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Brothers all? The operation of the electoral college

in the 2010 Labour leadership contest[1]

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We were brothers all
In honour, as in one community
(William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*)

I Introduction

Ed Miliband's victory as Labour leader in September 2010 focused attention, once again, on the internal politics of the Labour party and on the operation of the electoral college that determined the outcome of the contest. Among other matters, press reports concentrated on the intense and at times acrimonious struggle between Ed Miliband and his brother David that had shaped the contest, the narrow margin of the former's victory, and the role that affiliated trade unions had, arguably, played in determining the result. Though there has been subsequent academic discussion of the leadership election (for example, Dorey and Denham 2010; Jobson and Wickham-Jones 2011), there has been no detailed analysis of the initial nominations for candidates or of the results in the context of the specific workings of Labour's electoral college – an institution at one time seen to confer a

moderating role to party's affiliated unions by which they would stabilise warring factions (Minkin 1991: 357). In this article we fill this gap, raising questions about the nominations process, the ideological divide between candidates, and about the electoral college, the answers to which invalidate hitherto key assumptions (for example that union nominations would not help to shape outcomes) and raise significant issues for the party in terms of both candidate selection and the electoral process.

The Labour leader is chosen by an electoral college made up of three, equally weighted parts (for the origins see Seyd, 1988, 119-125; and Minkin, 1991, 334-57; for a narrative survey of the mechanism see Heppell, 2010; for the political context see Hayter, 2005; and Shaw, 1994). The first comprises members of parliament (MPs) and members of the European parliament (MEPs), the second individual members of the party, and the third members of affiliated organisations, including trade unions, who (following a reform in 1993) vote on the basis of 'one member, one vote' (OMOV). Ed Miliband's success depended upon trade union support in section three of the electoral college: he trailed David in sections one (MPs and MEPs) and two (individual party members). Accordingly the contest raised issues about what was the appropriate role of trade union interventions in shaping Labour party politics. Subsequently, two scholars disputed the impact of organised affiliates on the outcome, arguing that Ed Miliband's victory owed much to the second preference votes of members of parliament (MPs/MEPs) and individual party members in other sections of the electoral college (Dorey and Denham, 2011). Another account, by contrast, suggested that trade union nominations and conduct of the vote had shaped the voting in section three (Jobson and Wickham-Jones, 2011). Critics of this position countered that trade union nominations were simply a recommendation to an organisation's members who then voted as individuals (see Steel, 2010, 4; and Wintour, 2010, 8). Unlike MPs' nominations, they played no formal part in the contest. Moreover, CLPs had exactly the same opportunity to make nominations at the start of the contest. After reform of the electoral college in 1993, many commentators had concluded such nominations to be irrelevant (for discussion of the reformed arrangements see Alderman and Carter, 1995; Quinn, 2004; Russell, 2005; Katwala, 2010; and Jobson and Wickham-Jones, 2011, 324).

The role of organised Labour was not the only contentious aspect of the 2010 leadership election. At the start of the contest, much criticism had been made of the background of the most plausible candidates – white, forty-something year old, Oxbridge educated, middle class, male career politicians. Diane Abbott had emerged as a fifth candidate, narrowly achieving the threshold of supporting nominations necessary to be included on the ballot. (When there is a vacancy, as in 2010, candidates must be nominated by 12.5 per cent of the Parliamentary Labour Party, PLP.) Further issues concerned the differences that had emerged between Ed Miliband and his brother David during the campaign and the extent to which the contest was characterised as an ideological battle between two competing visions of the party's future trajectory and, for that matter, two contrasting interpretations of its past, in terms of its relationship with New Labour (Jobson and Wickham-Jones, 2010).

In this article, we build on earlier accounts of Labour's electoral college. In two pieces published in *Parliamentary Affairs*, for example, Henry Drucker offered a detailed outline of the new arrangements adopted by the Labour party. In the first he charted the origins of the college during the factious conflicts of the late 1970s and early 1980s and indicated how such a structure placed the party's leader under increased pressure (Drucker, 1981). In the second he outlined the operation of the new format in the 1983 leadership and deputy leadership contests. Drawing on the

nominations for the two posts and on the distribution of votes, he was able to identify some statistical patterns in the results. In the deputy leadership contest, while there was stability amongst recommendations made by unions and MPs, there was a degree of instability among nominations by Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) (Drucker, 1984, 296). Some CLPs voted for candidates they had not nominated and vice versa. There was also something of an ideological shift between the 1981 deputy leadership contest and that held in 1983 as around 40 per cent of Tony Benn's support among CLPs went to the rightwing candidate in the latter contest, Roy Hattersley. Drucker concluded that the new arrangements had increased party stability, but noted that the possibility remained that a leader might be elected without winning in all three sections and that 'such a result would not [be] a comfortable one' (Drucker 1983, 299). Malcolm Punnett, again in *Parliamentary Affairs*, detailed the operation of the college in 1988, noting the pressure to reform the process by which unions and members voted (Punnett, 1990; see also Punnett, 1993). He emphasised the resistance to the introduction of one member, one vote in the CLPs, because it could dilute the power of activists and thus potentially privilege 'moderate' leadership candidates, and in union affiliates because it would compromise union leaderships' power over the party derived from their ability to strike bargains on behalf of their members (Punnett 1990, 190, 194). Subsequent papers, once more in this journal, reviewed contests in 1992 and 1994, without examining in detail any statistical voting patterns (Alderman and Carter, 1993; and Alderman and Carter, 1995). Following Punnett's indication that reform would be likely to have unintended consequences, Quinn later concluded that the electoral college had strengthened incumbent leaders, allowing them to reach over the heads of activists and union leaders to more moderate members (Quinn, 2005, see also Heppell 2010, 204-205).

