CHILD CARE, WHO CARES?  
A CRITIQUE OF CHILD CARE IN CANADA

by

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B.A., The University of British Columbia, 1995

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Political Science

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standing

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 2000

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ABSTRACT

Today in Canada, child care is not perceived by the government, nor its citizenry, as a public good. Despite numerous reports from economic, health, social and psychological experts, Canadians remain complacent about the inadequate child care provisions in our country. As a society, we do not demand, or even anticipate, the public provision of universal, affordable, accessible child care. Instead, Canadians consider the care of children to be a predominantly private issue; unworthy of significant government intervention or assistance. Consequently, parents and children must improvise within a privatized, ad hoc, market-oriented patchwork of individualized child care arrangements. While it is true that certain “special” cases are acknowledged to deserve the government’s support, - for example Aboriginal children and children with special needs, as well as the children of “welfare moms” - their exceptional status serves to reinforce the notion that the care of children is primarily a private parental responsibility.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and critique the current child care system (or lack thereof) in Canada. In addition, I intend to show that existing child care arrangements are unsatisfactory not only because of the immediate consequences for parents, children, and child care workers, but because of the way in which the privatized purchasing of child care reinforces other systemic shortcomings in our patriarchal, racialized, capitalist society. I will argue that current attitudes toward child care in Canada, as part of a patriarchal capitalist and racialized paradigm, rely on and perpetuate detrimental notions of class, gender and race, to the disadvantage of all citizens. Finally, I will discuss the possibilities for meaningful reform of the Canadian approach to child care.
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INTRODUCTION

Nothing is quite as revealing about the character of political life in a society as the manner in which public resources are generated and then used up in the pursuit of public goods.¹

Today in Canada, child care is not valued by the government, nor its citizenry, as a public good. As a society, we do not demand, or even anticipate the provision of universal, affordable, accessible child care. Instead, Canadians consider the care of children to be a predominantly private issue; unworthy of significant government intervention or assistance.² Consequently, parents and children must improvise within a privatized, ad hoc, market-oriented patchwork of individualized child care arrangements. While it is true that certain “special” cases are acknowledged to deserve the government’s support, - for example Aboriginal children and children with special needs, as well as the children of “welfare moms” - their exceptional status reinforces the notion that the care of children is primarily a private parental responsibility. As Evelyn Ferguson explains, “The state’s current residual role, in which help is provided only if parents are deemed in need or inadequate, does not ensure support for ‘normal’ families and reinforces the perception

² Less than 15% of Canadian children have access to regulated child care services. Furthermore, access to regulated care varies considerably among the provinces. British Columbia and Quebec provide the most (per capita) regulated spaces, while 6 provinces have fewer than 10% coverage and two others have fewer than 5% regulated child care spaces. Childcare Resource and Research Unit, “Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada: Provinces and Territories” (Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Centre for Urban & Community Studies, University of Toronto. April 2000). On line: http://www.childcarecanada.org/whatsnew/pt98hlts.html. Accessed 02/07/00.
It should be noted at this point that the federal government does assist parents in their child care costs through the Child Care Expense Deduction. While statistics are not available after 1996, it must be acknowledged that the government forgoes considerable revenues through the deduction. The CCED, and the federal government’s reason for investing in direct benefits, rather than public programs, will be discussed further in Chapters 1 and 2.
that child care is the primary responsibility of women who work in the private sphere of
the home.\textsuperscript{3}

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and critique the current child care system
(or lack thereof) in Canada. In addition, I intend to show that existing child care
arrangements are unsatisfactory not only because of the immediate consequences for
children, parents, and child care workers, but because of the way in which the privatized
purchasing of child care reinforces other systemic shortcomings of modern patriarchal
capitalist society. I will argue that current attitudes toward child care in Canada, as part of
a patriarchal, capitalist paradigm, rely on and perpetuate sexism, classism, and the
international (racialized) exploitation of economically disadvantaged women.
Furthermore, I will regretfully argue that under the current conditions of devalued and
underpaid child care, combined with the trends toward devolution and downsizing, true
reform will be difficult, if not impossible to achieve.

In Chapter 1, I will provide an historical overview of Canadian attitudes toward
child care; beginning at the turn of the century, and culminating with the failure of the
Liberal Party’s 1993 Red Book promise. I will also describe the current state of child
care in Canada. In Chapter 2, I will explain, through conventional policy analysis, the
failure of the Liberal promise, and the reasons why the issue was subsequently ‘dropped’
from the public agenda. In Chapter 3, having addressed the ‘policy’ issues pertaining to

\textsuperscript{3} Evelyn Ferguson, “The Child Care Crisis: Realities of Women’s Caring”, in Carol T. Baines, Patricia M.
Evans & Sheila M. Neysmith, ed.s, \textit{Women’s Caring: Feminist Perspectives on Social Welfare} (Toronto:
Canada's approach to child care, I will explore the ways in which current attitudes toward the paid care of children are harmful for women, children, and society in general. In particular, I will argue that Canadians' treatment of the child care issue reinforces anachronistic assumptions about the so-called public/private divide, capitalism, gender, class, and race. Finally, in Chapter 4 I will argue that Canadians' attitudes toward child care and the role of government practically preclude the possibility of substantial change. In short, I will assert that there can never be genuine reform in the area of child care as long as Canadians continue to conceive of the issue (if they think of it at all) as a matter of predominantly private concern. Furthermore, in the current political/economic environment of devolution and privatization, 'marginal' issues such as child care are unlikely to be considered matters of national concern, and will likely be dismissed in favour of accepted 'public' issues, such as health care.

