid activities in the private sphere are not real work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are not in a job if you do only unpaid household work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Women’s interest groups or social movement?**

Before looking at which of the discourses on unpaid work dominated the texts of public sector actors it is necessary to establish whether the feminist discourse found in Australian debates on the valuation of household labour signalled activity by a women’s movement on the topic. In order to demonstrate that a women’s movement was involved in public debates it is necessary to identify a grouping that utilises unconventional forms and tactics at least some of the time in order to challenge the status quo.

As was noted earlier in the thesis, the historical balance of political forces in Australia and New Zealand meant that both countries developed their state welfare policies around the central element of wage agreements that attempted to

\textsuperscript{34} Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000a), \textit{op.cit.}, p. 54.
institutionalise the male provider or family wage system. This shaped unpaid work argumentation during the first of the three decades analysed, as only those jobs carried out for financial gain were considered to be ‘work’ and only this paid work was seen as requiring public sector measurement and valuation. The women-centred discourse found in unpaid work debates in Australia contained discursive traits opposed to the paid-work narrative and the definition of ‘work’ as tasks carried out for financial gain. These differences established the feminist discourse as a narrative of opposition in unpaid work debates.

But social movements are more than discourses challenging the status quo, they are collectives of individuals and organisations utilising unconventional tactics and forms at least some of the time. The analysis of the feminist discourse coalition membership revealed only limited involvement by actors from the periphery of the political realm in Australian unpaid work debates. Unpaid work argumentation in Australia predominantly involved formal women’s organisations (See Figure 6.5). As was noted in Chapter One, interest groups if not part of the establishment, are certainly seen as having a fairly formalised link with policymakers while social movements are seen to have limited formal access to existing political elites. Grass-roots organisations may have discussed the gendered division of household labour, but their involvement was not directly evident in public debates on measuring such work.

The ‘winning’ discourse coalitions in Australian unpaid work debates
While there was little evidence of grass-roots organisations or unconventional tactics being used in unpaid work debates in Australia, I will look at the involvement of formal women’s organisations in debates about household labour. The investigation will provide an opportunity to compare the discursive influence of formally organised women’s interest groups with the women’s movement activity found in the previous three case studies. As has been done in previous chapters, influence will be gauged by looking at the changing membership of the discourse coalitions that

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36 J. M. Berry, op.cit., p. 32.
formed around the narratives used in the debates to see which of the constellations achieved discursive saturation and institutionalisation during the 30 years of debates analysed.

*Partial influence of the feminist discourse coalition*

I will look first at the changes that occurred in the feminist discourse coalition where there was a shift from involvement by women’s interest groups to more mainstream political actors during the 30 years scrutinised. As is seen in Figure 6.5 the feminist discourse coalition was occupied mainly by women’s interest groups in the first decades analysed. But in the last of the three decades scrutinised, the feminist constellation was predominantly a discourse of ‘feminist’ writers located in tertiary institutions and women’s interest groups. From the late 1980s the feminist discourse coalition also included a number of female politicians. Despite this inclusion of political elites during the time frame, the feminist constellation was unable to achieve full discursive saturation in unpaid work debates in Australia as core actors were absent from the coalition. Neither was there any evidence of the institutionalisation of feminist demands for the mainstream measurement and valuation of unpaid household work during the three decades of argumentation analysed.
Before moving on to look at the other discourse coalitions active in Australian unpaid work debates, it is necessary to make note of the early membership of the feminist discourse coalition. From 1926 to 1971 the Australian Bureau of Statistics included in Censuses a question that sought to find out if a person was “engaged in home duties” or caring for children.37 This inclusion of unpaid work in censuses resulted in the placement of the ABS within the feminist discourse coalition seeking the mainstream valuation of unpaid work. However, extracts from the Australian censuses put the question into context and show that “work” was seen as being very different to tasks in the home:

(a) Did the person have a full or part-time job, or business or farm of any kind last week? . . .

- Tick ‘no’ if this person did not have a job or did only unpaid housework.38

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38 Ibid., p. 5.
The questions in early censuses on home duties were not a sign of the statisticians treating paid and unpaid work equally but an example of the gender divide that existed in state sector texts between the public and private worlds.

It was not only the feminists that struggled to gain ground in Australian unpaid work debates, the socially conservative narrative constellation was unable to attract public sector support in debates on unpaid work in Australia between 1970 and 2000 (See Figure 6.6). The assignment of actors to coalitions according to their narrative traits highlights that there was minimal support between 1970 and 2000 for the assertion that women should be paid a wage in order to keep them working in the 'home'. The support that was enlisted by the socially conservative discourse coalition came during the latter half of the time frame analysed and signalled the operation of a countermovement in Australian unpaid work debates.

Figure 6.6

Socially conservative discourse coalition
Australian unpaid work debates 1970-2000
The institutional views of unpaid work

While there was no acceptance of calls to pay women for household duties, nor any mainstream inclusion of unpaid work in public sector measures of productivity, there was a change in which of the discourse coalitions dominated the texts of government statisticians (See Figure 6.7). The institutionalisation of the paid-work narrative was evident in the question asked in censuses and other government surveys, which prized jobs done for financial gain over unpaid tasks in society. While statisticians institutionalised the paid-work narrative, they did not convince other actors to accept their discourse. A similar pattern of institutionalisation without saturation was seen in the New Zealand unpaid work debates (See Figure 4.6).

Figure 6.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paid work discourse coalition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian unpaid work debates 1970-2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Politicians
- Public service
- Women's bureaucracy
- Government advisory
- Women's advisory groups
- Academics
- Business
- Unions
- Interest groups
- Women's interest groups
- Women's movement
- Countermovement

During the 1990s state support for the paid-work discourse coalition waned and public sector actors moved into the technocratic discourse coalition. The technocratic discourse (which supported the valuation of unpaid work separately from other productive activity) was utilised by public sector actors such as ABS,
politicians, and the Office of Status of Women (See Figure 6.8). Again it was the involvement of the ABS that signalled the institutional strength of the technocratic discourse, for (as has been noted) the Bureau is a core actor in this policy subsystem as it carries out public sector data gathering and analysis in Australia. The decision to carry out time-use surveys in 1987, 1992 and 1997 was evidence of the institutionalisation of the technocratic discourse coalition. Unlike the paid-work narrative, the technocratic discourse coalition not only achieved institutional strength, its narrative was adopted by a reasonably broad group of adherents in the last ten years analysed.

Figure 6.8

While the women’s organisations were unable to draw public sector actors into the feminist discourse coalition between 1970 and 2000, the launching of time-use surveys does indicate a level of influence by the women’s organisations. Within many of the texts it was evident that it was women’s organisations who were the first to challenge the public sector actors in regards the measurement of unpaid work.
The partial influence of the feminist discourse coalition can be seen when comparing Figures 6.5 and 6.8, as the women-centred constellation is active prior to the technocratic discourse coalition. The movement of state sector actors illustrate that interest groups can bring influence to bear on policy debates even if that influence is only deemed a ‘partial success’. In Chapter Two it was noted that investigations of social movement influence needed to be able to show partial influence by these groupings, as policy debates are not an all or nothing affair.

**Lower order changes in unpaid work in Australia**

Before moving on to look at the reasons behind the different levels of discursive influence in unpaid work debates in Australia, it is important to examine any lower order changes that have occurred in unpaid work debates.

*From payment to measurement*

A change in policy assertions on unpaid work valuation was found within the women-centred narrative. A small number of feminist texts found in Australian unpaid work debates in the 1970s had asserted that only the payment of a wage to those performing household work would provide adequate recognition of the work done by women in society. As had occurred in the New Zealand case, these calls were not found beyond the end of the 1970s. Instead those demanding recognition of women’s unpaid contributions to society and the economy concentrated on public sector measurement and valuation of household tasks. The shift occurred in part as feminists recognised the difficulties in the payment of a homemaker’s wages.

In view of the practical difficulties in giving full monetary recognition to the contribution which women in the home make to society in the current economic climate, we recommend that the Government give urgent and serious consideration to increasing and indexing family allowances and increasing the dependent spouse rebate (in its present form) as well as increasing support services for women through Government programs and assistance to self-help community activity.\(^{39}\)

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The lack of support for the payment of a homemakers' wage may also have been the result of a strategic action by actors within the feminist discourse coalition. Feminist organisations may have abandoned calls for payment because this was also sought by groups wanting to ensure women remained in their 'rightful' and 'proper' place—the private realm. The women's movement's abandonment of the payment of a wage for 'housewives' was also based on equity grounds. The payment of a homemakers' wage only to women who were full-time in the home would also have discriminated against women in part-time paid work, who have been found to do similar levels of unpaid work as the former. Such a payment would also discriminate against those women in full-time paid work who also do a disproportionate share of household work when compared with men in full-time employment.

The move by feminists to support the measurement of unpaid work rather than payment of these tasks may also have been due to a shift in the focus of women's organisations from the home to the public sphere. This change was noted by Marilyn Lake:

From the 1960s, however, feminists increasingly favoured government subsidised child care over an income from the state as paving the way for mothers' independence. By that time, it had become abundantly clear that the labour market was the main game, which sooner or later women would need to join, and the longer time spent out of it, the more handicapped they would be.40

Without interviewing women's interest group members about their motivations during the 30 years of debates analysed there is no way to gauge the exact reasons for the changes in language and policy assertions.

From 'tasks' to 'work'

Another lower order change that was evident in the discourse analysis was the changes in the labels used to describe household work. In the public sector texts of the 1970s and 1980s there was frequent reference to household 'activities' and 'duties'. For example, in the 1971 Census the ABS did make inquiries about the 'activities' performed by those in the labour force. Even in 1989, the ABS was

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40 M. Lake, op.cit., p. 8.
discussing household ‘duties’, not ‘work’ performed in the home. In rejecting the inclusion of a question on usual major activity for the upcoming census the ABS noted:

The main use of data on usual major activity is to ascertain the extent of involvement in unpaid ‘home duties’.41

It is in 1990s that the Australian public sector moved to utilise the term unpaid household work in state sector texts in Australia. The adoption of the term ‘unpaid household work’ within public sector texts can be linked to international debates on the inclusion of unpaid tasks in National Accounts,42 though public sector actors are not the only ones to shift to use the term ‘unpaid work’.

Feminists had adopted the terms ‘unpaid work’ or ‘unpaid domestic work’ much earlier than public sector actors, with the first evidence of the use of the terms coming in the 1980s.43 As was the case for public sector actors, much of the use of the term unpaid household work by women’s organisations was linked to international debates on unpaid work that were utilised by members of the feminist discourse coalition to push for the public valuation of productive tasks performed in the home. The influence of international rhetoric and labels was also seen in the New Zealand case study and indicates the influence of both global social movements and international academic communities on domestic policy debates.

**Partial influence and discursive legacies**

While the discourse coalition analysis did not provide direct evidence of the feminist discourse coalition influencing unpaid work debates, the analysis of texts on household labour gave a sense of indirect influence by women’s organisations in Australia on this topic. As was noted earlier in the chapter, public sector actors moved from ignoring the measurement of unpaid work to carrying out major time-use surveys from 1992 (See Figures 6.8 and 6.9). In a number of debates around unpaid work there was evidence of the increased profile of unpaid work and its value

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to society which came during the three decades scrutinised. In 1975 WEL noted changes to the Whitlam government's National Compensation Bill that it claimed were evidence of a change in attitudes to those performing valuable work in the home:

A non-earner (this includes housewives) and those earning less than $50 a week will be allocated a notional income of $50. To us this recognition of the contribution to the national economy of women working in the home is a major breakthrough; unfortunately this principle is not adhered to right throughout the Bill. 44

The gendered nature of debates about unpaid work in Australia may also signal the strength of women's organisations in this area of argumentation. The household labour debate in Australia most commonly focused on discussions of the division of labour between men and women throughout the 30 years analysed. In contrast, within New Zealand unpaid debates there was a move in the 1990s away from the gendered discussions of household tasks to debates about how to measure and value voluntary work performed outside the home.