Here, we detail the nominations of candidates in the 2010 contest, and go on to examine in detail the pattern of voting and its relationship to those nominations in all three sections of the electoral college. Our statistical approach is in marked contrast to that adopted by Dorey and Denham and that offered by Jobson and Wickham-Jones as well as that contained in previous studies of leadership contests noted above. We mine the surprisingly rich data released by Labour on the exhaustive series of ballots conducted until one candidate reached a majority in 2010. The data included full details of MPs' and MEPs' preference orderings; the outcome of first preference votes by members on a constituency by constituency basis; and the distribution of the votes from each affiliate among the five candidates. The detail provided went well beyond that offered for the two previous operations of the electoral college since the introduction of OMOV in 1993. In 1994 only first preference votes in section one were published and only percentages in sections two and three (Labour party, 1994, 8, 81-92); in 2007 only a basic summary of the result was distributed (Labour party, 2007). The party had also published, as had been the case in 1994 and 2007, a full list of nominations from MPs, MEPs, constituency Labour parties (CLPs) and affiliated organisations as part of the candidates' statement that went to every participant in the election (Labour party, 2010b). We make comprehensive use of this data across all three sections of the electoral college.

The article proceeds as follows. In the next section we discuss nominations and examine any configurations that emerged from this process. In three subsequent sections we analyse each section of the electoral college in turn: MPs and MEPs, followed by individual party members, and finally affiliated members. Throughout our focus is on the statistics of the outcome: for reasons of space, we address neither the arguments marshalled by candidates nor the techniques (frequently inspired by Barack Obama) by which they tried to win votes. We unpack the outcome looking for patterns of preferences and for internal tensions within the electoral college.

II Formal nominations

On 18 May 2010, Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC), the body nominally responsible for running the party outside parliament, decided, in a break with immediate precedent, that the leadership would be resolved the day before the annual conference, to be held in Manchester in late September (Black, 2010). The last three contested elections to the leadership and deputy leadership occasions, held in 1992, 1994, and 2007, had been determined at special conferences after a few weeks of campaigning. On this occasion, it was decided to revert to the original practice followed by the party of using the electoral college just before the annual conference (as had happened in 1981, 1983, and 1988). Accordingly, the entire summer of 2010 was spent campaigning on the succession to Gordon Brown.

Securing nomination for the Labour party leadership, even when there is a vacancy, is by no means straightforward. Candidates must be nominated by fellow members of the PLP (Labour party, 2008, 24). Following what many perceived to be a frivolous and potentially divisive challenge by Tony Benn to the incumbent Neil Kinnock in 1988, the threshold for nomination was raised from 5 per cent of the PLP to 20 per cent (Heppell, 2010, 142). In 1993, the figure was subsequently lowered, in the event of a vacancy, to 12.5 per cent. Nonetheless, following Benn's 1988 doomed adventure, there had been no leftwing candidate at successive elections for either the leadership or the deputy leadership in 1992, 1994 and 2007 (with the arguable exception of Jon Cruddas in the latter contest) for those on the left of the party were unable to pass the required threshold, an apparent indication of their lack of power. In 2010 any candidate needed the endorsement of 33 MPs to meet the 12.5 per cent threshold. CLPs and affiliates could also nominate. But unlike MPs' nominations, such recommendations played no formal part in the contest. They were not part of the threshold of support that an aspiring candidate needed to meet.

A number of potential candidates put themselves forward when Gordon Brown resigned following the party's loss of the 2010 general election. On 12 May 2010, just days after the defeat, David Miliband was the first to declare (Baldwin, 2010a, 15). From the start, he was widely perceived to be the frontrunner in public opinion polls and by bookmakers (Kirkup and Prince, 2010; and *The Economist*, 2010). He was closely identified with former premier Tony Blair, having headed his policy unit during Labour's first term in government between 1997 and 2001. Three days after David's announcement, he was joined by his brother, Ed Miliband (Stratton, 2010a, 9). They had been on separate sides of the Blair-Brown division that had fractured the party so badly in office: Ed Miliband had worked as a policy adviser for Gordon Brown for a long period after 1994. The younger Miliband was less experienced, having only entered the government in 2006, four years after his brother. However his performance at recent Labour conferences at which he had adopted a high profile, one that extended far outside his departmental brief, was a clear indication of his wider aspirations.

A few days later, the two Milibands were joined by other aspiring candidates, as Ed Balls, John McDonnell (a left-winger), Andy Burnham and Diane Abbott (another member of the party's left) in turn declared themselves as candidates (see, amongst others, Stratton and Curtis, 2010, 15). Ed Balls was perceived to be even closer to Gordon Brown than Ed Miliband, working as chief economic adviser to the Treasury before becoming an MP and serving as Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families under Brown. Andy Burnham, the former Secretary of State for Health, was another career politician.

However, while the Miliband brothers separately cleared the hurdle of 33 MPs to enter the formal contest, the other potential contestants initially struggled to meet the 12.5 per cent threshold. Eventually Ed Balls and Andy Burnham scraped over the line, each with precisely 33 MPs supporting them (the latter right on the deadline). The two candidates perceived to be on the left of the party both found the going even tougher. One day before nominations closed, McDonnell had 16 nominations, while Abbott had just 11 (Stratton, 2010b, 2). Not only was the left's vote split between them, it appeared to be so marginalised that, even taken together, their combined support would fall well short of that required for a nomination.