While some may argue that the announcement of the National Children's Agenda indicates a growing awareness of the need for child care, a close reading of the so-called Agenda in fact reveals a complete absence of any call for universal, accessible child care. Instead, the Agenda repeatedly refers to provincial autonomy and non-binding "invitations" to work toward ambiguous "goals" and "indicators" for Canadian children. This will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 1 and 2.

It is interesting to note that on 5 June 2000, social services ministers from all ten provinces announced their intention to refuse to participate in any National Children's Agenda talks until the federal government agreed to restore $4.2 billion in cuts from annual health care transfers. According to Martha Friendly, this announcement was devastating, and showed the provinces' willingness to "hold children hostage for the sake of healthcare funding". She further noted that "The provinces have a point about the CHST, but they don't have a point when it comes to tying the two things together." Charlie Gillis, "Provinces Link Daycare to Health Funds" National Post (10 June 2000). Online: http://www.nationalpost.com/search/story.html?f=/stories/000610/314307.html. Accessed 06/26/00.

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CHAPTER 1: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PUBLICLY-FUNDED CHILD CARE IN CANADA

Origins

The Canadian government’s first venture into the realm of child care was both paternalistic and welfare-oriented. “The daytime care of children became a social issue in nineteenth century Canada following a noticeable increase in the number of ‘neglected’ and delinquent children in the industrialized cities.” Beginning in 1909, the government gave founding and operational grants to day nurseries in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. The overt function of the day nurseries was to “benefit and encourage the working poor”, although “equally important was their role in a system of social control and regulation of the poor.” From the turn of the century until World War II, public child care was seen as a charitable means of assisting the needy, while instilling ‘proper’ values in the children of ‘unfortunate’ women.

World War II provided the context for the first conceptual revolution in attitudes toward public child care. For the first time, publicly-funded child care was not stigmatized as a service designed exclusively for the children of economically disadvantaged women.

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8 It should be noted that this is in fact a recurrent theme throughout various policy approaches to the issue of child care. Even today, many politicians and citizens conceive of child care as a “social welfare service” for the poor. The problems associated with this “charitable” approach will be discussed in Chapter 3.
Women's labour was needed during the Second World War in industries and in many positions left vacant by men who had joined the armed forces. As part of a plan to draw women into the workforce, Prime Minister Mackenzie King offered federal cost-sharing with the provinces that provided day care centres for mothers working in war industries, a benefit which was later extended to all working women.9

This arrangement was codified in the *Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement*, enacted in 1942.10 Thus, in the context of the war, child care was conceived by both the government and the people as a necessary element of a national goal. On a certain level, the *Agreement* also signified a recognition (albeit limited) of the fact that in order for women to participate in the paid labour force, society must arrange for the provision of care for those women's children.

Unfortunately, the government's commitment to working women and their children receded with the war effort. At the end of the war, the federal government withdrew its share of the day nurseries' funding and nurseries were shut down, as "part of the campaign to send women back to the home as men returned from the war demanding employment."11 The Canadian people and their government reverted to their ante-bellum assumptions that all but the most desperate of women would stay at home to care for their children.12 In the post-war years, "high childcare fees, the aggressive ideological campaigns of the 1950s, the rise of suburbanization, and economic prosperity that

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9 Baker: 199.
permitted many women to remain at home out of the paid labour force contributed to a decreased demand for childcare.\textsuperscript{13}

Toward the end of the 1960s, the issue of child care resurfaced, along with the emergence of left-wing and feminist politics. Feminists, socialists, and child care advocates began to speak of the need for universal, accessible, non-stigmatized, publicly-funded, non-profit, non-compulsory child care. These sentiments culminated in the 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women, which included daycare in its report as one of the issues requiring federal and provincial attention.\textsuperscript{14} Furthermore, the Commission explicitly linked child care to women’s equity by declaring that “the time is past when society can refuse to provide community childcare services in the hope of dissuading mothers from leaving their children and going to work.”\textsuperscript{15} In response to the Royal Commission, the federal government organized the first national day care conference, funded by Health and Welfare Canada, in 1971.\textsuperscript{16}

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, calls for publicly-funded child care increased. Organizations such as the National Action Committee (NAC) and the Canadian Labour Congress rallied for greater government funding and regulation of existing child care services, as well as significant expansion of the child care system. In addition, child care

\textsuperscript{13} Lind & Prentice: 96.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid: 87.
advocates, workers, and operators began to form interest groups which focused exclusively on the provision of child care and the potential role of the government in that field.\textsuperscript{17}

In the 1984 federal election, the leaders of all three parties responded to the growing political salience of the child care issue by declaring their support for publicly-funded child care. The Liberal Party's professed concern for the children of working and studying parents was corroborated by the establishment of a federal Task Force on Childcare, headed by University of Victoria sociologist Katie Cooke. In 1986, Cooke's team released their 395-page report, which concluded that "sound child care and parental leave policies can no longer be considered a frill, but rather, are fundamental support services needed by all families in Canada today."\textsuperscript{18} After meeting with over 7,000 parents and groups across the country, the Task Force recommended that the Canadian government, in co-operation with the provinces, move toward a universal child care and parental-leave system by the year 2001. While acknowledging that the cost would be significant, Cooke and her team insisted that the matter was "simply one of priorities, of determining which current programmes have a higher or lower priority than the care of our children and the future of our citizenry."\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} The Canadian Daycare Advocacy Association (CDCAA), The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC), The Canadian Child Daycare Federation (CCDF), and The Canadian Child Care Management Association (CCMA) are examples of these groups. The CDCAA is an amalgam of provincial child care advocacy organizations. The CCDF was organized by child care givers following a federally funded conference of early childhood educators in 1983. The CCMA is an organization of for-profit daycare operators, whose aim is to secure government subsidies for for-profit centres.