As was done in earlier chapters, tentative conclusions on discursive influence are drawn by comparing the varied levels of impact achieved by the four discourse coalitions involved in Australian unpaid work debates between 1970 and 2000. Several interconnected factors appear to have contributed to the discursive influence in unpaid work debates, including the type of discourse being advanced by actors and the impact of international debates on domestic argumentation.

Comparability and international discourses

While feminists were able to bring some influence to bear on Australian unpaid debates between 1970 and 2000 with state actors agreeing to measure unpaid work contributions in society there was never any acceptance of the mainstream measurement of unpaid work. The stability in definitions of 'work' within the public sector texts appeared to have been one factor that hindered the discursive influence sought by Australian women's organisations during the three decades analysed. As

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noted in earlier case studies, feminist actors had more success in advancing
discourses that did not challenge existing institutions such as the family. Women’s
interest groups calling for the inclusion of unpaid work in mainstream statistics and
reports challenged entrenched concepts of work and the formal economy. The
women-centred narrative challenged definitions of work and non-work that were
seen to exist because of the dominance of the ideology of patriarchy in Australia:

... ideology legitimates and maintains distinctions, not only between
women’s and men’s work, but also between “work” and “non-work”.
Unpaid labour performed in the home is defined as “non-work”; labour
performed in the paid workforce is considered “real” work.45

Statisticians were reluctant to redraw the boundaries of the concept of work due to
what they claimed were difficulties in distinguishing between household ‘work’ and
leisure:

A prerequisite for the measurement of total unpaid work is a
satisfactory definition of what constitutes such work. The boundary
between productive and non-productive activity is not clearly
distinguishable in many cases. For example, the distinction between
unpaid work and leisure is often very difficult to draw.46

At no time do we see the full acceptance of unpaid household tasks as ‘work’ in the
Australian argumentation scrutinised. While unpaid work was accepted as
productive activity in debates from the 1990s, it was never presented as being equal
to work done for profit.

The demand for comparability of statistics appears to have prevented the acceptance
of household tasks as ‘work’. The ABS often discussed the legacy of past censuses
and surveys on its current work. As was seen earlier the ABS refused to modify the
labour force questions in the Census stating that there was insufficient justification to
depart from labour force definitions. “The ABS is unwilling to modify the labour
force questions used in the 1996 Census in case there is some impact on the
comparability of the data with that from previous censuses or with that from the

Queensland Press, p. 126.
46 D. Trewin, op.cit., p. 19.
monthly Labour Force Survey". This desire for comparability in statistics was also found in New Zealand debates on household work.

Not only did statisticians claim the need for comparability over time, they also asserted state sector measurements of productivity must fit with internationally accepted measures (as was seen in the New Zealand case). For example, the Australia Bureau of Statistics used the 1990 review of the UN System of National Accounts as an authority for its decision to keep household work out of GDP calculations. "In this review it was decided household services should be excluded from GDP because they are not capable of being marketed once produced." The exclusion of unpaid work from mainstream calculations is repeatedly linked to international standards:

Although most unpaid work relates to activities that constitute 'production' in a broad sense, international statistical standards have defined the types of unpaid work covered by this paper as falling outside the conventional definition of production, mainly because of conceptual and measurement difficulties associated with including the unpaid work with the conventional measures.

Thirty years of research has shown that the highest validity and reliability in measurement of time spent in all activities is achieved by using time-use diaries, which are now used around the world.

Even when the state sector agreed to measure unpaid work it was argued that many of the concepts around unpaid work were still being internationally contested. "Despite these reservations this paper includes caring in the scope of unpaid household work. However, the ABS recognises that the distinctions between paid work, unpaid work and leisure are still subject to world-wide debate and refinement." Similar to their New Zealand counterparts, women's organisations in Australia also referred to international debates in order to forward their case for the mainstream

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47 W. McLennan (2000) op.cit., p. 76.
48 Australian Bureau of Statistics (1990a), op.cit. p. 64.
51 D. Trewin, op.cit., p. 20.
measurement and valuation of unpaid work. However, the fact that the paid-work narrative was able to achieve a greater level of institutionalisation than the feminist narrative from 1970 to 2000 signalled that discursive influence requires more than the ability to draw on international debates and precedents. The influence of discourse coalitions in Australian unpaid work discourses was also helped or hindered by their ability to align with past narratives. The feminist and socially conservative discourse coalitions both challenged the paid-work assertions found to dominate debates in the 1970s and neither constellation was fully influential in Australian unpaid work argumentation. In contrast, the technocratic discourse coalition’s assertions often aligned with the paid-work narrative. In both the narratives statistics were seen as facts and in both ‘work’ is defined primarily as ‘paid employment’. So the movement of public sector actors from the paid-work narrative to the technocratic assertions did not require a radical restructuring of normative and policy assertions.

The final factor behind the limitations placed on the influence of feminists in unpaid work debates in Australia was likely to have been the power of actors themselves. Statisticians were the experts who acted as gatekeeper in unpaid work debates. While they acknowledged the need to consult with the public about categories for censuses and other survey mechanism, ABS staff were the final arbiters of any claims. Though as this case study illustrates, ABS texts changed over time as the organisation moved from discounting any need to measure unpaid work to the acceptance of the need to carry out time-use surveys. This movement of public sector actors shows the susceptibility of the ‘state’ to pressure from women’s interest groups.

Conclusion
The influence of women’s organisations over unpaid work debates has been limited and as Elizabeth Van Acker noted in 1999, policy makers continue to disregard the gendered nature of organisations and work practices and the model of the ‘male breadwinner’ still dominates policy thinking. Emotional, caring and sexual labour has been discounted or not recognised in the Government’s emphasis on increasing
productivity and working harder.\textsuperscript{52} It was the strength of ABS as the gatekeeper of statistical measurement in Australia and the value placed on comparability of statistics internationally and over time that resulted in the continued separation of unpaid work from paid employment in state-run surveys.

The existence of time-use surveys in Australia signalled that organised women’s groups were able to achieve partial influence in unpaid work debates. However, if we look beyond the time frame of this case study, the discursive influence of organised feminists in Australia and its impact upon public sector actors may have been short lived. In 2000, the ABS made it clear it planned to extend its programme on measuring and valuing unpaid work but no time line was offered:

It is the ABS's intention to publish more comprehensive measures of household production than those contained in this publication should it prove feasible to do so. However, given the degree of uncertainty that currently surrounds this work it is not possible at this stage to indicate the time frame in which these measures might become available.\textsuperscript{53}

Despite commitments for these measurements to be taken every five years no time-use survey was carried out in 2002. Perhaps the lack of time-use surveys indicates that public sector actors are turning back to the belief that it is only necessary to measure paid productive activity. Any such speculation however will only be confirmed as more time passes.

For those doing unpaid work on a daily basis, the measurement of domestic tasks highlights that progress has not really been forthcoming. As Michael Bittman noted in 1998, the results of more than two decades of attempts to renegotiate privately the domestic division of labour have been disappointing.\textsuperscript{54} Not only was there little change on the domestic front, from the late 1990s in Australian unpaid work debates there were traces of conservative rhetoric on gender roles re-entering public argumentation. Public sector acknowledgement of the importance of unpaid work in Australia has not reached the level of respect shown to paid employment, neither is


\textsuperscript{54} M. Bittman (1998) \textit{op.cit.}, p. 37.
there evidence that women have been freed from the cult of domesticity. The attack on women-centred assertions in public argumentation will be discussed in the next chapter that compares the four in-depth case studies to look for patterns of discursive influence by women's movements and women's interest groups.
Chapter Seven

Comparing change: Narrative content and political context

This chapter revisits the tentative conclusions drawn in the four case studies with regard to the discursive influence achieved by New Zealand and Australian women’s movements in debates on childcare and unpaid work. The aim is to examine patterns of discursive change and further understanding of the effects of social movement activity on the political realm and public policy. From the case studies it appears that the content of the message proffered was a necessary, but not a sufficient condition, for social movements seeking to bring discursive influence. Along with the narrative content, pre-existing discourses and political alliances are shown in all four case studies to be factors that affected the discursive influence achieved by unconventional collectives. As was noted in the Introduction to this thesis, the factors found to affect the discursive influence of social movements in the case studies will be examined in light of existing literature on social movements and policy learning. Can models used to explain social movement emergence elucidate the influence achieved by these phenomenon? Does literature on policy learning provide an explanation for the ability of mass mobilisations to bring discursive change? Or are both public policy and social movement literature needed to explain the discursive influence achieved by women’s movements and other collective actors in New Zealand and Australia?

The discursive influence found in the four case studies from both conventional and unconventional political actors was never even or complete.\(^1\) Despite the uneven and imperfect impact, the interaction between multiple actors in policy argumentation

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\(^1\) The uneven results may be no surprise to those studying policy learning who often assert that policy learning is found to be of different ‘orders’ and imperfect across different actors in a policy network. For more see D. Stone. (2000) “Learning Lessons, Transferring Policy and International Carriers of
provided some opportunities for social movements to convert more conventional political actors to their discourses. Fischer is right to assert that “New discourses can—and at times do—have the power to alter existing commitments. They supply people with new ideas about their potential role and possibilities for change can create new capacities to act." But the processes of debate also led to public sector actors influencing the discourses used by women’s movement activists. The changes to the narratives of women’s movements and feminist organisations in New Zealand and Australia provide evidence of the iterative process that is policy debate.

Before drawing together the four case studies I want to acknowledge that comparative work is complicated when looking at diffuse unconventional actors like social movements. Despite the difficulties involved, comparative research into the women’s movements (and other mass mobilisations) is necessary. I agree with Beckwith that the potential benefits, in terms of building a body of knowledge, of developing new indicators and perspectives and of honing existing ones, and of increasing our confidence about strategic and policy recommendations for women’s movements are substantial.

This chapter begins by focussing on the varied levels of discursive influence brought to bear by women’s movement activity in the two New Zealand cases and in the Australian debates on childcare, as well as the impact of women’s organisations seeking the public measurement and valuation of unpaid work in Australia. While the case studies provided illustration of discursive influence by a range of political actors, focussing on women’s movement and women’s interest group activity in isolation will assist in locating whether there was anything unique in the way outcomes were achieved by actors on the periphery of the political realm.

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Ibid.” Unpublished Paper Delivered to the Political Science Program Research School of Social Sciences, ANU.


ibid., p 456-457.
Women’s movement influence

In all four cases women’s movement activity brought about some policy and rhetorical changes. There was erosion of the idea that ‘housewives’ belong in the home caring for husbands and children. There was a rise in discussions about the ‘double burden’ of paid work and unpaid work carried out by women. There was a change in the way household chores were discussed and adoption of the term ‘unpaid work’. Within the four case studies there were also changes in the way ‘women’ as actors were constructed, with a shift from women being regarded primarily as ‘mothers’ to an acceptance of women as ‘workers’. There were also changes in constructions of gender roles in Australasia in line with feminist narratives advanced through women’s movement activity. These changes were similar to those found in a 1994 New Zealand survey of individual attitudes to household work:

Once we turn to the language people use in talking about work, however, the women’s movement emerges as having been a major background factor. To start with, it has altered the acceptability of saying ‘That’s the way the world is—there’s men’s work and there’s women’s work’. Even among the traditional couples we have interviewed for other studies, open references to men’s work and women’s work were rare.⁵

Many of the changes found in the four case studies were part of the broad shift brought about by feminism. As Melissa Lane notes “the most important lasting legacy of feminism is the idea (and slogan) that the personal is political.”⁶ The four case studies show a shift in the public-private divide within policy debates, but the shifts are not entirely in the direction sought through women’s movement activity. Why were the women’s movements only partially successful in policy debates in New Zealand and Australia?