At this point there was much criticism that, in a party committed to encouraging diversity and equality of participation, all the potential candidates for the Labour leadership would be 40-something year old middle class white men, educated at Oxbridge, who had moved on to become political advisers and worked their way up in the party. Three of the candidates, Balls, Burnham and David Miliband had even played football for the same team, Demon Eyes, in the London Thames League during the late 1990s (Miliband, 2011). Then, in an extraordinary last day of nominations, the pattern changed dramatically (Stratton, 2010c). The rules of the contest allowed MPs who had lodged recommendations with the party to withdraw that backing and give it to another candidate. Accordingly, McDonnell pulled out of the contest and many of his supporters, but not all, went over to Abbott, who had entered the contest specifically to produce 'a more diverse range of candidates' (Baldwin, 2010b). Nonetheless, Abbott was still some way off crossing the 12.5 per cent threshold. She had already received some surprising nominations (in political terms) including those from David Lammy and Keith Vaz, neither of whom would be regarded as the left's natural bedfellows. Just before nominations closed, she then received a flood of support from unlikely quarters including Chris Bryant, Harriet Harman, Tony Lloyd, Denis MacShane, Jack Straw, and, most surprisingly of all, one of the other candidates, David Miliband. None of these were on the left of the party. It would be hard to avoid the conclusion that, stung by such criticism that the party was excluding particular candidatures, leading figures had artificially expanded the contest. Supporters of David Miliband may also have calculated that having a leftwing candidate in the form of Abbott was a useful way to outflank the positions that his brother and Ed Balls, both perceived as being more radical, would take during the long campaign. Nominations for David Miliband had fallen on the final day as some of his supporters reallocated their backing: on which point, we note that Jobson and Wickham-Jones, 2011, drawing on press coverage at the time, wrongly attribute the number of MPs endorsing the former foreign secretary.

Table 1: Nominations, 2010 Labour leadership contest				
Candidate	MPs	MEPs	CLPs	Affiliates
Abbott, Diane	33	0	20	3
Balls, Ed	33	0	17	1
Burnham, Andy	33	1	45	1
Miliband, David	81	6	165	3
Miliband, Ed	63	6	151	9
Did not nominate	14	0	234	14
Source: Labour party, 2010b				

When nominations closed there were, accordingly, five candidates. In terms of support David Miliband led amongst MPs (the formal part of the process) and amongst CLPs, followed in both

these sections by his brother Ed (see Table 1 above). Ed led in the third section amongst affiliates, in particular drawing support from the largest trade unions. Perhaps most strikingly, three of the candidates had only just secured the minimum level of support from MPs formally necessary to enter the contest. We see this as an indication of a manipulative arrangement designed to bring at least one, if not more, of the candidates into the contest so as to provide a more diverse selection of leadership contenders.

We note that there was a regional dimension to the pattern of these nominations, particularly for the less well supported candidates. Andy Burnham received over a third of his nominations from MPs and over 40 per cent of his constituency recommendations from local parties based in the North West where his parliamentary seat, Leigh, is located. Just under a third of Diane Abbott's nominations from MPs were from London (she is an MP for Hackney) though she did less well amongst local parties in the capital. David Miliband received strong backing from MPs in the North-East (his constituency is South Shields). But he also took nearly half the nominations from Scottish MPs. He received more support from Yorkshire MPs than any other candidate despite both his brother and Ed Balls having constituencies there. Both Miliband brothers performed strongly in the East Midlands, London, Wales and the West Midlands with roughly equal number of nominations from MPs. In terms of CLPs' backing, Ed performed well in East Anglia, London, South West and Wales as well as his home base of Yorkshire. In all, David Miliband led in six regions to Ed's five. Between them, they led in all the regions bar one. Northern Irish constituencies (merged for the purposes of Labour party membership and lacking a single Labour MP) nominated Andy Burnham, the first such nomination in a Labour leadership election. At the CLP level, therefore, this already appeared an essentially two horse race between the Miliband brothers.

III Voting amongst MPs and MEPs

270 ballots were distributed in the first section of Labour's electoral college to MPs and MEPs (one member of the PLP elected in May 2010 had had the whip withdrawn because of the expenses scandal). Four MPs did not vote: Gordon Brown (former leader), Harriet Harman (acting leader), Nick Brown (chief whip) and Tony Lloyd (chair of the PLP). Four other MPs dropped out during successive rounds: two candidates (Diane Abbott and Ed Balls), one aspiring candidate (John McDonnell) and the partner of a candidate (Yvette Cooper). Abbott and Balls respectively voted for themselves alone; Cooper voted only for Balls; McDonnell just for Abbott. Every other member of section one voted for either of the Miliband brothers at some stage and were included in the final calculation. Andy Burnham's initial vote for himself then went to David Miliband (he put Ed third). David and Ed Miliband voted for each other as their second and only other preference. Fifty seven MPs or MEPs stated only one preference: 53 of these were for David (31) or Ed (22). As can be seen in Table 3, David Miliband, closely followed by his brother Ed, dominated voting amongst MPs and MEPs. Gaining 42 per cent of the votes cast as first preferences, David went on to win this section by 140 ballots to 122 in the final round.

Table 3: Voting by MPs and MEPs, round by round, 2010 Labour leadership contest				
Round Candidate	1	2	3	4
Abbott	7			
Balls	40	41	43	
Burnham	24	24		
Miliband David	111	111	125	140
Miliband Ed	84	88	96	122
Total	266	264	264	262
Did not vote	4	6	6	8
Source: Labour party, 2010a				

Table 4 gives the distribution of preferences and, in the process, emphasises the Milibands' collective dominance of the PLP. Only 95 MPs mapped out explicitly their full ordering of preferences including last place. The vast majority of those that did (81 in all) placed Diane Abbott last. But the fourth preferences are also revealing. Andy Burnham got more than twice as many fourth preferences as he did first. Ed Balls got nearly the same number of fourth and first preferences. Implied preferences (adding a fifth choice where a candidate made four rankings) are given in the last column of Table 4. All but one of these 26 implied last preferences were for Diane Abbott, making her the last choice of 106 of 121 MPs whose full preference choice can be identified.