The Cooke Report was galvanizing and thought-provoking for Canadians across the political spectrum, and played a significant role in maintaining public interest in the nascent policy issue of child care. Nevertheless, when the Progressive Conservatives gained power in 1984, they formed their own Special Parliamentary Committee on Childcare, headed by Conservative MP Shirley Martin. While it is a testament to the growing significance of child care that the Conservative Party paid any attention at all to the issue of child care, the “progressiveness” of the committee must not be over-stated. Rather than focusing on the needs of children and their working parents, Martin and her committee harmonized their child care investigation with the greater Conservative agenda. In particular, the Special Committee was clearly committed to the privatization of the child care ‘industry’. The Child Care Act (Bill C-144) proposed by the Tories was based largely on the Martin Committee and held none of the recommendations made by Cooke’s Task Force.\(^\text{20}\) Finally, in February of 1992, the Conservative government abandoned their child care agenda altogether when the Bill died as a result of the election being called.\(^\text{21}\)

**The Liberal Promise**

By 1993 there were 3.2 million children with parents in the labour force or studying more than 20 hours per week, yet there were only 362,818 regulated child care

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\(^{19}\) Ibid: 341.
\(^{20}\) Lind & Prentice: 103.
spaces available. In response to this child care crisis, and taking advantage of an election year, the Liberal Party of Canada included the promise of an expanded child care system in its political platform for the upcoming federal election. Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada (also known as the Red Book) explicitly outlined the Liberal Party’s commitment to the expansion of Canada’s child care program. The authors of the Red Book promised that, if elected to office, the Liberals would implement a $720 million cost-sharing program with the provinces over the following three years. Their plan was to use this money to create 50,000 child care spaces in each year following a year of 3% economic growth (GDP), to a total of 150,000 spaces. Aside from the 3% requirement, the only other contingency was that the Liberal Party would need to secure the agreement of the provinces, since child care fell under provincial jurisdiction. The Liberal promise, had it been implemented, would have resulted in a 41% increase in the number of regulated spaces in Canada. While there still would have been a severe shortage of regulated care, the plan represented a significant increase in child care options for working and studying parents. The Liberals insisted that the expansion of the child care system was both necessary and beneficial to the economic well-being of many Canadians. Aside from the direct benefits to parents of children who relied on paid care, the expansion of the child care system was presented as a form of job creation, since “on average, one person is employed for every five child care spaces created.”

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22 Harder: 8.
24 Ibid: 38.
25 Harder: 8.
Thus, 1993 was a promising year for child care advocates and parents alike, as the Liberals gave every indication of being committed to working parents and their children. After the election, and during the early part of its mandate, the Liberal Party continued to exhibit a serious commitment to the development of a national child care program. The February 1994 Budget allocated the first two years of child care funding: $120 million for 1995-96 and $240 million for 1996-97. The federal government’s dedication to its child care policy was also evident during the 1994-95 Social Security Review process, during which time child care and development were discussed at great length. In retrospect, however, some critics have cited indications of the Liberals retreating from their promise as early as 1994. Katherine Teghtsoonian claims that

The marginalization of child care as a policy concern for the federal Liberals has been gradual, but steady. In 1994, the $720 million commitment was included in the federal budget, but was not referred to in either the Speech from the Throne or the Budget Speech. The 1995 budget made no provision at all for new spending on child care. It is true that in late 1995 then-Human Resources Development Minister Lloyd Axworthy announced that $720 million in federal money would be made available if enough provinces agreed to participate in the new program. However, by early 1996 (following the replacement of Axworthy by Doug Young as Minister of Human Resource Development) these plans appeared to be crumbling.

In February of 1996, amidst the deafening silence of public acquiescence, Doug Young announced that the national child care plan had been abandoned, due to lack of provincial

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26 Liberal Party of Canada: 38.
interest. Furthermore, and more damaging to the hopes of a national child care program, the 1996 Throne Speech announced that "the government will not use its spending power to create new shared cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction without the consent of a majority of the provinces." To many child care advocates, this announcement marked the federal government's official abdication of leadership in the development of child care services. While the federal government continued (and continues) to subsidize parents' child care costs directly through the Child Care Expense Deduction, it became apparent that progressive national child care policies would not develop, in light of federal deference to provincial jurisdiction.

By 1998, "the federal government [was] spending approximately one third less ($105 million) on child care services for the general population than it was in 1993; and


31 Government of Canada, Speech from the Throne to Open the Second Session of the Thirty-Fifth Parliament of Canada (Ottawa: Author, 1996): 7. It is interesting to note that this principle was later written into the Social Union Framework Agreement 1999, discussed later in this chapter.

roughly $274 million less than it had promised in the Red Book.” While some programs, such as those for Aboriginal children and children with special needs, were enhanced, most working and studying parents found that they had fewer options for regulated child care in 1998 than they did when the Liberals gained office in 1993. The federal cutbacks were exacerbated in some provinces such as Ontario and Alberta, by the socially conservative and cost-cutting agendas of the governments in the provincial legislatures.