Message content

Of the women-centred narratives found within the four case studies, those advocating ‘pragmatic’ policy responses to a changing world received the greatest levels of public sector support and institutional influence. Within New Zealand childcare

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debates women’s movement activity lead to partial acceptance of the need for state-funded childcare for working-mothers. While in Australia the working women’s discourse coalition achieved both discursive saturation and institutionalisation in the 1980s and 1990s, evidence of women’s movement influence in this policy subsystem. The New Zealand and Australian working women’s discourses presented childcare as a pragmatic response to changing social conditions (See Figures 3.2 and 5.2). This pragmatism can be seen in a section of a report into the lives of migrant women in Australia:

The social and economic implications of the need for child care in a society in which it is less and less possible for a family to survive on one income must be realised by governments, employers and unions. There is an urgent need to investigate ways to provide child-care facilities that meet the needs and preferences of migrant women workers.7

In contrast, the women’s movement demands for state-funded non-parental care provision for all women remained on the periphery of the political realm in both childcare case studies throughout the 30 years scrutinised. The women’s rights discourse coalitions found in both New Zealand and Australia had sought ‘radical’ restructuring in society, particularly in relation to constructions of the institution of the family (See Figures 3.1 and 5.1). The ‘radical’ nature of the women’s rights narratives was evident in a paper at the National Women’s Conference on Feminism and Socialism:

They (women) are demanding that society take responsibility for providing adequate childcare, for relieving the individual family of the burden of caring for the young, the old, and the sick.8

New Zealand and Australian political elites (such as politicians and public sector employees) rarely picked up the ‘radical’ messages of challenge of the women’s rights discourses, instead looking more favourably on the ‘pragmatic’ and ‘reformist’ messages of the working women’s discourses during debates on non-parental care.

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7 D. Storer (1975) op.cit., p. 116.
Further evidence that politicians and public sector employees leave ‘radical’ messages on the periphery of the political realm was found in the two unpaid work case studies. In the debates about the valuation of unpaid household tasks, women-centred discourse coalitions on both sides of the Tasman called for changes to definitions of ‘work’ and constructions of gender roles (See Figures 4.2 and 6.1). Feminist discourse coalitions in Australia and New Zealand achieved partial influence over the policy subsystems analysed, with governments on both sides of the Tasman launching time-use surveys in the 1990s and adopting the term ‘unpaid work’. However, these constellations were unable to completely break down existing public sector definitions of ‘work’ as paid employment. Neither was there state sector acceptance of the feminist calls to incorporate the measurement and valuation of unpaid work in censuses and national accounts.

Looking across the case studies it appears that the content of the message was a factor that aided (or hindered) attempts by women’s movement actors to bring discursive change. Similar results concerning the acceptance of reformist rather than revolutionary change were found by Freeman in her 1975 study of women’s liberation movements. While radical messages were not accepted by political elites, they may have eased the way for the more ‘reformist’ narratives. However, as has been noted in previous chapters, it is difficult to establish actors’ motives for accepting or rejecting a particular story line when carrying out a textual analysis.

While there was evidence from the four case studies that the content of a discourse utilised by women’s movements and organisations contributed to the achievement of discursive saturation and institutionalisation, there was no clear evidence that policy type made a difference to a mobilisation’s ability to gain discursive change. I had suspected that women’s movements might have had more difficulty bringing about policy change in relation to childcare due because it required the redistribution of government funds. However, activity by Australasian women’s movements and women’s interest groups was more influential on the redistributive issue of childcare than on the more rhetorical argumentation on unpaid household work. It appears that women’s movement activity in unpaid work debates may have been hindered by the

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very technical nature of the debates. Later in the chapter I will discuss the ability of experts in the public sector to use technical ‘evidence’ to bolster their position within unpaid work argumentation. For now, I will continue to look at the factors that contributed to the discursive influence attained through women’s movement activity.

Beyond the message content
Given that the methodology of this thesis was designed to identify discursive influence of social movements, the centrality of narrative content to any impact achieved may seem unsurprising. However, variations in the discursive influence achieved through women’s movement activity in New Zealand and Australian childcare debates indicates the need to look beyond the message itself in explaining how and when social movements affect public policy narratives.

As was seen in Chapter Five, the working women’s discourse coalition in Australia (with its pragmatic calls for childcare as a right of working mothers) gained sustained support from public sector actors during two of the decades analysed. This included support from women’s bureaucratic organisations and advisory bodies, the Department of Immigration, Department of Employment Education and Training, government advisory bodies and several political parties (See Figure 5.10). This pattern of support achieved by the Australian working women’s discourse coalition was not repeated in New Zealand childcare argumentation (See Figure 3.7), despite women’s movement activity in both nations being based on almost identical ‘pragmatic’ discourses. While women’s movement activity in New Zealand debates on non-parental care resulted in limited public sector backing of the working women’s narrative, there was never the full institutional acceptance of state-funded childcare as a right of working mothers found in Australia. Can variations in the internal resources of women’s movements or political context of New Zealand and Australia help to explain these differences in discursive saturation and institutionalisation?

Internal resources
Comparing the influence achieved in childcare debates in New Zealand and Australia provides little evidence that a protest organisation’s internal resources can explain their ability to influence other political actors. Both the New Zealand and Australian
women's movements during the 1970s included groups such as the Women's Electoral Lobby, women's research organisations, grass-roots collectives, and feminist publications. Despite the similar movement composition, activity by the New Zealand women's movement did not result in the institutional acceptance of either of the two feminist discourses advanced in childcare debates, while their Australian counterparts were able to influence that nation's policies on non-parental care.

The lack of significance of internal structures and resources in achieving discursive influence can also be inferred by comparing the unpaid work debates in the two nations. The feminist discourse coalition that achieved partial influence in Australian unpaid work debates was comprised of 'formal' women's interest groups. The influence achieved by these 'formal' interest groups was matched by the impact of the diffuse women-centred discourse coalition initiated by grass-roots activists in New Zealand.

*The political context*

Internal organisation and resources may not be a factor that affected the ability of women's movements to bring discursive change, but the political context in which the mobilisations were active in New Zealand and Australia appeared to have affected the discursive influence in the four case studies.

Similarities in the political heritages provide a basis for comparing the influence of women's movement activity in Australia and New Zealand. The two nations share a common political inheritance as former British colonies or settler societies within the Westminster tradition of responsible parliamentary government and both countries had an early history of social liberalism. Social legislation introduced by Australian and New Zealand governments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including industrial arbitration and old-age pensions, earned them a reputation as social laboratories of the world. This early flowering of social liberalism was squeezed out by the consolidation of class-based politics in the early twentieth
century and the rise of political labour. Fairly stable two-party systems\(^{10}\) established themselves on the basis of the class divide between labour and non-labour and the associated divide between more collectivist and more individualist ideology.

It is necessary to look briefly at the political events that provide a backdrop for the 30 years of policy debates analysed. There are many similarities in the development of public policies in Australia and New Zealand, dating from the late 19\(^{th}\) century and early in the 20\(^{th}\) century. Both Australasian nations relied extensively on the state to take care of all manner of problems encountered by settler societies.\(^{11}\) Historically, Australia and New Zealand were seen as social laboratories because of their innovative use of the state to achieve social and economic objectives and a hundred years ago were among the most economically prosperous countries in the world. Both countries were heavily reliant on the primary sector for economic wealth and on protectionist policies and state regulation.\(^{12}\) Following the international economic crisis of the 1970s such policies came under increasing criticism.

In recent decades there have also been similar patterns of partisan government in the two nations. In both New Zealand and Australia, left-leaning Labour parties held power briefly in the 1970s and returned to office in the 1980s. However, as Castles et al note, in the 1980s the Labour parties became committed to neo-liberal projects of deregulation and privatisation, policies then taken further by subsequent ‘conservative’ governments on both sides of the Tasman.\(^{13}\)

What the four case studies in this thesis show is a pattern of similarity in the discourses used to argue for and against childcare in both Australasia nations for many of the 30 years analysed. Then in the late 1990s there is a divergence between

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\(^{10}\) Often termed a ‘two-and-a-half party system in Australia, where a rural-based conservative party, now called the National Party, has generally worked in Coalition with the major non-Labor party, now called the Liberal Party.


the main thrust of ruling political parties in New Zealand and Australia. As was seen in Chapter Five, a neo-conservative rhetoric was beginning to establish itself in Australia. In the New Zealand case studies there was no such neo-conservatism evident in the texts analysed. The divergence is likely to be caused by the very different government currently in power. Australia is headed by PM John Howard and a conservative Liberal/National coalition. In New Zealand, PM Helen Clark leads a ‘left-wing’ Labour coalition government. These divergences in the political rhetoric and discourses dominating the policy debates of New Zealand and Australia are worthy of further examination, particularly given the similar histories of the two nations, but are outside this thesis.

Despite these common heritages, and patterns of governance, a number of differences in political institutions may help explain the varied levels of women’s movement influence in New Zealand and Australia.

_Proximity to the ‘centre’_

One difference between the political contexts of New Zealand and Australia that may explain variations in the levels of discursive influence brought to bear by feminist activity is the placement of the women’s bureaucracies in the two nations. As was noted in Chapter Two, there is substantial research into the ‘femocrat’ phenomenon, with women’s bureaucratic machinery often seen as being the institutionalisation of the women’s movement.14 The aim of the thesis was not to examine the role of women’s bureaucracies, but the role of femocrats in the processes of argumentation appears to have been significant for women-centred discourse coalitions.

Australia’s central women’s bureaucracy, the Office of Status of Women, is located in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, placing ‘femocrats’ close to the heart of decision-making in Australian federal politics. The textual analysis of childcare debates in Australia indicated that women’s movement activists were able to utilise alliances with these femocrats in their push for discursive change. Feminists in New Zealand lacked the close link to the powerhouse of government decision-making enjoyed by the Australian women’s groups. While New Zealand’s

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women’s bureaucracy, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, used feminist narratives in debates on childcare it is a stand-alone department and is not attached to the Prime Minister’s department in New Zealand in the way Office of the Status of Women is in Australia. Comparing the different levels of influence by women’s movement activity in the two childcare cases indicates that the formation of alliances with actors who are in close proximity to the seat of power is an important tool for unconventional actors seeking to bring discursive change. It is important to note that in attaining discursive influence over policy debates it is not just the mere existence of femocrats that is important but their placement within the public sector.

Added to the influence of the Office of Status of Women, and its location in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in Australia, was the involvement of women’s sections located in a number of state agencies and public sector bodies, such as the long-standing Women’s Bureau of the Department of Employment, Education and Training. The existence of women’s sections within the Australian public service is likely to have aided women’s movement activity as it provided multiple avenues of attack on the issues of childcare and unpaid work. In contrast to Australia, work on gender impact in New Zealand was left predominantly to the stand-alone Ministry of Women’s Affairs.

The placement of the women’s bureaucratic machinery was not the only factor that seemed to have affected women’s movement influence, the movement of individuals between the women’s movements and the public sector also appears to have been a factor contributing towards discursive influence by non-state actors. As was noted in Chapter One, individual actors may occupy a place within social movements and in mainstream political bodies at the same time, blurring the boundaries between organisations. This appears to have been an advantage for women’s movement activity in Australian childcare debates where individual women’s movement activists were able to use positions in the political realm to push for discursive change. For example, the importance of having a feminist inside the Prime Minister’s office during the 1970s was noted by Marian Sawyer who saw childcare gains at this time as being the result of efforts by feminist Elizabeth Reid in her time
as advisor to the PM from 1973.\textsuperscript{15} There was also evidence of feminist influence within the speeches made by Paul Keating at the time when well-known Australian feminist Anne Summers was an advisor to this Prime Minister. During the early 1990s Keating utilised the language of the women's movement in a number of speeches in support of the rights of working women. These findings suggest that further research is needed into tracing the careers of individual actors from grassroots women's organisations. Such network analysis into the careers of individual political actors was outside the scope of this thesis.