Table 4: Preference ranking of candidates by MPs and MEPs, 2010 Labour leadership contest						
Preference Candidate	1	2	3	4	5	5 including implied last
Abbott	7	4	4	9	81	106
Balls	40	38	40	38	3	3
Burnham	24	28	33	55	6	7
Miliband, David	111	61	28	9	4	4
Miliband, Ed	84	74	40	10	1	1
Total	266	205	145	121	95	121
Source: Labour party, 2010a						

Many members of the first section of the electoral college voted for both Miliband brothers in their first or second preferences (see Table 5 below). The number of combined first and second preference votes going to Ed and David, 72, is an indication that potentially there was not as great an ideological split between the brothers as was perceived to be the case in press reports.

Table 5: MPs and MEPs voting for David Miliband or Ed Miliband as their first or second preference, 2010 Labour leadership contest

First preference \ Second preference	Miliband, David	Miliband, Ed	Other candidate	Total
Miliband, David	xxx	40	37	77
Miliband, Ed	32	xxx	29	61
Other candidate	29	34	4	67
Source: Labour party, 2010a				

MPs' nominations and voting

The data on MPs' voting indicates the fluidity of nominations made over three months earlier in June 2010 (far more than that identified in 1983 by Drucker, 1984, 296). Nominations were made by 243 MPs (see Table 1 above). When voting closed in September, 42 of these had shifted allegiance (see Table 6 below). Over 17 per cent of the PLP did not vote for the candidate they nominated. Diane Abbott lost 26 of her 33 nominees. Two did not vote (Harriet Harman as acting leader and Tony Lloyd as chair of the PLP) but the remainder voted for other candidates (many for David Miliband). The paucity of Abbott's support among the PLP is clear, but so too is her lack of support on the left of the party as indicated by the voting of members of the Campaign Group. Formally founded in 1982, the group represents the core of leftwing members of parliament and can be considered to be Abbott's natural constituency. Of the 14 or so core members, however, four did not vote for Abbott at all, one put her last, another fourth, and one second. Manifestly, she did not get the combined votes of those who had been committed to a McDonnell candidacy back in May 2010 as well as her original supporters. In short, the viability of Diane Abbott's candidacy was clearly doubtful.

Table 6: Shifts between nominations and voting, Labour party leadership contest 2010

	Nominations	Flow of votes away	Flow of votes to
Abbott, Diane	33	26	0
Balls, Ed	33	1	7
Burnham, Andy	33	13	2
Miliband, David	81	1	21
Miliband. Ed	63	1	10
Total	243	42	20
Note: two nominating MPs, Harriet Harman Tony Lloyd and did not vote.			
Source: calculated from Labour party, 2010a and 2010b			

The distribution of votes in the PLP does not, however, raise question marks purely over the Abbott candidacy. Andy Burnham, too, lost considerable support overall. Having been nominated by 33 MPs, he received the first preference votes of only 20 of those members of the PLP who had supported him back in June. Whilst he picked up two votes, he lost 13 during the course of the

campaign. Amongst the MPs who nominated him, one placed him last, two placed him fourth and one did not rank him: yet without their support he would not have reached the threshold of nominations and his candidacy would not have succeeded. It may be that this flow away from Abbott and Burnham is a product of the summer-long campaign. Alternatively, given the reasonable consistency of preferences amongst MPs and MEPs detected by YouGov (2010a) over the summer, we see evidence here of the deliberate attempt to widen the array of candidates at the time nominations closed, and of the limited boundaries of the PLP's ideological terrain.

IV Voting amongst individual party members

The second section of Labour's electoral college comprised 177,559 individual party members of whom just over 125,000 voted. At the end of the first round, David Miliband led in this section, with 44.1 per cent of the ballots cast (see Table 7 below).[2] By the final round, he received 54.4 per cent of the vote to Ed Miliband's 45.6 per cent. Looking at the plurality of the vote, David's dominance is clearer still. He won outright in 540 constituencies (more than 85 per cent of the total) whereas Ed Miliband won outright in just 73 (12 per cent). The remaining CLPs were either ties (10 in total, all involving David Miliband) or distributed between the other candidates. Diane Abbott did not win a single constituency. In her own constituency of Hackney North and Stoke Newington she received merely 20.7 per cent, coming third behind the Milibands. Ed Balls led in just two constituencies: Morley and Outwood, his own, and Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford, that of his partner Yvette Cooper. Andy Burnham won only eight constituencies, seven of these in the North-West, his home region. In short, David was clearly the first preference of party members.

Table 7: Individual party members' votes, round by round, 2010 Labour leadership contest				
Round / Candidate	1	2	3	4
Abbott, Diane	9,314			
Balls, Ed	12,831	14,510	18,114	
Burnham, Andy	10,844	12,498		
Miliband, David	55, 905	57,128	60,375	66,814
Miliband, Ed	37,874	42,176	46,697	55,992
Total valid votes	126,874	126,312	125, 186	122,806
Source: Labour party, 2010a				

Was the membership vote shaped by partisan incumbency (i.e. by whether or not a constituency was represented by a Labour MP)? On the face of it, David Miliband might have been expected to do better in non-Labour seats given his apparent appeal towards the centre ground of British politics. By contrast, given their partisan positioning, the other candidates might be expected to do better in

constituencies held by the party. However, the difference between the two types of seat was marginal: in seats not held by Labour David obtained 43.8 per cent of the vote and won the highest share of the vote in 88 per cent; in Labour seats the equivalent figures were 44.4 and 81 per cent respectively. Of course voters in Labour seats may have voted for David as the candidate best able to help the party win backs seats lost elsewhere in past elections. Nonetheless, the pattern undermines the notion of an ideological split in the party membership.