In addition to the direct cuts to the proposed national child care program, child care services suffered greatly as a result of the federal government’s 1995 budget, which called for a 33% cut in transfer payments to the provinces between 1995 and 1998. Furthermore, the Canada Assistance Plan, which had previously allotted approximately $300 million to the provinces for child care services, was abolished on April 1, 1996, and replaced with the Canadian Health and Social Transfer (CHST). The 1995 cutbacks, combined with the non-coercive conditions of the CHST, led to a reduction of services in many Canadian provinces. While provinces such as Quebec and British Columbia maintained a serious commitment to child care services, they were under no obligation to do so. Other provinces, such as Alberta and Newfoundland, simply chose not to spend all of their (diminished) transfer funds on child care. In fact, by 1998, nine out of twelve

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35 The CHST will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.
provincial/territorial jurisdictions had frozen, reduced or eliminated direct funding to child care programs.\textsuperscript{36}

Now, in the year 2000, it has been 30 years since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women first recommended a national child care program. There are now 3.3 million children who require paid care, and less than 15\% of those children receive care in a regulated setting.\textsuperscript{37} However, despite growing support from experts and lay citizens alike, child care is less affordable and accessible than in the late 1980s, in ten out of twelve provincial/territorial jurisdictions.\textsuperscript{38}

In policy terms, the government’s only commitment to child care can be indirectly inferred from the National Children’s Agenda (NCA), announced in the 1997 Throne Speech.\textsuperscript{39} According to the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Council of Ministers on Social Policy Renewal, the NCA is a comprehensive strategy to improve the well-being of Canada’s children. The Agenda prioritizes four areas of improvement: the National Child


\textsuperscript{37} Gillian Doherty, Donna S. Lero, Hillel Goelman, Annette LaGrange and Jocelyne Tougas, \textit{You Bet I Care! A Canada-Wide Study on Wages, Working Conditions, and Practices in Child Care Centres} (Guelph: The Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being, 2000). Statistics obtained on line at: http://www.childcarecanada.org/whatsnew/youbet.html. Accessed 7 July 2000. While the percentage of children in regulated care has gone from 10\% to just under 15\%, it is important to note that the increase includes Quebec, where virtually all children are in care that is regulated and subsidized. The percentage of children in regulated care in 10 of the 11 other jurisdictions in Canada has actually decreased.


Benefit\textsuperscript{40}, Aboriginal “Head Start” programs, children’s “centres for excellence”, and “learning readiness indicators”.\textsuperscript{41} The Agenda speaks in broad terms about goals and values, but leaves the details to the provinces. Needless to say, the NCA does not explicitly discuss the need for a national, accountable child care program. Rather, its emphasis is on direct transfers to individuals (through the Child Tax Benefit) and targeted programs aimed at “children at risk”, as defined by the provincial and territorial governments.

The National Children’s Agenda is intended to represent the new Canadian model of (highly decentralized) federalism, the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA).\textsuperscript{42}

According to the federal government,

The “social union” initiative is the umbrella under which governments will concentrate their efforts to renew and modernized Canadian social policy. It focuses on the pan-Canadian dimension of health and social policy systems, the linkages between the social and economic unions, and the recognition that reform is best achieved in partnership among provinces, territories and the Government of Canada. The primary objective of the social union initiative is to reform and renew Canada’s system of social services and to reassure Canadians that their pan-Canadian social programs are strong and secure. In working to build a strong social union, the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories have reached a broad consensus that the first priorities should be children in poverty and persons with disabilities. (emphasis added)\textsuperscript{43}

From the perspective of childcare advocates, the NCA, as part of the Social Union, is not a very promising child care initiative. Both the NCA and the Social Union

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The National Child Benefit comprises the Canadian Child Tax Benefit, the Working Income Supplement, and additional Federal dollars.
\item Ibid. See also Federal-Provincial-Territorial Council of Ministers on Social Policy Renewal, A National Children’s Agenda: Developing a Shared Vision (Ottawa: Brochure, 2000).
\item Martha Friendly, A National Child Care Program: Now is the Time (Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2000): 2.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Framework Agreement emphasize provincial differences, autonomy, and authority over health, education, and social services. For example, the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) states that the government of Canada will “work collaboratively with all provincial and territorial governments to identify Canada-wide priorities and objectives… [and] not introduce such new initiatives without the agreement of a majority of provincial governments.” Furthermore, “[e]ach provincial and territorial government will determine the detailed program design and mix best suited to its own needs and circumstances to meet the agreed objectives.” Under such an agreement, child care advocates fear that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to establish national programs with equitable costs, access, and standards among the provinces.

The SUFA and NCA, combined with the devolution and downsizing characteristic of current Canadian governance, mean that the provinces are virtually “in charge” of setting their health, education, and social agendas. As Barbara Arneil explains, the result is that “there is no consideration of citizenship within the discussion of the children’s agenda. Because provinces do not see this as part of their constitutional responsibilities, the intersection between citizenship and social policy is never considered.” In the absence of federal leadership and standards, it is therefore difficult to imagine the establishment of a universal, accessible, affordable, standardized, child-focused childcare system in Canada.