What is difficult to gauge from the discursive analysis utilised in this thesis is the exact relationship between active women's movements and 'femocrat' power. Hobson suggests that "Whether feminists are able to promote feminist goals within a policy constellation is dependent upon the power resources accumulated in women's movements-more concretely the political capital that has accrued from composing a constituency that represents women's interests across a wide spectrum of class and party alliances."\textsuperscript{16} Elizabeth Shannon also found this result in her thesis on the influence of Australian and Irish feminist organisations on policy. Shannon notes that regardless of intergroup dynamics, in both countries found successful intervention required a coalition of grass-roots feminists, national women's organisations, and 'feminist-friendly' coalitions.\textsuperscript{17} The influence achieved by femocrats active in Australia may have been aided by the longevity and perceived strength of activism on the periphery of the political realm, not just the bureaucrats' proximity to power.

\textit{The discursive terrain}

In the four case studies the timing of the entry into debates and subsequent discursive terrain in which social movements were active was another factor that appeared to affect the influence achieved through grass-roots activism. By the time New Zealand's 'second wave' feminist movement actively and publicly debated non-parental care, the state sector had already instituted nation-wide childcare regulations. The 1960 childcare regulations in New Zealand constructed non-

\textsuperscript{16} B. Hobson. (1999) \textit{op.cit.}, p. 165.
parental care as a welfare issue and focused on the needs of children. As a result feminists who argued for government-funded childcare from the 1970s were faced with pitting the rights of women against children’s rights. As Helen Cook noted in childcare debates in the 1980s:

The interests of the child have been and will continue to be paramount, but it is my contention that, in contrast with what one could term the everyday practice of childcare, any theoretical and political analysis of childcare involves a shift of emphasis from a focus on the child to that of women: To women as childbearers and childcarers, to women as the principal users of childcare, the main providers of childcare, and women as childcare workers.\(^\text{18}\)

In contrast, federal level childcare regulations in Australia were not introduced until 1972\(^\text{19}\) leading to the development of a different discursive terrain for feminists seeking childcare for working women. From the early 1970s in Australia, childcare provisions were linked to paid employment. When the 1972 legislation was passed in the dying days of the conservative coalition government, it was noted that the law reflected “the Government’s recognition of the rapidly increasing proportion of married women in the labour force and the consequences of these phenomenon for the care of their children.”\(^\text{20}\) It is clear from the four case studies in this thesis that “actors are by no means completely autonomous: they are constrained not only by conventional understandings and agreed-upon rules of the game but also by mutual positioning, existing institutional routines, and changing contexts.”\(^\text{21}\)

Differences in the political contexts may also have affected the longevity of public activity by women’s movement in New Zealand and Australia. There was a waning of feminist activity in New Zealand from the 1990s (See Figure 3.6, 3.7, and 4.4). In contrast, activity from feminists on the periphery of the political realm in Australia was strong throughout the 30 years analysed (See Figures 5.9 and 5.10). The lack of activity by the New Zealand women’s movement in the last decade scrutinised, when compared to Australia, may have been tied to the composition of the two country’s

\(^{17}\) E. Shannon op.cit., p. 28.


\(^{19}\) As noted in Chapter Five, prior to 1972 in Australia childcare legislation was instituted at the State government level and therefore is outside the purvey of this thesis.

Houses of Representatives. By the 1990s when visible feminist activity was waning in New Zealand, women had reached significant levels of representation in the House of Representatives in New Zealand, particularly when compared with Australia. In 1990, women occupied 16.5% of parliamentary seats in New Zealand, while only 6.8% of politicians in Australia’s House of Representatives were female. Without interviewing actors on their motivations for joining (or not joining) the women’s movement, it is not possible to be definitive about the cause of social movement activity decline in New Zealand. However, it is important to note the correlation between the disappearance of grass-roots feminist activity on childcare and unpaid work and the rise in the number of women politicians in New Zealand. The New Zealand women’s movement may have also dispersed into isolated groups working on specific issues, as is suggested by feminist activist Sandra Coney.²²

Comparison of the four case studies and the activity of women’s movements and organisations in New Zealand and Australian childcare and unpaid work argumentation indicates that a number of intersecting factors affect the discursive influence achieved by social movements: the content of their messages; the political alliances formed by social movements and proximity of allies to political power brokers; and the discursive terrain into which these narrative enter (See Figure 7.1 and 7.2). Did the content of messages, political alliances, and discursive terrain affect the ability of mainstream actors to shape policy narratives in the same way that they impacted upon social movement attempts to bring discursive change?

Moving beyond women’s movement influence
An examination of the saturation and institutionalisation of nine other discourse coalitions from the New Zealand and Australian debates on childcare and unpaid work debates may help to further explain the conditions under which political collectives can bring discursive influence to bear on policy argumentation. The analysis focuses on the influence of those narrative constellations that entered childcare and unpaid work argumentation between 1970 and 2000, and extended or challenged existing narrative assumptions. Excluded from the comparison of discursive influence are the discourse coalitions that were seen to dominate debates

²² S. Coney (1993) op.cit., p. 54.
in the early 1970s, as these constellations had achieved their institutionalisation prior to the time frame investigated.

If the generalisations drawn from comparing the influence achieved by feminist discourse coalitions are accurate, a number of conditions are needed for a discourse coalition to 'win' in policy debates. First, proffering a narrative of 'reform' will aid a discourse coalition's chances of saturation and institutionalisation. While those with 'radical' narratives will remain on the periphery of the political realm. Second, the discourse coalitions with the closest links to political elites will exert the most discursive influence in policy processes (Comparisons are mapped in Figures 7.1 and 7.2).

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23 As was noted in Chapter Three, discourses were treated as 'radical' in this thesis if they sought to completely change existing societal rules and norms.
### Figure 7.1

**Comparing discursive influence - Discourse coalitions in childcare debates New Zealand and Australia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Coalition</th>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Reformist</th>
<th>Status quo</th>
<th>Message origins</th>
<th>Level of influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women's rights discourse coalition New Zealand</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working women's discourse coalition New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education discourse coalition New Zealand</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Targeted assistance discourse coalition New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Women's rights discourse coalition Australia</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working women's discourse coalition Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Worker's rights discourse coalition Australia</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children's rights discourse coalition Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Targeted assistance discourse coalition Australia</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Figure 7.2

Comparing discursive influence - Discourse coalitions in unpaid work debates New Zealand and Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Message content</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Level of influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radical</td>
<td>Reformist</td>
<td>Status quo</td>
<td>Grassroots</td>
<td>Elites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women-centred discourse coalition New Zealand</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid work discourse coalition New Zealand</td>
<td>✔️</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist discourse coalition Australia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technocratic discourse coalition Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socially conservative discourse coalition Australia</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Narrative content and institutional influence

In the analysis of women’s movement influence it was noted that public sector actors in Australia and New Zealand had accepted discourses that left unchallenged the basic institutions of society, rather than those that sought ‘radical’ change. For non-movement actors the content of their message was also important in achieving public sector support. A large number of pragmatic narratives were put forward in childcare and unpaid work debates in New Zealand and Australia, but not all of these story lines were at the heart of winning discourse coalitions.\(^{24}\) The variations in influence make it necessary to look beyond the simple dichotomy of ‘radical’ and ‘reformist’ narratives when seeking to understand when and how collective actors bring discursive change.

Such a variation was seen in the New Zealand childcare case where two narratives of reform received very different receptions from political elites. As was noted in Chapter Three, the education discourse coalition achieved both saturation and institutionalisation in the mid-1980s, while the working women’s discourse coalition was unable to achieve this level of public sector support. As well as being a narrative that sought pragmatic reform, another factor aiding the education discourse coalition in its achievement of discursive saturation and institutionalisation was an alliance found within the constellation between childcare activists and the government of the day. Activists who advanced the education narrative were able to utilise an alliance with the Labour Party to bring this discourse to the fore.\(^{25}\) The alliance was important for the education activists in the mid-1980s as Labour was the party in government at that time. The benefit of alliances with political elites in the New Zealand Labour Party was similar to the way connections to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet benefited women’s movement activists in Australian childcare debates.

Further evidence that narrative content on its own does not guarantee discursive influence is found in comparing the childcare debates on both sides of the Tasman.

\(^{24}\) Though as is seen in Figures 7.1 and 7.2 it is only grass-roots organisations that raise ‘radical’ challenges during the 30 years analysed, with most discourse coalitions based on narratives of ‘reform’.

\(^{25}\) For a discussion of the education sector connections with the Labour Party in New Zealand see B. Gustafson op.cit., pp. 274-275.
Australian childcare debates, like the New Zealand argumentation, included a discourse that presented non-parental care as an education and children’s rights issue (See Figures 3.4 and 5.5). However, influence by the children’s rights narrative was absent in the Australian texts analysed. The children’s rights discourse coalition did not radically challenge existing norms in childcare debates in Australia, so its content on this level should not have hindered its acceptance by the public sector. Two contextual factors may explain the variations in results for actors seeking to have childcare accepted as an education issue. First, differences in the political systems of New Zealand and Australia may have been one reason for the varied results. Second, the discursive terrain faced by the collectives involved in childcare argumentation on either side of the Tasman may explain differences in the type of influence the education discourse and children’s rights discourse coalitions brought to bear.

As was noted in Chapter One, the Australian political system is based on federalism, while New Zealand is a unitary system of rule. In setting up the analysis I decided to concentrate on debates about childcare and unpaid work at the commonwealth level of government in Australia. However, the federal division of power may have affected the very content of Australian childcare debates analysed, as it is the States and Territories that provide the bulk of government services including education.

The timing of a constellation’s entry into policy argumentation may be another factor shaping the influence of more mainstream political actors, just as it was for the women’s movement activists. As was noted earlier, New Zealand childcare was shaped from the 1960s as a children’s rights issue. In contrast national childcare legislation in Australia was not introduced until 1972. This meant a different discursive terrain for children’s rights and education activists on either side of the Tasman. In Australia, the discursive terrain faced by children’s rights narrative was centred on the link between childcare provision and the paid employment opportunities of women. Again this variation in influence provides evidence that actors involved in processes of argumentation are constrained by conventional understandings and mutual positioning.

The discursive terrain may have also affected the parental rights discourse coalition in Australian childcare debates. Despite its origins in the texts of political elites, the
parental rights narrative never achieved institutionalisation of its claims for state-funded childcare for *all parents*. By the time the parental rights discourse entered Australian childcare debates, the issue of non-parental care had been shaped in terms of ensuring the economic survival of the individual and their families. The parental rights discourse challenged this institutionalised link between state-funded childcare provisions and the working status of parents, as it called for childcare for all adults caring for children regardless of their labour force status.

While the children’s rights and parental rights discourses struggled to influence childcare debates, the achievement of institutionalisation and saturation by narratives centred around neo-liberal beliefs provides further understanding of when and how collective actors can bring discursive change.

*The influence of neo-liberalism*

In both childcare and unpaid work debates in New Zealand and Australia, textual elements from neo-liberalism were found in debates from the 1980s. In Australia ‘new right’ thinking was evident in the targeted assistance discourse coalition that called for childcare to go only to families in ‘need’. The strength of the neo-liberal discourse in the 1990s was highlighted by its centrality within the reports of the Economic Planning Advisory Council’s Childcare Task Force in 1996. From the late 1980s, neo-liberal discursive elements dominated the texts of public sector actors in childcare argumentation in New Zealand. Within the targeted assistance discourse in New Zealand it was argued that families should be granted government financial assistance for childcare in order that adults could take on paid employment and avoid having to claim state-funded social security benefits. Neo-liberal traits were also evident in unpaid work debates in both New Zealand and Australia by the end of the time frame analysed, with a number of narrative coalitions asserting that the rightful place of all adults was within the paid labour market in order that they might achieve economic independence.