CLPs and geography

Much of the distribution of the individual members' votes across the regions was consistent (see Table 8 below). David Miliband topped the poll in every region. Only in three (Scotland and Yorkshire and Humberside alongside Northern Ireland) was his lead over his brother less than ten percentage points. In another indicator of consistency, Ed Miliband came second in every region with the exception of the small (in terms of Labour party membership) Northern Ireland. Burnham's impressive performance in Northern Ireland may reflect the fact that he was the only candidate to visit the region during the contest, the proximity of his constituency, and perhaps also his Liverpudlian roots.

Table 8: Percentage share of first preference votes, by region, 2010 Labour party leadership contest						
Region	Abbott, Diane	Balls, Ed	Burnham, Andy	Miliband, David	Miliband, Ed	Total
East Anglia	9	12	6	45	29	100
East Midlands	7	10	8	45	29	100
London	9	8	5	46	31	100
North East	5	9	7	53	26	100
North West	6	8	19	41	25	100
Northern Ireland	7	4	28	34	27	100
Scotland	7	11	7	41	35	100
South East	8	11	7	44	30	100
South West	8	12	7	43	29	100
Wales	6	11	7	44	32	100
West Midlands	7	11	8	45	29	100
Yorkshire and Humber-side	6	11	9	39	34	100
Source: Labour party, 2010a						

The distribution of votes is perhaps most striking in London. In terms of nominations Ed Miliband had more support from MPs in London than David (11 to 10) and more nominations from CLPs (26 to 18). It does not seem to have helped much with the popular vote which David won by 46 to 31 per cent, taking the highest share of the vote in every single London constituency, 70 in all. A germane contrast can be drawn here with the vote for the London mayoral candidate in 2010. In that contest, Ken Livingstone won over 65 per cent of the votes cast, giving him a majority over Oona King of more than 30 percentage points. The leftwing Livingstone received more votes than King in every single constituency in London. At the same time the moderate David Miliband won every London constituency in the leadership election. He had a lead over Ed of around 15 percentage points. A

considerable number of those voting must have voted a David Miliband/Ken Livingstone ticket for party leader and mayorial candidate respectively.

Such a pattern of voting indicates a strong non-ideological aspect of the ballots for Labour leadership and mayorial candidate. That is, party members did not endorse ideological consistency in endorsing either a David Miliband-King alignment or an Ed Miliband-Livingstone one. Further support for this conclusion is produced in polls by YouGov during the campaign which indicated that most party members were well to the left of David Miliband (see the discussion in Quinn, 2012). Nearly 90 per cent of party members perceived themselves to be leftwing, in one shade or another. Yet David was located within the centre ground of the party (alongside less than 10 per cent of its members). 53 per cent of party members saw themselves as either very or fairly leftwing: only 5 per cent regarded David in a similar way.

The impact of CLP nominations on voting

Just under 400 constituencies had taken the opportunity to nominate for the contest (see Table 1 above). The Miliband brothers took nearly 80 per cent of these with David (165) edging out Ed (151). The remaining constituency nominations were divided between the other three candidates with Ed Balls getting least (17). On the face of it, such constituency nominations from June had little impact on the voting that took place in September 2010. 82 constituencies nominated Abbott, Balls or Burnham but they came top (or tied first) in just 11 constituencies (none of which had nominated another candidate). Abbott did not win a single constituency that nominated her. Balls won just two. In many cases nominations appear to reflect the collective view of either local oligarchies and or a hard-core of committed activists who were able to make the decision to recommend a candidate without delivering the votes of individual members or apparently even shaping their outlook in a discernable fashion (see Table 9 below). Remarkably, twelve constituencies nominated a candidate who then got less than ten votes from the local members. Diane Abbott was nominated by 20 constituencies but received less than 25 votes in 15 of these. Andy Burnham picked up less than 25 votes in nearly half of the constituencies (21 out of 45) that nominated him. It is a striking feature of David Miliband's domination of the CLP vote that he received more than 40 per cent of first preferences in all but 23 of the 165 seats that nominated him. By contrast, his brother Ed managed that threshold in only 21 out of 151 seats. The value of nominations is also questioned when consideration is given to the number of constituencies that made a recommendation only for those members to vote in a different manner. David failed to win a plurality of the votes in only six seats that supported him. For Ed, the figure is well over 100.

Table 9: No of nominating CLPs in which candidates failed to clear a threshold of votes or share of the vote, 2010 Labour party leadership contest						
	Overall nominations	Less than 10 votes	Less than 35 votes	Less than 20 per cent	Less than 40 per cent	Did not win
Abbott, Diane	20	5	17	19	20	20
Balls, Ed	17	1	8	7	16	15
Burnham, Andy	45	6	28	29	41	38
Miliband, David	165	0	3	0	23	6
Miliband Ed	151	0	14	2	130	117
Source: Labour party, 2010a and 2010b						

A similar pattern emerges from the overall vote amongst members. Table 10 indicates how each candidate did in terms of the share of the vote according to who that member's constituency had nominated. All candidates did better in such constituencies, the three trailing candidates relatively better than the Milibands though not enough to raise their performance above that of the two brothers. Regardless of who nominated, as Table 10 indicates, David was the most popular candidate amongst members, whilst Ed was second. Only with those CLPs that nominated Ed Milband does David's lead drop below thirteen per cent – falling to 8 per cent.