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45 Ibid.
Fiscally, the federal government is equally non-committal on the topic of child care. In the 2000 Budget (the so-called “Children’s Budget”), Finance Minister Paul Martin announced that CHST payments would be increased by $2.5 billion, however, he specified that the money is intended to assist the provinces and territories in funding post-secondary education and health care. In order to assist parents with the cost of raising younger children, the government announced that the Canadian Child Tax Benefit will be increased by $2.5 billion a year by 2004. In the 2000 “Children’s Budget”, not a single dollar was dedicated to child care services. In fact, the Finance Minister’s only reference to child care was implied through the Mr. Martin’s invitation to the provincial and territorial governments “to agree by December 2000 on an action plan to support early childhood development.”

In the late 1990s, in the wake of federal withdrawal from national leadership in social services and obsession with the debt and deficit at all levels of government, child care suffered considerably. Unfortunately, now that concerns regarding debt and deficit have diminished, attitudes toward child care still vary considerably among provincial and territorial governments.

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46 Barbara Arneil, Speech to the British Columbia Political Science Association, April, 2000.
47 The Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) is a federal block-funding scheme. CHST funding is intended to go toward health, social services, and post-secondary education. It is important to note that the provinces receive the CHST with no conditions attached, and can use the money in any way they see fit. Unfortunately, since early childhood care is not perceived as ‘education’, it also receives no categorical attention under provincial budgetary schemes.
49 It is interesting to note that the provinces can reduce welfare payments, dollar for dollar, to correspond to the money families receive through the increased National Child Benefit. While the provinces can use the savings for children’s services, they are under no obligation to do so.
CHAPTER 2: A POLICY ANALYSIS

Since the Liberal Party’s abandonment of its child care promise, there has been no substantial public discussion of the child care situation in Canada. As explained at the end of Chapter 1, child care as a political issue has virtually disappeared from the public agenda. Why is this so? Why did the Liberals fail to implement the child care program promised in the 1993 Red Book? The proposal appeared to have many of the characteristics of a ‘winner’ policy: dispersed costs, concentrated benefits, increased

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51 See note 53.
53 Lind & Prentice: 8. It should be noted that references to national attitudes and problems do not apply to Quebec. The Parti Quebecois has taken a drastically different approach to child care and family policies, whereby the provincial government is actively and pro-actively involved in supporting families with children. A discussion of Quebec’s Family Policy would be a thesis topic in and of itself, and must therefore be no more than a footnote in a paper such as this. For a more in-depth discussion of Quebec’s unique and laudable programs, please see Maurice Boisvert, Quebec Family Policy: Presentation By Mr. Maurice Boisvert, Deputy Minister (Quebec: Ministere de la Famille et de L’Enfance, 1999); Yves Rochon, “Quebec: A Giant Step Forward for Working Conditions”, Interaction, Volume 13, Number 3:4 (Ottawa: Canadian Child Care Federation, 1999); Chaya Kulkarni, Child Care, Ontario Politics, and the Agenda-
employment, decreased dependency on social assistance, and best of all, an investment in children. Who would oppose a policy designed to benefit children? What factors contributed to the demise of such a potentially appealing policy proposal? Finally, assuming that the child care promise was included in the Red Book because of its political import, why was there virtually no public outcry, in the wake of the proposal's abandonment? In short, why is it that after thirty years on the periphery of the public agenda, the need for a national, accessible, accountable child care system continues to be a non-issue among the vast majority of Canadian citizens?

In this chapter, I will perform a policy analysis of the Liberal government's failure to implement its national child care policy, proposed in the 1993 Red Book. While I will be focusing primarily on the events between 1993 and 1996, I believe that they also grant significant insight into the greater narrative of the child care issue in Canada. In addition, I will try to explain the acquiescence of the Canadian people, in response to the government's abdication of its promise.54 In order to understand the complex circumstances under which the proposal was abandoned, I will analyze a variety of contributing factors, under the broad headings of "interests", "institutions" and "ideas".

It is perhaps obvious, but nevertheless worthy of mention, that none of these categories exists in a vacuum. Each influences, and is in turn influenced by the other, so that interests, institutions, and ideas intersect to form a nexus within which a given

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54 Setting Process (University of Toronto Dissertation, Department of Theory and Policy Studies, 1999). The final article contrasts Ontario's approach to child care with that of Quebec.
policy’s lifespan is determined. In the case of the policy in question, for example, the
demise of the Liberal Party’s child care program can be seen as the result of the
intersection of ineffective interests, executive and fiscal federalism, social conservatism,
and economic neo-liberalism. Despite the intricate interconnection of the different
variables, however, it is both easier and more explanatory to tease the various factors
apart, in order to analyze their relative significance with greater clarity.

**Interests**

To begin, the Liberal Party’s failure to implement its 1993 Red Book promise of a
national child care system is often attributed to the lack of organized interests lobbying on
behalf of the proposal. It is therefore useful to analyze the role of interests in the chain of
events that led to the abandonment of the proposed program.

Analytical approaches that consider interests to be the most significant variable in
public policy tend to fall into four schools of thought: welfare economics, Marxism,
pluralism or corporatism, and public choice. In order to analyze the degree to which
interests determined the outcome of the Liberal child care policy, it is first necessary to
establish which of these theoretical approaches, if any, enhances our understanding or
explains the outcome of events.