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In childcare debates on both sides of the Tasman neo-liberal narratives emanated in the first instance from the texts of politicians and a number of business/corporate 'think tanks' (See Figure 3.5 and 5.6). Both targeted assistance discourses were institutionalised in policy debates. At one level this indicates that the more conventional the network, the more institutional influence it can achieve. As Berman notes, "The carrier's status within the system will affect the likelihood of an idea gaining political salience: the greater the influence of the carrier, the greater the chance that the idea will attain political importance."27 While the status of the carrier may be important, the fact that a discourse has its origins within the texts of politicians and public servants did not guarantee success in two of the case studies. In Australian childcare debates there was no institutionalisation of the children's rights and parental rights narratives that had emanated from political elites.

Added to the political strength of the actors pushing a neo-liberal discourse, was the familiarity of the discourses forwarded by these actors. In both New Zealand and Australia prior to 1970, childcare was seen as a philanthropic service to families in crisis.28 In referring to the importance of the family environment in caring for children and the necessity to limit state-funded childcare for to those in 'real need' the neo-liberal discourse coalitions of the 1990s were able to play upon familiar understandings of non-parental care.

In unpaid work debates the familiarity of the narrative content was also a contributing factor to the acceptance of neo-liberal messages. In particular there was continuity in definitions of 'work' and 'statistics' in both nations from the initial institutional narratives identified in the case studies and in subsequent institutionalised discourses.

Not only were neo-liberal narrative coalitions able to tap into existing understandings in childcare and unpaid work debates, the use of the rhetoric in the four case studies

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can be tied to a general acceptance of neo-liberal principles by government at that time. The public sector acceptance of targeted childcare support comes as Australia and New Zealand move to adopt more neo-liberal social and economic policies.\textsuperscript{29} On both sides of the Tasman neo-liberal advocates wanted to reduce the power of the state and to encourage a free market. Cheyne et al note that in New Zealand neo-liberal advocates were determined that dependency on the welfare state would be diminished and competition would create a dynamic and efficient economy in the South Pacific.\textsuperscript{30} These aims can be seen in the texts of political elites, with a link drawn between economic self-sufficiency and childcare:

If these families have no child care centre, and there are no other options, these families, particularly women and single parent families, will have to move, stop their studies, stop child care or maybe leave the work force to look after their children and become a greater welfare burden than if that subsidised child care was available.\textsuperscript{31}

The power of the neo-liberal discourse coalitions in Australasia was also aided in the 1980s and 1990s by the waning of the power of ‘activists’. Feminists in Australia lose the advantages provided by the Office of Status of Women, with the office increasingly having its budget and roles cut by the government from the late 1990s.\textsuperscript{32} While in New Zealand there was a weakening of the power of the interest groups and unions who advocated the education discourse, as there was a change in the way political elites saw these employee organisations. This change occurred when the Fourth Labour Government shunned the involvement of what they saw as ‘vested interests’ in decision-making processes.\textsuperscript{33} In New Zealand in the 1980s there was also deterioration between feminists and the Labour Party. As Margaret Wilson notes there was a struggle between two very different ideologies. The dominant group in the executive, centred around the Minister of Finance, had determined that New Zealand’s future lay with the market economy. The women of the Party had

\textsuperscript{30} C. Cheyne et al. \textit{op.cit.}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{31} P. Andren, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 6471.
\textsuperscript{33} See J. Kelsey, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 80-81.
determined that in order for women to develop towards full equality the state needed to play an active role in redressing the imbalance of the power between the sexes.\textsuperscript{34} This demise of critical alliances may help explain the loss of support from political elites for the working women’s narrative constellations in New Zealand and Australia, as well as the waning of public sector support for the education discourse coalition in New Zealand.

This change in alliances illustrates that even the rules of engagement in policy processes are subject to change and are constructed. As Toke notes in his study of the energy efficiency policy field, it is also far too simplistic to describe policy outcomes as being determined by the bargaining power of the actors. He claims that the bargaining power of the actors is constituted by the shared discourses that underpin the network. It is necessary to study the development of these cognitive structures in order to obtain more complete explanations of policy outcomes.\textsuperscript{35}

\textit{Neo-liberalism and its impact on women’s movements}

Not only were neo-liberal discourse coalitions able to achieve saturation and institutionalisation in the 1990s, actors utilising new right narratives were able to roll back the progress made by women’s movement activity and even shape the way in which feminist demands were made. Within social movement literature there is recognition that the discursive competition will affect social movement narratives and tactics. "The debates that ensue and the very existence of competing frames can chip away the mobilizing potency of the original master frame."\textsuperscript{36} The influence of neo-liberal narratives was evident within the texts of feminist writers and organisations, particularly in the 1990s. By the 1990s in New Zealand, texts from women’s organisations often incorporated neo-liberal rhetoric on economic viability.

\textsuperscript{34} M Wilson (1992) “Women and the Labour Party”. In M. Clark. (ed.) (1992) \textit{The Labour Party after 75 Years}. Wellington, Department Publications No. 4 Department of Politics Victoria University of Wellington, p. 47.


and cost-benefit analysis. The texts of actors from the feminist discourse coalitions in New Zealand used economic data to defend childcare provision and acknowledged the need for childcare to be seen as a ‘quasi-market’. In the Australian childcare case study there was also use within feminist texts of the language of neo-liberalism. These changes in rhetoric in the texts of the women-centred discourse coalition members occurred even though underlying assumptions of the texts often remained wedded to earlier feminist demands for free childcare for working women.

Another shift in childcare debates that limited the impact of women’s movement activity was the move by feminists to accept that government funding should be given to commercial (for-profit) childcare centres. As was noted in previous chapters, strategic framing may have led women’s movement activists to change their view of the type of services worthy of state support. In Australia the women-centred discourse coalitions found in childcare debates conceded that government funding should go to all childcare centres, not just community care. As was noted by Brennan, the switch to the private sector does matter, for several reasons. In the first place, it means that the hard won gains of the 1970s and 1980s—which had finally led to publicly funded, community controlled services being established as the core of the government’s childcare program—have been lost. Heavy reliance upon private businesses to establish new services also meant that the Commonwealth has lost control over the location of new services—even though it is committed in advance to subsidising them through fee relief. Hence the principles of the planning approach have been overturned.37

Not only was there evidence of feminists using neo-liberal rhetoric, there was evidence that the women’s movements’ own narrative traits had been subsumed by the market-oriented discourses. As was seen in Chapters Three and Five, both feminist and neo-liberal narratives used the rhetoric of economic independence during childcare debates, even though the underlying assumptions varied. Feminists sought economic independence to ensure life choices. Neo-liberals saw financial independence as a way of decreasing the state’s responsibility for the economic welfare of citizens. The match in rhetoric gave the appearance that the state had

accepted the calls of the women’s movement for economic independence for
mothers, closing down the need for continued advocacy on this issue. While
advancing the idea of economic independence as important to women, the need for
childcare was not strictly tied to employment in the feminist narratives. For
example, the New Mother Support Groups noted, “Part of the philosophy of New
Mother Support Groups is that mothers need to feel ok about having ‘time out’ for
themselves. At the moment it seems that it is acceptable to have ‘time out’ if your
child is at kindergarten or playcentre. However, using community crèches, child-
care centres or home care is labelled as ‘not doing your job properly’.”38 This ‘time
out’ was no more acceptable within the neo-liberal rhetoric, than it was under the
patriarchal narrative regime of the 1970s.

Another area of overlap between neo-liberal and feminist claims came in assertions
about the rights of individuals. Women-centred narratives in unpaid and childcare
debates in Australasia often asserted the need for policy changes in order to advance
the rights of individual women, while neo-liberal narratives noted that individual
rights had to be met by individual responsibility. This overlap on the rhetoric of
individualism made it appear that women’s movement had activity had been at least
partially successful. But as Ros Noonan and Ann Else noted in 1993: “Ironically, the
most serious challenge to feminism has come not from those asserting the inferiority
of women, or an inherently different female role, but from those who claim the value
of the individual and the individual’s freedom above all else.”39

So for public sector actors and social movements seeking discursive influence the
content of their message and the political context impacted upon their ability to bring
about change. In particular, neo-liberal narratives stymied the women-centred
narrative by matching and appropriating some of the rhetoric used in these story
lines.

199.
International influence over policy debates

While domestic debates were the feature of the four case studies, it is important to note international debates and their affect on argumentation in New Zealand and Australia. There was evidence of international ‘policy diffusion’ occurring in the debates scrutinised, in particular in the discussions about unpaid work. Policy diffusion is the transfer of policy ideas from one nation to another or one government body to another. In particular, it is in unpaid work debates that there was significant evidence of international policy diffusion. Through examining pre-existing resources (one of the four elements looked for in each of the texts analysed) it was possible to scrutinise the sharing of resources over unpaid work measurement and valuation. On both sides of the Tasman the texts of public sector actors included references to similar authors, such as Ironmonger, Bittman, and Waring. There was also a significant level of reference to international debates on time-use measurement and on the United Nations System of National Accounts. Public sector statisticians (who were the gatekeepers of statistical measurement in both New Zealand and Australia) used international discussions as part of their justification for excluding unpaid household work from mainstream measurement of work, such as the System of National Accounts.

The transfer of narratives and ideas in Australasian unpaid work debates not only occurred between state sector actors, policy diffusion was also found within the texts of non-government organisations. “In short, policy transfer does not necessarily require governmental involvement but can occur between corporations, international organizations and NGOs.”40 Within texts on unpaid work, women’s movements and interest groups in both New Zealand and Australian frequently referred to international research and to the policies of international bodies in attempts to bring about discursive change. Many of the ideas transferred by the women’s movements and women’s interest groups were the same as those used by political elites. For example, both women’s organisations and public servants referred to UN discussions and documentation on the System of National Accounts. Social movements and interest groups not only utilised texts from outside national borders, there was evidence of their involvement in international networks established to debate the

valuation and measurement of unpaid work. Transnational networks and their role in policy change is discussed by True and Mintrom: “In recent years, prompted in part by the global conferences sponsored by the United Nations (UN) and the gender policies of the European Union (EU), a myriad of state and nonstate actors around the globe have created working coalitions to leverage national-level reform efforts.”

While both government and non-state actors took part in policy transfer across national borders, the usefulness of international debates when seeking discursive influence varied for unconventional actors and political elites. Public sector statisticians in both New Zealand and Australia were able to successfully utilise international debates to legitimise their decisions to keep data on unpaid household work separate from measurement and valuation of other productive tasks. Non-governmental advocacy coalitions may have used international debates in their attempts to influence unpaid work argumentation, but they did not have the same success as public sector actors. It seems Stone is right to assert that non-state actors may be better at the ‘soft transfer’ of ideas influencing public opinion and policy agendas, while officials are more involved in the hard transfer of policy practices and instruments involving formal decision-making.

While unpaid work debates were ‘global’, the two childcare cases investigated were on the whole much more domestic debates. One common resource worth noting in was the use of ‘maternal deprivation’ arguments. Claims that time away from mothers was harmful to children were utilised in both New Zealand and Australia throughout the 30 years. While those opposed to non-parental care provisions utilised the work of John Bowlby, the women-centred discourse coalitions actively criticised Bowlby’s assertions. For example, Elizabeth Windshuttle noted, “Women have variously been warned about the dangers of attending to crying babies, or not attending to them, and since Bowlby, doctors have been lecturing women about the ‘scientific facts’ of maternal deprivation.” However, the analysis of pre-existing

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resources in the childcare case studies in New Zealand and Australia showed only minimal international transfer of narrative traits and assumptions in these cases.