Table 10: Percentage share of first preference votes by party members broken down by CLP nominations for candidates in nominating constituencies, 2010 Labour party leadership contest.							
		Share of first preference votes (per cent)					
CLP nomination:	No.	Abbott, Diane	Balls, Ed	Burnham, Andy	Miliband, David	Miliband, Ed	All
Abbott	20	11.8	8.4	7.2	43.0	29.6	100
Balls	17	5.7	23.8	8.5	37.7	24.2	100
Burnham	45	5.3	9.0	21.7	39.4	24.6	100
Miliband, D.	165	6.6	9.3	7.8	49.5	26.8	100
Miliband, E.	151	7.7	9.5	6.7	41.7	34.4	100
Overall average	398	7.4	12.0	10.4	42.3	27.9	
Source: Labour party 2010a and 2010b							

A further indication of the relative lack of impact of CLP nominations is given in Table 11 below which compares voting by members with opinion polls of the same electorate taken in July and September (see YouGov 2010a and Quinn, 2012). What is striking about the polls is their consistency over the period of the contest and, some minor variation aside, their relative accuracy with regard to the final result.

Table 11: Comparison of opinion polls of members with voting, 2010 Labour leadership contest			
	July poll (%)	September poll (%)	First round preferences (%)
Abbott, Diane	13	11	7
Balls, Ed	7	9	10
Burnham, Andy	10	10	9
Miliband, David	38	38	44
Miliband, Ed	32	31	30
Source: YouGov, 2010a; and Labour party, 2010a.			

V Voting by affiliated members

The third section of Labour's electoral college consists of affiliates, which can broadly be divided into two types: trade unions and a plethora of general socialist groups. The former dominate the latter massively - in terms of ballots distributed, trade unions outnumbered the socialist societies by 2,727,378 votes to 19,652. Of the 2.7 million votes distributed to the affiliates only just over 200,000 valid votes were cast. Effective turnout was a miserable 7.7 per cent. As Table 12 below indicates, in contrast to the other sections of the electoral college, Ed Miliband led amongst affiliates from the first round onwards despite the fact that the ideological profile of union members and their perception of the candidates differed little from that of individual party members (Quinn, 2012, chapter 3). In the final round he received just under 60 per cent of the vote in this section. This was sufficient to overwhelm voting in the other two sections, thus securing him the leadership, but at the price of accusations that his victory lacked legitimacy and earning him the tag 'Red Ed' from some press commentators (see, for example, Milne 2010, Peev 2010; and Watson 2010) – something which he was forced to tackle head-on at the September 2010 conference. Ironically, the circumstances of his victory may have served to limit his utility to the unions as he subsequently strove to avoid appearing to be their creature – for example, proposing a plan that the voting power of the trade unions at the party's annual conference be reduced (see Maguire, 2011; Stratton, Wintour and Charlton, 2011; and Walker 2011); a proposal vigorously and successfully opposed by the unions.

Table 12: Voting by members of affiliates, round by round, 2010 Labour party leadership contest				
	1st round	2nd round	3rd round	4th round
Abbott, Diane	25,938	-	-	-
Balls, Ed	21,618	26,441	35,512	-
Burnham, Andy	17,904	25,528	-	-
Miliband, David	58,189	61,336	66,889	80,266
Miliband, Ed	87,585	95,335	102,882	119,405
Total	211, 234	208,640	205,283	199,671
Source: Labour party 2010a				

There are currently 15 trade unions affiliated to the Labour party, far fewer than in the past. Three of these did not distribute ballots in the leadership election. Three unions, BECTU (Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union), BFAWU (Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union) and the Musicians' Union, did not nominate but did vote. The remaining nine unions nominated and voted. There are sixteen socialist organisations affiliated to Labour, of which five nominated and voted while nine voted but did not nominate. In all, out of twenty-six affiliates that participated in voting, fourteen affiliates made recommendations that were printed in the candidate booklet whilst twelve did not.

Overall, around 97 per cent of the electorate of this third section of the electoral college were members of bodies that made nominations. This figure reflects the domination of the section by the three biggest trade unions, Unite, GMB, and Unison, each of which had nominated and together represented just under 75 per cent of the total. With support from these unions and from UCATT, nearly 80% of trade union nominations, as a share of total membership, went to Ed Miliband. In terms of the overall electorate in this section, trade unionists represented over 99 per cent of the votes.

How did nominations by affiliates shape the distribution of first preference votes for the five candidates? Of the five affiliated societies that nominated, three voted in favour of that nominee. Ed Miliband won amongst the Labour disabled group and the Socialist Health Alliance, whilst David Miliband won a plurality of Labour students. But David also won amongst Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) members who had nominated Diane Abbott and Labour Lawyers who had nominated Ed Miliband. On average the nominee received just 34.0 per cent amongst affiliated societies, in part a reflection of Diane Abbott's poor vote amongst BAME members.

Nomination mattered more amongst the affiliated unions. Nine unions nominated and carried out ballots: eight delivered a plurality of votes that corresponded to their recommendation to members (see Table 13 below). The single exception was TSSA (Transport Salaried Staffs Association), who endorsed Diane Abbott but whose members gave more votes to David Miliband. However, he beat Abbott by just 25 votes, around 0.1 per cent of the organisation's membership, and his vote share was the lowest enjoyed by the leading candidate on the first ballot amongst any of Labour's affiliated unions. Overall, 49.3 per cent of first preference votes were cast for a union's nominee.