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54 It is interesting, for example, to contrast the public’s acquiescence in the face of a failed childcare
promise with its (vociferously animated) reaction to the Liberals’ failure to abolish the G.S.T.
Although welfare economics and Marxist theories may have explanatory value in certain types of analyses, they do not offer insight into the Liberal Party's failed child care policy. While welfare economics may explain why the child care issue became a part of the government's agenda, it does not elucidate the subsequent abandonment of the proposal. Marxist theory, on the other hand, is an insufficient theoretical approach to policy studies for several reasons: First, since Marxist theory focuses on the ("inevitable"?) connection between past and present, its analysis may be useful in a retrospective sense, but it lacks predictive capability. In other words, while a Marxist might assert that in the case of child care, 'the workers were once again forsaken by the state, in the interests of capital', the theory could not be used in a forward-looking manner, to predict the future of child care in Canada. Nor could a Marxist approach explain the discrepancy among provincial governments' subsequent approaches to child care, after the implementation of the 1996 budget. Furthermore, a Marxist analysis of the demise of the Red Book plan would do little to enhance our understanding of the issues in that particular instance, since a theory with one explanation for all events (class struggle to control the means of production) can do little to enhance one's understanding of any one particular event. A reductionist theory that explains everything, in a sense explains nothing, and does little to elucidate the specific issues of a particular policy's lifespan. A Marxist approach to the issue of child care has limited predictive or explanatory value, and lacks empirical validation. It is therefore an unsatisfactory theoretical perspective from which to study child care policy in Canada.

56 Since I find that neither approach is useful in enhancing our understanding, or explaining the outcome of events, and since a paper of this length requires brevity where possible, I will not provide a full explanation of either welfare economics or Marxist theories.
Since neither welfare economics nor Marxist theory serve to explain the Liberal Party's abandonment of its child care proposal, we must assume that if interests played any role at all in the policy's demise, they must be explained through pluralism and/or corporatism; or through public choice theory. According to pluralists, public policies are created in response to pressures placed on governments by individuals acting together through interest groups or pressure groups. Since individuals are independent and self-serving, "groups in pluralist theory are not only many and free-forming, they are also characterized by overlapping membership and a lack of representational monopoly."57 "Public policies are thus a result of competition and collaboration among groups working to further their members' collective interests."58

The obvious flaw of such a theory is that it fails to recognize even a minimal degree of agency on the part of the state itself. Consequently, neo-pluralists tend to acknowledge that public policy is not simply the result of interactions among groups, since politics can also be influenced by systemic biases. Corporatism takes the role of the state even more seriously, and asserts that "public policy is shaped by the interaction between the state and the interest group or groups recognized by the state. Interaction among groups is institutionalized within and mediated by the state."59 Whether one prefers the pluralist or the corporatist model of public policy, evidence should show that

57 Howlett & Ramesh: 33
interest groups played a significant role in the chain of events that led to the Liberal Party’s abandonment of its child care policy.

Without a doubt, interests groups contributed greatly to the politicization of the child care issue in the late 1980s and early 90s. Groups such as NAC and the CDCAA were integral in forcing child care onto the public agenda. However, once the expansion of Canada’s child care system became a matter of ‘hard’ politics, the role of interest groups lobbying for child care diminished significantly, to the extent that they were effectively excluded from the final stages of negotiation between the HRD office, the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister, and the provinces. While individual bureaucrats within each of these government offices maintained close contact with child care advocates, that connection did not translate into effective political influence.

Child care advocates lacked effectual representation at the national level for two reasons: First, most advocacy groups were provincial in orientation, as a result of child care being a matter of provincial jurisdiction. Provincial groups were unable to secure the economic resources and political connections necessary to lobby for their interests in Ottawa. While some groups, such as the Ontario Coalition for Better Day Care, enjoyed strong links with their provincial governments, their lobbying had limited influence on negotiations at the federal level. Second, child care interests were ill-served in Ottawa because the national groups that did exist were not politically influential, due to internal strife. The mandate of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada was to act as an
Although the National Action Committee (NAC) always raised the issue at Lobby Days, the organization failed to put its full political influence behind the issue, since it was at the time embroiled in its own internal battles. The Canadian Daycare Advocacy Association (CDCAA) undermined its own potential influence by failing to agree on whether greater national standardization and regulation of child care services, or provincial control over its rightful jurisdiction should be paramount. While some were adamant about national standards, others, such as the head of the organization (a Quebec Sovereigntist), were equally determined to ensure provincial autonomy. In the end, this led to its de facto exclusion from any effective influence on the policy process. Indeed, the only groups that might have had substantial influence on creating a child care policy were the labour unions; and they did not exert their political clout on behalf of the issue. Ultimately, those in favour of an expanded child care system failed to gather enough politically salient support or influence to ensure the survival of the Liberal Party’s proposal.

Even more interesting for the purposes of this paper, however, is the degree to which the interests of the anti-child care lobby (the status quo) were advanced in the