While there was evidence of global influence over unpaid work debates, for the most part national contexts were more important in shaping argumentation. Ferree and Gamson noted this in their study of abortion debates in Germany and the US where they assert that their own original data on abortion discourses in the mass media, and the observations of others, suggest the significance of national factors in shaping debates. ⁴⁴

The differences in the ability to successfully utilise international resources shows the importance of in-depth textual analysis when looking to gauge the discursive influence achieved by social movements and other political actors. However, drawing out the broad factors that were found to impact upon discursive change provides evidence of the importance of narrative content and political context for any organisation seeking to change policy debates. I will look to see if the factors seen to impact upon social movement influence bear any resemblance to the models used to explain the emergence of mass protests in societies. Debates on path dependency that emanate from public policy literature will also be used to further aid explanation of the changes that occurred in the four case studies.

**Political opportunity structure, framing, and resource mobilisation**

Within social movement literature three major reasons are given for the emergence and continuation of social movements over time: (1) the structure of political opportunities and constraints confronting the movement; (2) the forms of organisation (informal as well as formal), available to insurgents; and (3) the collective processes of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action. ⁴⁵ Broadly defined, these areas of research are thought of as political opportunity structure, resource mobilisation, and framing. It is impossible to do justice to the breadth and variety of research into social movement emergence in a single chapter, but I will isolate the main characteristics of each

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⁴⁴ M. M. Ferree and W. A. Gamson *op. cit.* p. 52.
approach in order to gauge their usefulness in explaining the varied levels of discursive influence achieved by women’s movements in New Zealand and Australia.

The belief underlying political opportunity research is that national context determines whether a social movement will emerge and thrive. The broad political environment in which the movement is embedded is seen to constitute a powerful set of constraints/opportunities affecting the latter’s development. The three dimensions of the political opportunity structure that are seen to impact upon social movements are; the degree of openness or closure of formal political access, the degree of stability or instability of political alignments, and finally the availability and strategic posture of potential alliance partners. These three dimensions that provide opportunities or throw up constraints to social movements are factors centred on existing political structures of nation states factors external to social movements.

Within the rubric of political opportunity structures, it is also possible to add global dimensions. For example, the women’s movements of many individual nations have often utilised the United Nations as a platform from which to launch claims against their domestic governments. Not only do movements work through ‘supra-governmental’ organisations such as the UN, but (as has already been noted) these unconventional collective actors work through transnational advocacy networks. As Stienstra notes, “Women’s movements across the world also developed stronger and more constructive ways of working together at the global level and have used new technologies to strengthen their networks and be more effective in their work.”

The second dominant area of research into social movement emergence, resource mobilisation, looks to a mobilisation’s internal factors to explain the existence and survival of this phenomenon. For resource mobilisation theorists a social movement’s own organisational structures and the use of available resources are the most important factors in their emergence and viability. Resource mobilisation theory asserts that society generates no shortages of discontent but only some groups

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46 ibid., p. 12.
48 D. Stienstra, op.cit., p. 78.
possess the necessary means to translate their collective discontent into public protests. For movements to survive actors must co-ordinate resources and create an enduring organisational structure to sustain collective action.

‘Framing’ research is a less developed theory about social movement formation that centres on the role of discourses in the emergence and survival of sustained social protests. The concept of frames is borrowed from sociologist Erving Goffman, who saw framing as a scheme of interpretation that enables individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences. It is asserted that political actors use frames to punctuate existing social conditions and to define what is unjust, intolerable, or deserving of action. ‘Frames’ are not presented in social movement research as identical to the concept of ‘discourse’, however an overlap is evident. As noted in Chapter One, a discourse is an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to a phenomenon. The use of the term framing often seems to be preferred within social movement literature as it implies a level of agency by those carrying out the ‘framing’. Though as I have already discussed in this thesis, ideas and narratives are tied to actors, hence the need to analyse both discourses and narrative constellations when investigating policy processes.

**Framing and frame alignment**

As the comparison of the case studies has indicated the centrality of narrative content in gaining discursive influence, I will turn first to look at how the concept of framing relates to social movement impact on public discourses. In particular I will turn to the work of David Snow and colleagues in which the authors suggest that differing forms of frame alignment are used to link the interpretative frames of individuals with social movement belief systems. “By frame alignment, we refer to the linkage of individual and SMO interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interest, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary.” The underlying premise is that frame alignment, of one

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49 For a full discussion see J. D. McCarthy *op.cit.*, pp. 141-151.
variety or another, is a necessary condition for movement participation, whatever its nature or intensity, and that it is typically an interactional accomplishment.\textsuperscript{53}

While the concept of frame alignment is utilised by Snow et al to explain why individuals join social movements, the process also provides insight into the ability of mass mobilisations to draw mainstream political actors to their narrative constructions. Snow et al propose that four processes in frame alignment are used by social movements to attract members: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation.\textsuperscript{54} For social movements the process of frame transformation is in fact inherent to their existence, as social movements are by definition collectives of individuals and groups seeking to challenge the status quo. Snow et al recognise this challenge by movements: "The programs, causes, and values that some SMOs promote, however, may not resonate with, and on occasion may even appear antithetical to, conventional lifestyles or rituals and extant interpretive frames. When such is the case, new values may have to be planted and nurtured, old meaning and understandings jettisoned, and erroneous beliefs or "misframing" reframed . . . in order to garner support and secure participations."\textsuperscript{55} Frame transformation may help social movements attract new members, but the four case studies in this thesis indicate that the more ‘transformative’ a movement’s narrative the less likely it is to be adopted wholesale by public sector actors.

In the four case studies, feminist discourse coalitions that were able to align their discursive frames to pre-existing narratives were the most likely to achieve discursive saturation and/or institutionalisation. Just as social movements need to align their messages to the understandings of individuals in society if they are to attract members, they must also develop a link between their messages of change and the understandings of other political actors in order to ensure their narratives are adopted and institutionalised. For actors proposing ‘new’ narratives in the case studies it was important to ensure the discourse included some links with the pre-existing institutional narrative. This link to pre-existing narratives can be actioned through the processes of frame bridging, frame amplification, and frame extension.

\textsuperscript{53} ibid., p. 465; S, Tarrow, \textit{op.cit.;} p. 175.
\textsuperscript{54} D. A. Snow, J. E Burke Rochford, et al. \textit{op.cit.}, p. 467.
\textsuperscript{55} ibid., p. 473.
The importance of familiarity in discursive traits can be likened to the importance of spatial proximity and cultural similarity in policy diffusion processes. In discussions about the diffusion of ideas between international social movements della Porta notes that spatial proximity or cultural similarity help in ideas being diffused from one country to another.\(^\text{56}\) While della Porta proposes that closeness in space or culture helps nations to share ideas, in the four case studies of this thesis it appears that lingual similarity—that is similarity in narrative content and form—aids the ‘diffusion’ of social movement discourses into the texts of the public sector.

The processes of frame bridging and extension are not only important for social movements. The importance of aligning with pre-existing norms and narratives was also evident in the influence achieved by neo-liberal coalitions in childcare debates in both New Zealand and Australia. In both nations, neo-liberal narratives took centre stage in the childcare debates of the 1990s. These discourses based on the targeting of assistance to families ‘in need’ left unchallenged existing institutional narratives about childcare being primarily a parental responsibility (See Figures 3.10 and 5.12). In contrast the women’s rights narratives on both sides of the Tasman had sought to transform views about ‘who’ was responsible for the care of young children and never attained full public sector support.

The two unpaid work cases also provided evidence that ‘frame alignment’ was a factor in aiding discursive influence for all political actors, not just women’s movement activists. In both case studies on unpaid household tasks, state sector actors launched time-use surveys in the 1990s and in doing so acknowledged the importance of unpaid work in society. This institutional change left untouched the core definitions of ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ that had been unsuccessfully challenged by the women-centred discourse constellations on both sides of the Tasman.

The centrality of frames to the argumentative process can also be found within public policy literature. Public policy research into agenda setting notes the importance of frames to actors involved in political debates. For example, Keck and Sikkink note

that “Network members actively seek ways to bring issues to the public agenda by framing them in innovative ways and by seeking hospitable venues. Sometimes they create issues by framing old problems in new ways; occasionally they help transform other actors’ understandings of their identities and their interests.” Sally Kenney also notes the importance of narrative components in a review of agenda setting literature: “The qualities of the ideas themselves may shape if not determine their agenda status, as well as thwart opposition.” As was seen in the four case studies of this thesis it is not just in agenda setting that the framing of messages was important, the content or shape of discourses was also important for social movements seeking discursive influence in final decisions and policy outcomes.

*Strategic framing in policy argumentation*

In their work Rein and Schon assert that frames are usually part of the taken-for-granted world of policy work. While I acknowledge that actors may not always consciously consider the way they are framing an issue, there was evidence in the analysis undertaken in this thesis that framing was often deliberate and strategic in childcare and unpaid work debates. This process of strategic framing is noted by Keck who says that with transnational advocacy networks the goal is to change the behaviour of states and these networks will use strategic framing to do this. Within social movement literature explaining the emergence of these phenomenon there is also recognition of strategic framing. “The social movement draws from and attempts to influence public discourse by the way it frames issue, defines grievances, and stages collective action to attract media attention.” In discussing the use of international narratives by social movements Snow and Benford note: “… social movement leaders and activists are actively engaged in a social constructionist process as framing agents: they not only strategically borrow or promote, but the objects of both-be they cultural ideas, items or practices—are framed behaviourally or lingually so as to enhance the prospect of their resonance with their host or target

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61 A. D. Morris and C. M. Meuller *op. cit.*, p. 15
culture. The point is that elites and non-elites constantly ‘work’ their environments; that is, they strive to manipulate the material and ideational elements available in their organisational and cultural contexts to protect or further their concerns and they are usually only too well aware that their opponents do, too.

One example of strategic framing within the four case studies was the acceptance by feminist organisations in the Australian childcare case study of the decision to widen out the type of childcare centres that would receive government funding. In the 1970s, women’s organisations had vehemently defended the restriction of government funding to community-based childcare centres. By the 1990s some feminists conceded that all forms of care by professionals should receive government funds. This change of views was in line with neo-liberal attempts to assert that childcare provision was a market, like any other business. Strategic framing may have also been behind the use of cost-benefit analyses by women’s organisations in New Zealand in their attempts to gain government funding for childcare provision. Changes within the texts of women’s organisations themselves indicate that actors within grass-roots organisations were aware of the importance of frame alignment when seeking to bring about policy change. As has been noted, New Zealand and Australian women’s movement activists and feminist organisations increasingly adopted neo-liberal rhetoric during the 1990s, a change that indicates the strategic use of language by these unconventional collectives. Feminist researchers and activists have long recognised the need for strategic action and frames. As Margaret Wilson noted, for New Zealand feminists being adaptable and opportunistic helps.

It is not only grass-roots activists who altered the type of language and frames used during public debates of childcare and unpaid work. An illustration of strategic framing was found in the texts of New Zealand’s Ministry of Women’s Affairs during childcare debates. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs in the 1980s was a part of the women’s rights discourse coalition in childcare debates but its use of neo-liberal assumptions and rhetoric in the 1990s saw it become part of the targeted

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63 J. K. Jacobsen, op.cit., p. 308.
64 M Wilson op.cit., p. 48.
constellation. For example in 1991 the Ministry organised a seminar on employer assisted childcare in which it presented a ‘cost-benefit’ analysis of childcare provision by employers:

A lack of adequate or affordable childcare for employees has obvious negative spin-offs for employers, such as:

- Greater absenteeism
- Lower productivity; and
- Increasing staff turnover, coupled with associated hiring and training costs for new staff.\(^{65}\)

In New Zealand unpaid work debates the Ministry also moved from the feminist discourse coalition to the neo-liberal constellation. While strategic framing appears to have been utilised in unpaid work and childcare debates, it may not have always been a voluntary process. Actors at times may have been compelled to change the way they talked about an issue in order to be heard by the public sector elites. As Fischer notes: “From discourse analysis we learn to recognize how some actors can position other actors in ways that compel them to say things in one place they might not have uttered in another.”\(^{66}\) Within discussions of the New Zealand Ministry of Women’s Affairs Anderson notes that the aspirations of the women’s movement have been largely contained, with feminists working in the state subjected to pressures of conformity and having to make compromises.\(^{67}\) Knowing the motivations for such strategic labelling is beyond the scope of this thesis and would require in-depth interviews with those involved. But it appears that political actors who are seeking a place in the debating chamber frequently find they must adopt the dominant discourse to achieve their goals.