Table 13: Trade union nominations and leader on first preference votes, 2010 Labour party leadership contest				
Union	Nominee	Percentage secured by nominee	Leader on first preferences	Percentage secured by winner
ASLEF	Diane Abbott	50.4	Diane Abbott	50.4
Community	David Miliband	59.7	David Miliband	59.7
CWU	Ed Balls	45.2	Ed Balls	45.2
GMB	Ed Miliband	49.3	Ed Miliband	49.3
TSSA	Diane Abbott	30.5	David Miliband	31.3
UCATT	Ed MIliband	66.9	Ed Miliband	66.9
Unison	Ed Miliband	40.7	Ed Miliband	40.7
Unite	Ed Miliband	49.7	Ed Miliband	49.7
USDAW	David Miliband	64.2	David Miliband	64.2
Average		49.3		49.3
Source: Labour party 2010a and 2010b				

Amongst unions that did not nominate, the winner of the greatest share of the vote (David Miliband in the case of two, Diane Abbott in the case of the third) received on average 32 per cent of the vote – 17 percentage points less than was the mean for nominating unions. Amongst affiliated societies that did not nominate (all of which favoured either David or Ed Miliband) the winner received on average around 41 per cent of the vote. Overall, most union memberships voted with their union's recommendation, the winner receiving on average around half the union's vote. Where unions did not nominate, the winner of that body received a much lower share of around a third. For the affiliated societies, the outcome is more complex. Nominations do not seem to have favoured candidates in such a direct way, partly because of Diane Abbott performed badly amongst the membership of BAME which had nominated her. Perhaps surprisingly, here, the winner amongst socialist societies that did not nominate frequently performed better than the winner amongst those that did.

Quite why union nominations should shape the distribution of votes so directly is uncertain. A generic alignment with the union leadership and a general allegiance to that body on the part of those taking part, as opposed to a specific endorsement of a candidate and their ideological position has been suggested to play a part (see Jobson and Wickham-Jones, 2011, 334-338). For the affiliated societies such generic loyalty would be far less important to a politically engaged membership, each of whom might make their own assessments of the different candidates. For some of the socialist societies, candidates may have had a strong identity with memberships thus effectively rendering any recommendation unnecessary. For example, Ed Miliband's vote from SERA is unsurprising given its interest reflected his outgoing portfolio in the Labour government.

We can get another sense of how trade union nominations shaped the 2010 Labour leadership contest by looking at the distribution of votes between the different candidates according to

whether the organisation nominated or not (Table 14 below). The very strong performance of Ed Miliband in nominating unions is manifest. The contrast with non-nominating unions is striking: in these unions David Miliband received more support. More noteworthy still is how much stronger Diane Abbott performed amongst the non-nominating unions, receiving 25.5 per cent of the vote. How representative is this outcome? Only three relatively small unions held ballots but did not make a recommendation. That is, did Diane Abbott perform well amongst these unions because of their atypical, radical nature? Or would she have done as well amongst other unions – had they taken the decision not to nominate? It is hard to give a categorical answer. The Musicians' Union may not be a particularly typical representative of organised labour (and was wrongly stated in the press to have nominated Abbott – see Kettle, 2010). BECTU was engaged in an industrial dispute at the time of the leadership contest. Equally, however, in the absence of an official recommendation from their leadership, some active trade unionists may have been more prepared to cast their vote for the most radical candidate standing in the election – that is, for Diane Abbott. Accordingly, the decision not to nominate appears to have resulted in more radical votes (for Diane Abbott) and more moderate ones (for David Miliband), both at the expense of Ed Miliband.

Table 14: First preference votes cast by union members, 2010 Labour party leadership contest			
A. Nominating Unions	Ballots received	Percentage share of the vote	Ranking
Abbott, Diane	23,388	11.9	3
Balls, Ed	20,455	10.4	4
Burnham, Andy	16,675	8.5	5
Miliband, David	53,294	27.1	2
Miliband, Ed	82,938	42.2	1
Total	196,750		
B. Non-nominating unions			
Abbott, Diane	1,691	25.5	3
Balls, Ed	567	8.6	5
Burnham, Andy	574	8.7	4
Miliband, David	2004	30.2	1
Miliband, Ed	1793	27.0	2
Total	6,629		
Source: Labour party 2010a and 2010b			

Evidence of the impact of union nominations is also to be found in the shifts in preferences of trade unionists during the summer (see Table 15 below, see also YouGov, 2010b and 2010c). YouGov polling indicated growing support for Ed Miliband, which can be attributed to the nominations and specific campaigning adopted by the unions. Of course, the swing might reflect the general impact of

Ed Miliband's campaign but it is worth noting that it was not replicated amongst party members (Table 11 above).

Table 15: Polling of trade unionists and first round voting, 2010 Labour leadership contest			
	July 2010 %	September 2010 %	First round %
Abbott, Diane	17	12	12
Balls, Ed	11	9	10
Burnham, Andy	13	14	8
Miliband, David	34	29	28
Miliband, Ed	26	36	41
Source: YouGov, 2010a and Labour party 2010a			

VI Conclusions

The 2010 contest for the Labour party leadership was a long and drawn out affair, one that culminated in gripping circumstances with an extremely close victory for Ed Miliband. In this article, drawing on the data provided by the party, we have unpacked the statistics of the result with regard to each section of the electoral college in terms of nominations, first preferences, and overall voting. In the process, we hope to have demonstrated just how cumbersome the procedures to elect the Labour leader are. Indeed, in analysing the data made available by Labour we think we have detected an error in the results published by the party. The total vote of individual members allocated to David Miliband put out by the party is 66,814. Having checked our data several times, our analysis indicates he received one vote less. To be sure, this amount is trivial to say the least and does not impact on the already miniscule size of Ed Miliband's majority. It is, however, an indication of the problematic and complex character of the electoral college.