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60 Burt: 206.
61 Beginning in 1990, working class women and women of colour within the National Action Committee opposed the dominant and domineering influence of white, upper class liberal feminists in NAC's leadership. The organization spent the next 6 years trying to evaluate and correct race- and class-based discord among its members. During that time, NAC was hampered, with regard to external concerns. On the child care issue, for example, upper-middle class white women were confronted by poorer women and women of colour, who pointed out that the white, nuclear, relatively wealthy conception of motherhood and child care needs did not reflect the realities of many (most?) other women. For example, NAC had never taken an official position on the racist and exploitative treatment of foreign domestic workers in Canada. As such, NAC's previous position on child care was revealed to reflect an exclusive, white-liberal conception of the issues surrounding the child care debate.
62 Confidential interview with senior HRDC official: November 1997.
absence of any significant group representation on that particular issue. Although some groups such as "REAL Women" and "Mothers are Women" did lobby against money spent on child care services instead of tax deductions for stay-at-home parents, their voices were marginal, and did not play a significant role in the policy process. Nevertheless, despite the fact that few interest groups were explicitly opposed to the expansion of the child care system, conservative interests (those opposed to change) were secured, with regard to the Liberal Party's child care proposal. This is because of broader political forces lobbying for fiscal reductionism and a more decentralized federation. In the wake of Charlottetown and Meech Lake, and in the economic climate of the day, those opposed to child care did not need to lobby the government, since their interests were advanced as part of the broader goals of the powerful economic and political lobby groups that called for devolution and downsizing. Fiscally, business lobby groups, taxpayer groups, and other fiscal conservatives relentlessly lobbied for tax cuts and deficit reduction. At the same time, the Privy Council Office was made constantly aware of the need to appease pro-Quebec groups whose influence could profoundly affect separatist sentiments in Quebec's volatile political climate. In the end, those opposed to an expanded child care system benefited from having their goals fit tidily into the larger agendas of decreased spending and decentralization. It would therefore appear that the success of the business community's lobbying on tax and deficit issues, combined with the lobbying of Quebecois advocates and appeasers, effectively precluded progress in the area of child care policy. As such, a neo-pluralist explanation does enhance our understanding of the demise of the Liberal Party's Red Book promise.
Similarly, public choice analysis (which is ultimately quite similar to the pluralist school of thought) could also be used to explain the events surrounding the rise and fall of the proposed child care policy. Public choice theory presumes individual political actors to be “rational utility maximizers”, who act in their own self-interest to maximize their own satisfaction. The theory is based on the application of neo-classical economics to political behaviour, on the assumption that political interaction is similar to economic interactions in a market economy. Although this “rational choice” approach is discomfiting to many, it does seem to explain the absence of organized interest(s) advocating for the failed child care policy.

Despite the fact that child care is a fundamental “bread and butter” issue to the parents of over three million children in Canada, it has failed to capture the political interest of working parents, let alone the general public. Why should this be the case, when the matter is of such imminent import to so many people? According to Mancur Olson, a leading rational choice theorist, the lack of interest group participation in the child care issue is not only understandable, it is to be expected. Olson’s explanation is one of simple mathematics: the larger the group of people affected by a policy, the less significant any one individual’s actions will be. This numerical insignificance acts as a disincentive to individuals who might otherwise be compelled to act on behalf of an issue that concerns them. “The paradox, then, is that... large groups, at least if they are composed of rational individuals, will not act in their group interest.”

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Alternately, Paul Pross' explanation for the interest groups' failure to mobilize is based on the notion of "latent" interests. Pross claims that individuals with latent interests "have no sense of solidarity with one another. They may energetically protect their individual interests, [in this case, reduced taxes, or a "deal" on an ad hoc child care arrangement] but do not feel the need to recognize their mutual interest and promote it collectively." These in favour of an expanded child care system seem to fall into this category since they "have not yet been mobilized to recognize shared interests, much less act upon them." This explanation is similar to Olson's in that it assumes rational individuals acting in their own self-interest. It also results in the same outcome of parents failing to mobilize their collective interests. The difference is that Pross' view is less deterministic or pessimistic, in that it leaves room for the possibility of growth in self-awareness and collective action. In the case of Canadian child care policy, a public choice theorist could convincingly argue that those who would benefit from universal, accessible, affordable child care were and continue to be less politically influential than well-funded and well-organized business interests, because of their failure to overcome obstacles to collective action. Whether or not working parents will ever be able to overcome their perceived numerical insignificance or their latent interests is a matter I will address in greater detail in Chapter 4.

To conclude this section, it would appear that while welfare economics and Marxist theories offer limited explanatory value in the case of the failed child care

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promise, both neo-pluralist and public choice analyses do help to enhance our understanding of the role that interests played in the policy’s life-span. Nevertheless, a purely interest-based analysis fails to explain why groups and individuals within groups have the interests that they have, and how they come to perceive those interests as deserving or requiring government intervention. Consequently, we must explore other causal variables, if we are to amply comprehend the Liberal Party’s renunciation of its child care promise, and the public’s acquiescence to that abandonment.

Institutions

The Liberal Party’s failure to implement its proposed child care program is also frequently attributed to the role of certain institutional variables.

Institutions can be thought of as configurations or networks of organizational capabilities (assemblies of personal, material, symbolic, and informational resources available for collective action) that are deployed according to rules and norms that structure individual participation, govern appropriate behaviour, and limit the range of acceptable outcomes.67

According to Michael Atkinson, “state organization has implications for the concentration and diffusion of power, for the manner in which societal actors organize and participate in policy-making, and for the process whereby some ideas are nurtured and others are discarded or ignored.”68 Carolyn Tuohy attributes even greater influence to institutions by asserting that they “not only entrench certain organizational patterns;

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68 Atkinson: 21.
they also crystallize certain ideas about social justice, and certain configurations of interests.  

According to this approach, the policy process adopted by a government and its citizenry will be profoundly influenced (although not entirely dictated) by its institutional features. The policy paradigm will therefore be affected by whether a country is federal or unitary, parliamentary or republican, democratic or socialist (or totalitarian). In addition, policies will evolve differently in countries with differing configurations of upper and lower houses, or those whose electoral systems are based on proportional representation, rather than representation by population. Finally, policy can also be influenced by the courts and other legal features, such as whether or not a country has a constitution, and if its constitution includes an entrenched bill of rights. Obviously, certain institutional variables will be more or less significant in different policy areas. Furthermore, institutional variables have varying explanatory or predictive capability, depending on both the policy area and the country in question. The institutional approach, far from being a panacea of policy analysis, is but one contingent element of the complex web of political processes.