*Path dependency and discursive stability*

Perhaps another way to view the frame alignment processes that aid the discursive influence of collective actors, is to consider whether institutional policy narratives were subject to path dependency. Path dependency highlights the importance of

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history in current policy argumentation. The concept is outlined succinctly in a study of political parties by Berman:

The decision making of these parties was therefore “path-dependent.” Choices made at time T influence choices made at time T+1. “Path dependency,” as Douglas North has noted, “means that history matters. We cannot understand today’s choices...without tracing” their evolution through time.68

The importance of historical contexts of debates and discourse development is also recognised within social movement literature, as can be seen in the work of McClurg Mueller: “In contrast with the economistic rational actor of early resource mobilisation theory, the new social movement actor both actively constructs and is constrained by the world of social meaning rooted in specific historic contexts and based in the experience and identities of race, gender, class, and nationality.69

In the four case studies there was repeated evidence that the content of previous policy debates impacted upon the current narratives. Discursive legacies restrained attempts by women’s movement activists to redefine ‘natural’ relationships and gender norms within childcare and unpaid work debates on both sides of the Tasman. As was noted earlier, the New Zealand and Australian women’s rights discourse coalitions that sought to reassign childcare duties to the whole community were unable to influence debates on non-parental care. Similarly for the women’s movement active in New Zealand debates on unpaid work and women’s organisations in unpaid work debates in Australia there was little public sector acceptance of their attempts to redefine ‘work’ and ‘leisure’.

The constraints of path dependency were also evident within unpaid work debates. Statisticians in both nations noted the importance of comparability of statistics in their decisions to maintain pre-existing definitions of ‘work’ and in doing so provided direct evidence of path dependency in policy debates. The changes found in childcare and unpaid work debates in Australia and New Zealand during the 30 years analysed were often incremental and it appears that discursive legacies held

back the claims of social movements seeking to radically alter the accepted cultural norms of these policy subsystems. Existing understandings of parental responsibilities for the care of children and existing definitions of work as paid employment limited the type of discursive change found in the New Zealand and Australian debates of childcare and unpaid work.

The importance of frame alignment and path dependency found in the four case studies was evidence of the strength of discourses once institutionalised. The importance of institutionalisation is noted in Berman's work: “Although carriers can play a key role in inserting ideas into political debate and helping them gain salience, the most important factor determining whether ideas are able to influence politics over the long term is “institutionalization,” that is, whether or not an idea becomes embedded in an institution or organization. Once institutionalized, ideas take on a life of their own, changing the motivation and perception of political actors, affecting their decision making over the long term.”

The discourse coalition model acknowledges the strength of institutionalisation, as it is only once a coalition achieves discursive saturation and institutionalisation that it is considered to be winning. Once a narrative was institutionalised into societal norms and public policy in the four case studies, it was difficult for social movement actors to gain acceptance for ‘radical’ change. In the four case studies, those discourse coalitions that were able to align the content of their narrative with existing institutional story lines had more discursive influence than those seeking to break with the past completely. This is not to suggest that breaks never occur. As noted there was a substantial change in the roles constructed for women, from the view that women were ‘mothers’ to the view that all females should be primarily ‘paid workers’. In both New Zealand and Australia a sharp rise in the number of working women from the 1950s, assisted this shift in the way roles were constructed. As such, these changes indicate that shifting societal and political contexts do provide for breaks with discourses of the past.

From framing to alliances
As well as the importance of framing to collective actors seeking discursive influence, the examination of the four case studies indicated the political

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opportunities structures faced by social movements affected their influence on policy debates. As was noted earlier three dimensions of the political opportunity structure are seen to impact upon social movements; the degree of openness or closure of formal political access, the degree of stability or instability of political alignments, and finally the availability and strategic posture of potential alliance partners.\textsuperscript{71} For the case studies in this thesis the availability and strategic posture of potential alliances were a necessary factor for social movements and other collective actors seeking to bring about change in public discourses. In the case studies of this thesis, the influence of women’s movements was aided by the alliances formed with political elites. The importance of alliances was also found by Abrar et al in their study of UK women’s movement influence.\textsuperscript{72} The case studies in this thesis, however, provide evidence that it is more than the mere existence of feminists inside the state that assists social movements seeking to change policy debates, the location of ‘femocrats’ in public sector bodies is important. The placement of the Office Status of Women within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet provided feminists within Australian childcare debates more leverage over policy narratives than was experienced by their counterparts in New Zealand. It was not just feminists who benefited from strategic alliances with political elites. As was noted already, the education discourse coalition was able to use links to the ruling Labour Party in the 1980s to ensure childcare was constructed as an education issue. The ability to draw on alliances, however, is connected to the frame alignment processes discussed in this chapter, as it is story lines that attract allies to a discourse coalition. This highlights the fact that the conditions that aid (or hinder) discursive influence are interdependent.

\textit{Internal resources and discursive influence}

The political opportunities structure and ‘framing’ may impact upon the ability of social movements to introduce new narratives into public policy, but as has been noted, internal resources were of little significance to movements seeking discursive influence in the four case studies. It has been argued within resource mobilisation literature that an important factor for social movement emergence is internal resources, such as member numbers and funding. Similar levels of internal

\textsuperscript{72} S. Abrar, et al. \textit{op.cit.}, p. 257.
organisation and resources in Australia and New Zealand women's movements from 1970 to 2000 did not produce the same outcomes for grass-roots organisations in the case studies. Resources may be needed in order for a social movement to emerge, but they did not seem necessary for ensuring discursive influence by movements in the four case studies.

The assertions about resource mobilisation are further backed up when looking at the narratives utilised by formal political actors that did not achieve institutionalisation and saturation. As was noted earlier the children's rights and parental rights discourse coalitions in Australia included public sector actors (actors with a high level of internal resources) but these narrative constellations were not able to shape childcare debates. The results on internal resources are similar to the findings of Burstein and Linton, who review 53 studies into the impact of political parties, interest groups, and social movements on public policy. The authors note that studies often assert that resources are often seen as important to policy influence, but in fact this hypothesis is not supported by evidence. "Concretely, this means that organizational resources, such as numbers of members or size of budgets, are unlikely to strongly influence policy change."73

Conclusion

A close analysis of unpaid work and childcare debates from 1970 to 2000 in New Zealand and Australia highlighted the ability of the women's movements and organisations in these nations to develop new messages and cultural codes which substantially challenged the status quo. Messages advocated by women's movements challenged existing cultural norms and institutional discourses. However, the more 'radical' and 'transformative' a social movement's message, the less likely it was to achieve public sector support. As mass mobilisations are based on challenging the status quo, this meant partial influence was achieved by grass-roots feminist activity in New Zealand and Australia between 1970 and 2000. And what influence was achieved by mass mobilisations was aided (or hindered) by factors outside the control of the movements.

While social movement activity does impact upon policy debates, the influence of these unconventional collectives is limited by past narratives and their ability to maintain and keep strategic political alliances. This follows the finding of an article reviewing literature on the influence of political parties, interest groups and social movement organisations on public policy, Burstein and Linton found that the hypothesis that these actors would substantially impact upon policy was not as well supported as expected. The authors question “Why do sociologists and political scientists persist in hypothesizing that political organizations influence policy, possibly strongly, when their own findings suggest that this is often not the case?”

In fact a combination of narrative content and political context are found to impact upon the influence achieved by both unconventional and conventional political actors. The findings show the importance of making sure any investigation of influence by social movements or other collective actors in society includes scrutiny of the historical context in which these groupings operate. By focusing on discourse coalition analysis the aim has been to analyse not just the texts of the policy debates but also the context of such argumentation. As was noted in Chapter Two, Hajer states that “A discourse coalition is an ensemble of a set of story lines, the actors that utter these story lines, and the practices that conform to these story lines, all organised around a discourse.” It is important to note that other social movements have been shown to have a major impact on policy debates.

The factors which allowed for social movement influence in the four case studies often mapped onto two factors seen as significant for social movement emergence—framing and political opportunities structure. However, no one part of the social movement model of emergence can explain the discursive influence of mobilisations, a combination of framing, political allegiances, and historic context are interlinked in ensuring a movements’ message attract mainstream political support.

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74 ibid, p. 398.
75 M. A. Hajer (1993) op.cit., p. 47.
76 See J. Dryzek et. al. (2003) op.cit.
Conclusion

Understanding social movement influence
The four case studies in this thesis have shown that social movements can influence the discourses dominant in policy debates and decisions. But the impact of these unconventional collectives is never absolute and is affected by three factors: the use of ‘revolutionary’ messages; discursive legacies and path dependency in the policy realm; and the type of alliances available to these unconventional actors. Of these three factors, this thesis found that the content of the message was a central factor in the ability of women’s movement activists to influence policy debates. For women’s movements, ‘radical’ messages of challenge are central to their very existence, but this challenge of existing norms and beliefs hinders their progress in the political arena.

The confirmation of the importance of narrative content to social movement influence is an endorsement of the recent shift within social movement research to focus on the cultural and discursive activities of movements. As was noted in Chapter One, there have been increasing attempts to shift the focus of social movement research away from structural factors such as the political opportunities and internal resources, to the cognitive dimension. While we cannot ignore political opportunity structures and resource mobilisation, I agree with Zald that “understanding the ways in which ideological commitments are formed and transmitted deserves more attention than currently given it.”¹ As the four case studies illustrated, one way to look into the way ideological commitments are transmitted and formed is to investigate the diffusion of social movement discourses into the texts of other collective actors in the political and social arenas. Focussing on discursive influence, rather than documenting the material or participatory gains

of mass protests, provided a unique opportunity to grasp more fully the iterative process that is policy argumentation and the role of actors from the periphery of the political realm in these processes. In the four case studies the analysis of discourses and the coalitions formed around narratives showed that as well as women’s movement activities impacting upon policy narratives, the processes of policy debate altered the frames utilised by the movements. The focus on discursive influence by women’s movements also threw light on the waxing and waning of mobilisation activity.

While narrative content is central to social movement investigation (and public policy research) it cannot be separated from historical and political context. As was seen in this thesis, change was frequently path dependent with politicians and public sector actors more readily accepting of familiar narratives than those that seek to ‘radically’ restructure society. For social movements this presents a dilemma, for as has already been noted, their very existence is based on challenging the status quo. How do movement’s successfully challenge the status quo while at the same time presenting that challenge in a ‘pragmatic’ or moderate form? One response by movements is to generate multiple forms, each with varying levels of discursive challenge. This tactic was used in childcare debates in both New Zealand and Australia, with women’s movements in these nations active in two discourse coalitions. One coalition was based around a ‘radical’ narrative, the other constellation centred on a more ‘pragmatic’ discourse. It is often noted within feminist research that women’s liberation movements are both multi-voiced and utilise multiple points from which to attack the status quo. This tactic used in the childcare debates resulted in one arm of each of the New Zealand and Australian women’s movements making progress on their claims against the state, while other areas of the social movement’s activity were less successful. The women’s movement in Australian and New Zealand was able to gain some acceptance of the need for state-funded childcare for working women, but unable to further debates about non-parental care provisions for all women (no matter their labour force status). On one level this could be seen as ‘success’ for social movements seeking to bring social change but this tactic brought discursive influence at a price. Once there was saturation and institutionalisation of the discourse coalition advocating a link between childcare and economic independence there was little opportunity for
women’s movement actors to broaden state-provided childcare to cover all women (both those in paid employment and those working in the home full-time).