In conclusion, a number of issues arising from our discussion demand emphasis. First, the link between nominations and voting by MPs was extremely fluid and shifts in allegiance during the campaign were significant. Diane Abbott's candidacy was the result of manipulations within the PLP in the sense that she had minimal genuine backing from Labour MPs. Abbott's candidacy gave the contest greater diversity of candidates and facilitated discussion of a wider range of issues by injecting the left's voice into debate. It is much less certain whether it was a substantive campaign. Andy Burnham's campaign also struggled to clear the formal threshold of support from the PLP that was necessary for him to be placed on the ballot paper. Our understanding is that some MPs made clear to him at the time of nominations that they would be extremely unlikely to give him a first preference in September. Likewise Ed Balls only just cleared the hurdle of nominations (though he picked up votes from MPs during the campaign). His relatively low personal vote from the members of his own constituency, in contrast to that attained by Burnham and the Milibands, may also be telling evidence of a candidate lacking sustained support. In effect, therefore, the 2010 Labour leadership contest was from the start a two-horse race. As Dorey and Denham (2011) note, Ed Miliband's victory owed much to second and subsequent preferences as ballots were redistributed:

though given that David led on the first ballot only to lose on the fourth round of preferences, such a condition must axiomatically be the case.

The fact that some candidates had minimal support from the PLP despite reaching the nomination threshold must raise question marks about their place in their campaign. However successful they may have been in raising issues, such candidacies were not plausible given the rules of the contest. Labour may well have issues concerning the socio-economic and political narrowness of its pool of potential leadership candidates. In retrospect, artificial manipulations of the formal rules do not appear to be a solution to that problem given the evidence here of the negligible support such candidates will receive in formal voting.

Second, the analysis of voting in sections one and two of the electoral college, made of up of MPs and MEPs, and individual party members respectively, confirms the dominance of David Miliband across those sections of the party. The ideological positioning of party members obtained by opinion polling indicates that his support did not reflect either political issues or specific proposals. David scored highly compared to the other candidates on issues of competence and electability (Quinn, 2012). In these sections, one is struck by the virtual absence of ideology from the detectable voting patterns. This conclusion confirms the point made by Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley (2002, 168) that New Labour's members placed considerable emphasis on electoral success and its preconditions alongside any ideological commitments they might have. In this context, the non-ideological pattern of votes in London (with many David Miliband supporters backing the left-wing Ken Livingstone as mayoral candidate) is especially noteworthy. (Of course, the Milibands set out varied policy positions during the long campaign. Such differences did not shape an ideological chasm in voting.)

Third, we have examined the role of nominations offered by constituency parties in section two of the electoral college. We have noted the limited impact that these had on the electoral process, with David Miliband dominating all types of constituency regardless as to who they nominated. In many cases, constituency nominations appear to have been made by local oligarchies and committed activists that had little impact on the final vote of the members within those localities. This conclusion may reflect on the current state of many local Labour parties after a decade or so of falling membership and general political inactivity.

Fourth, by contrast with CLP recommendations, we have shown the role that nominations played in the third section of the electoral college, that made up of affiliated members. Work by Jobson and Wickham-Jones (2011) has offered an account as to how trade union nominations and campaigning played a part in the electoral process. The statistical data provided here gives substantive evidence backing up their argument, demonstrating that trade union nominations shaped the pattern of first preference votes in favour of Ed Miliband. In particular, we are able to contrast how nominations by trade unions had more impact than the recommendations offered by constituency parties. Where trade unions nominated, 49 per cent of affiliated members followed that guidance. Where constituency parties nominated, 38 per cent of individual members went along with that recommendation. More relevant still, the contrast between unions that nominated and those that did not is much greater than that for constituency parties (or socialist societies).   Given the ideological similarities between members of the two groups (noted above), we conclude that the

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sharp differences between the voting of CLP members and trade unionists reflect the impact that union nominations had on the latter.

Overall, on the basis of the available data, we find that the long campaign shaped the different sections of the electoral college in distinct ways. Individual party members appear to have been most consistent in their support for candidates. At the same time some MPs shifted away from their nominations while affiliated members modified their alignment in response to union recommendations and intense campaigning.

We end with an observation about the efficiency of the party's procedures for electing its leader. Labour's electoral college was designed in arbitrary circumstance during the conflicts that engulfed the party in the early 1980s. Following its establishment, scholars and participants alike defended it in functional terms (see, for example, Minkin, 1991). Trade union participation in the election of the Labour leader, it was argued, allowed affiliates to perform a stabilising role in a party whose parliamentary elite and members might be at loggerheads. Our analysis of the voting patterns in the 2010 leadership contest demonstrates categorically that the procedure is no longer fulfilling such a task. Instead union voting was notably at odds with voting in the other two sections, not least because union members were heavily influenced by their leaderships in the context of an increasingly concentrated movement dominated by a few super unions. The result was the election of a leader who was not the first choice of either the parliamentary party or of party members and whose legitimacy was therefore immediately in question. Manifestly, the 2010 leadership contest has raised significant questions about the practical viability and normative desirability of the electoral college.

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Note

[2] For the purposes of this analysis, the Northern Irish constituencies are conflated into a single seat, as they are for Labour party membership, giving a total of 633 seats altogether. Other than in Table 12, we have also excluded from this data party members living abroad and those for whom no address was given.