The four case studies provided evidence of the iterative process of policy argumentation which not only at times led to changes in public sector texts in line with women’s movement narratives, but also led to changes in the narratives put forward by women’s movement activists. During policy debates in the 1990s women’s movement texts utilised the language of neo-liberalism and often sought out ‘factual’ economic research to back up demands for state-funded childcare. This adoption of the economic based language of neo-liberalism may not always have been voluntary, there are indications that women’s movement actors and more formal women’s groups strategically used market-oriented language in order to be taken seriously in debates. But changes to women’s movement narratives show that it is important to look at these processes of argumentation as iterative, and affecting all that take part.

The fact that social movements do impact upon policy narratives necessitates inclusion of these phenomena in discussions of policy processes. Investigations into social movement influence necessarily require a synthesis of approaches from different disciplines and sub-disciplines (as was seen throughout this thesis). This synthesis will help develop a fuller picture of the policy process and the interaction of narratives, collective actors of all kinds, and institutions in decision-making processes and outcomes. Feminist researchers do acknowledge the need to develop ‘tool kits’ that borrow across disciplines and sub-disciplines in order to carry out research. There is also recognition within social movement research of the need for synthesis in approaches. For example, in Vladislavljevic’s work there is a combination of social movement theory and nationalism debates. Though even within social movement research there is a need to synthesise the different ‘schools’ of thought–resource mobilisation, political opportunities structures, and framing.

Steven Buechler advocates such a synthesis, stating that genuine theoretical synthesis implies moving beyond pre-existing paradigms to create something new, and “until now much of the work has merely adopted the language and issues of a different

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paradigm as a minor theme in a pre-existing paradigm.”3 While advocating an eclectic approach, I also wish to acknowledge that this holds its own challenges. In taking theories and models from both sociological and public policy literatures there were a number of methodological and disciplinary chasms which appear, and even finding a common terminology to use within the research proved difficult.

Developing the methodology
While Hajer’s discourse coalition approach proved useful in looking at policy processes and the role of political collectives in these processes, further development of this model is needed to advance both the theory and methodology. The presentation of data is one area that requires more development. As was evident from the four case studies the narrative terrain of policy subsystems is often complex, particularly when using a 30-year time frame. While the discourse coalition maps created for this thesis provide a tool for visually representing coalition change, more work needs to be done on mapping these types of changes. Visual representation of data may not have been seen as necessary in earlier studies of the policy process of ‘coalitions’ in policy argumentation, as researchers have often believed there will be only a small number of coalitions active in any policy subsystem. This assumption followed Sabatier’s work into advocacy coalitions in which he asserted that a policy subsystem would only contain between two and four coalitions. As Chapter Three and Five show, there are policy subsystems that can contain more than four narratives when investigating a wide time frame, though rarely are all the coalitions detected at the one time.

One repeated concern within the analysis used within the case studies was the inability to determine actors’ motivations. The inability to tell with certainty actors’ motives made it difficult to determine when collective actors had been co-opted by political elites. In many instances in the four case studies I found changes in the language utilised by public sector actors in line with women’s movement narratives, indicating that some policy learning had occurred. However, it was difficult to tell if the acceptance of social movement narratives was genuine or done to close down debates. For example, did public sector actors adopt the term unpaid work just to

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close down argumentation about the link between the word ‘work’ and pay? The suspicion is that some of the state changes were deliberate actions to shut down challenges from social movements, though using textual analysis as the tool for uncovering discursive change made it difficult to tell for certain. As was noted in Chapter Two, an attempt was made to gauge this discursive co-option by looking at the difference between the normative claims made by the various actors and their use of language or ‘lower order’ claims. While this helped to pinpoint disjunction between language uses and underlying normative claims, it did not shed any light on why such disjunction occurred. In order to understand further the issue of co-option there is a need to mix textual analysis with in-depth interviews of actors involved in policy debates. Though as was noted earlier in this thesis, when looking over a 30-year time frame it may be difficult for actors to recall their motivations.

Another difficulty arose due to the decision to use written texts (a necessity due to the wide time frame analysed). There is clearly a significant level of non-verbal communication that goes on in the policy realm, communication that cannot be analysed when focused on written documentation. Though overcoming this problem is difficult, as there are tradeoffs between the ability to ‘watch’ different actors in action in the political realm and the time frame needed to show discursive change occurring. One area where research could be widened out is to include cartoons and slogans from social movements in research into discursive influence. In particular the use of ‘humour’ as a subversive tool by social movements requires further analysis.

The next steps
As I draw to a close in this thesis, I am aware how much more could be learnt if we broadened out the time frame of analysis, the social movements investigated, and the policy types and topics researched. Much of the current social movement research, like my own, focuses on three decades—the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. This was a very distinctive time in which there was a burgeoning of rights-based movements seeking to change the world. Looking outside the time frame of 1970 to 2000 would help unravel further the importance of political context and discourse content for social movements seeking discursive change.
A comparison of different types of social movement would also aid investigations of influence. The women’s movement is only one of many mass mobilisations in modern democracies. As was noted in Chapter One, a combination of characteristics set social movements apart from other collective actors. The elements can be drawn together and social movements defined as *collectives of individuals and groups who share a common message of opposition to dominant norms and who use unconventional action and structures (at least some of the time) to bring about social change*. As this definition indicates the world of social movements is never static.

There has been a significant amount of research within social movement literature into environmental protests and comparing the results of research into different movements (a project outside the realm of this thesis) would be useful. It would also be worthwhile to compare movements with non-violent tactics, such as the peace and women’s movements, with more disruptive mass mobilisations. Few arms of the women’s movement threatened to dismantle the state and many feminist organisations in fact worked within existing political structures to bring change. Comparing the women’s movement with other mass protests in society would help answer whether the women’s movement is a unique social movement, with unique outcomes.

It is also important to look at other issues advanced by women’s movements and feminist organisations over the past few decades. The focus of this thesis was on two topics, childcare and unpaid work, both challenging existing constructions of mothering and family. The fact that both topics analysed were tied to the institution of the family resulted in similar outcomes in the debates. Women’s movement activists may have had more influence over debates that do not directly impact upon the family as an institution, such as debates about political representation. Though change to the ‘family’ and gender roles are essential to the women’s movement.

There is also a need to look at different policy types. As was noted women’s movements had less overall influence in the more technical unpaid work argumentation, than the ‘emotive’ debates about non-parental care provisions. A

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more diverse spread of policy types may help unravel why some issues are more amenable, than others, to influence from the actors on the periphery of the political realm.

Another area that needs to be investigated is the role of the mass media in aiding (or hindering) social movement influence. As was noted early in this thesis, discursive influence is often indirect, with social movements and other political actors impacting upon the policy realm via intermediaries such as the mass media. The sheer size of the debates chosen for analysis in this thesis made it impossible to delve into the texts of the mass media. Media accounts of social movements and their narratives may explain why some frames are more acceptable to political elites than others. Certainly in the 1970s in New Zealand and Australia, women’s movements claims were frequently presented as radical in the mainstream media. Concern about the way feminist groups was presented in the media is noted by New Zealand feminist Sandra Coney: “The growing power of the media to influence public policies is not exploited by these groups, who usually do not favour public action which risk media ridicule and condemnation.” While some feminists have been wary of the media, social movements at times actively seek publicity in the mass media. While it is important to look at the role of the media as ‘mediators’ for social movement narratives, there is also a need to think through the issue of causality. How are we able to show that it was the media that influenced political elites and mass mobilisations to speak and act in certain ways?

Investigation of the mass media and their effect on social movements and public policy also necessitates investigations of the use of the Internet by grass-roots organisations. Some of the waning of visible social movement activity may be due to the use of Internet by grass-roots organisations. In this thesis I have not looked at the Internet, in part due to difficulty in identifying the date in which changes are made to websites. However, more attention is now being paid to the archiving of web pages making it easier to research these ‘documents’.

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The differences in the discursive influence achieved through women's movement activity in New Zealand and Australia suggests the need to look more closely at the role individual activists play in changing public policy. As was noted in Chapter Seven, the placement of activists at the centre of decision-making in Australia seemed to provide an advantage for women's movement activity in this nation. Investigation of the role of individual actors in changes to policy argumentation would need to combine scrutiny of discourse coalitions with network analysis. In particular, a focus on network analysis which demonstrated the movement of feminists from grass-roots movements into positions of power within the political realm (or at least positions in close proximity to those in power) would be enormously useful.

Beyond the involvement of social movements in policy processes, the case studies indicate the need to look further at the role of elites in narrative change. As was seen throughout the four case studies, 'radical' messages were often left to the periphery of the political realm by politicians and public sector actors. Further case studies on social movement influence may provide answers as to when elites are prepared to accept 'radical' change.

Research is also needed into the role of think tanks in policy processes. Business and economic 'think tanks' were influential in both New Zealand and Australian case studies. While I proposed that some of this influence was due to their positioning in the political realm and their ability to draw on familiar frames and norms, there is still much to be discovered about these phenomena. In particular, it would be worthwhile to compare the operation of think tanks with social movement activity.

**Conclusion**

This thesis has shown that social movements can bring about discursive change, and that we can investigate the influence they bring to bear on policy narratives and decisions. However, women's movement influence in New Zealand and Australia was limited by the content of messages proffered, path dependency, and institutional settings. As a result, I want to warn against seeing social movements as a replacement for political parties, as is frequently done in political science. Traditional indicators of active democracy are in decline and new forms of networks
and social interaction are emerging in societies. However, Davis is right to question: “Are Websites a plausible surrogate for community meetings, or interest groups necessary successors to political parties?”

The four case studies in this thesis show that social movements are very different collective actors from political parties, and do not influence policy in the same way or to the same level. Pinning our hopes on these phenomena for transferring citizen desires into policy are fraught with dangers.

Research also shows that social movements must continually battle with a long-standing dilemma—whether to remain on the periphery of the political realm and challenge the status quo, or whether to adopt a less ‘radical’ stance and accept a seat inside the political realm. As Carney put it: “If feminism wants its ideas to remain its own and retain ‘the margins as a space of radical openness’... it can. However if feminism is determined that policy-makers integrate feminist ideas into everyday work plans then feminism must open its culture, share its languages, and communicate its ideas effectively.”

The first tactic opens up a whole stream of alternatives for changing the world—the second provides a chance for tangible outcomes. In a policy process that is iterative it is important that the ‘players’ are aware of the dangers of taking on pragmatic reform, and the problems with maintaining a radical edge.

Above all this thesis has shown that it is possible to measure social movement influence in policy argumentation by looking at changes in public sector discourses and the membership of discourse coalitions. Such investigations provide some insights into how and when social movements bring discursive change. This thesis has also shown that ‘girls can do anything’, but their actions and the outcomes they achieve are constrained by existing discourses and institutions.

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## Appendix One

### Women's rights discourse coalition

New Zealand childcare debates 1970-2000 (See Figure 3.6)

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Patriarchal discourse coalition
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Paid-work discourse coalition
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## Women's rights discourse

### Australian childcare debates 1970-2000 (See Figure 5.1)

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Mothercare discourse coalition
Australian childcare debates 1970-2000 (See Figure 5.8)

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**Women's rights discourse coalition**

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## Workers' rights discourse coalition

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Parental rights discourse coalition
Australian childcare debates 1970-2000 (See Figure 5.13)

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Feminist discourse coalition
Australian unpaid work debates 1970-2000 (See Figure 6.5)

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Socially conservative discourse coalition
Australian unpaid work debates (See Figure 6.6)

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Paid-work discourse coalition
Australian unpaid work debates (See Figure 6.7)

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Technocratic discourse coalition
Australian unpaid work debates 1970-2000 (See Figure 6.8)

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