That said, however, one institutional factor in particular did play a significant role in the demise of the Liberal Party’s 1993 proposal for a national child care policy. Furthermore, it provided a conceptual framework within which Canadian citizens

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unskeptically accepted the reasons given for the government’s abdication of its promise. I am of course referring to the pride and bane of Canadian politics: federalism.

As every student of Canadian politics quickly learns, much of Canada’s political history has been profoundly influenced by the fact that our country is a federation. As a result of our federalist heritage, social policy in Canada, both historically and in the present, is largely affected by the assumption that “provincial authorities are closer to the realities within their jurisdiction than is the central government, and as a result they are likely to develop standards that are more in keeping with local values and preferences.” Whether or not this is actually the case, our system is premised on that assumption and our Constitution entrenches it. Provincial governments, in general, are fiercely protective of their own policy domains and have the political and legal authority to insist on a large degree of autonomy in their affairs. Consequently, the federal government is greatly constrained by provincial protectionism whenever it attempts to introduce national programs that fall under provincial jurisdiction.

Although provincial territorialism need not always act as a conservative force in the policy process, it does appear to do just that in the case of social policy. As Keith Banting notes:

70 Katherine Teghtsoonian, “Institutions and Ideology: Sources of Opposition to Federal Regulation of Child Care Services in Canada and the United States”, Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration, Vol. 5, No. 2, April 1992: 215. While the provincial responsibilities enumerated in section 92 of the BNA Act were originally thought to be less significant aspects of governance, their importance has grown significantly through the evolution of the “welfare state”. Today, an argument could be made that these areas would be better suited to the federal government, since health, education, and socio-economic equity have become such integral aspects of Canadian citizenship and national identity. Nevertheless, the provinces retain authority over these areas, and will very likely continue to do so.
Theories which suggest that social reform can be introduced more rapidly in a federal system than a unitary one, since innovations can be established in one province and the "seeds of radicalism" can then spread across the nation, underestimate the withering effects of regional disparity and provincial economic competition.\footnote{Keith G. Banting, The Welfare State and Canadian Federalism (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982): 174.}

In addition to the limitations mentioned above, the Canadian policy process is also determined by constraints such as sections 91 and 92 of the Canadian constitution, which outline the federal/provincial division of powers; and the amending formula, which stipulates that national reforms must have the approval of "at least two-thirds of the provinces that have ... at least fifty per cent of the population of all the provinces."\footnote{Parliament of Canada, Constitution Act, 1982, Part V: "Procedure for Amending Constitution of Canada", section 38(1)(b).} Consequently, Canadian (decentralized) federalism, combined with the constitutional amending formula, serves to impede the development of national social programs. "In keeping with other forms of fragmentation of authority, divided jurisdiction raises the level of consensus required for innovation, and thereby complicates the process of introducing new programs."\footnote{Banting: 174. It should be noted at this time that although Keith Banting was hesitant to have his work in the area of income security applied to other policy areas, there is evidence to indicate that his observations hold true, in the case of the Liberal Party's failure to implement its proposed national child care policy.}

So what do the works of Scharpf, Atkinson, Tuohy, McRoberts and Banting tell us about the role of federalism in the demise of the child care policy and the public's acquiescence? Briefly, an aggregation of their respective theories tells us that institutions "influence policy indirectly by shaping our understanding of politics": They "crystallize... certain configurations of interests" and influence "the manner in which societal actors
organize and participate in policy making”. A country’s institutional features will “limit the range of acceptable outcomes” and create a “process whereby some ideas are nurtured and others are ignored”. The institution of federalism, in particular, “raises the level of consensus required for innovation and thereby complicates the process of introducing new programs”. In light of these theories, there is evidence to suggest that an institutional analysis of the failed Liberal child care plan will grant significant insights.

When the Liberal Party gained power in 1993, Lloyd Axworthy embarked on his plan to actualize the Red Book child care promise made earlier that year, as part of the Social Security Review. However, this goal was to be usurped by another, more “pressing” issue: the upcoming Quebec referendum. In light of the inflammatory political climate surrounding the referendum, federal officials in the P.C.O. working on the “referendum strategy” were concerned with any federal policy that might be construed as infringing on provincial jurisdiction. The goal was to avoid provocation of the “Yes” side of the campaign. While some HRDC officials felt that the Quebec government was open to negotiation on the topic of child care,74 other federal strategists did not want to promote any initiatives that could be construed as the federal government meddling in provincial affairs. Discussion of the child care proposal was postponed until after the political tension of the referendum, and its accompanying provincialist rhetoric, had subsided.

74 Confidential interview with senior official: November 1997.
In the meantime, HRDC held the Social Security Review discussions in 1994-95. It was at this time that the architects of the child care policy received input from the interest groups who wished to influence policy formation. After these consultations, the role of interest groups in the policy process diminished significantly. Aside from the reasons already given, this occurrence can be partially attributed to the practice of *executive* federalism, whereby "policy discussion takes place in negotiations between executives of the different governments." This creates an institutional setting within which interest groups tend to be excluded from the process of policy formation. While there are definitely examples of well organized, powerful interests permeating such exclusivity, this was not the case for child care advocates, since there were no politically potent groups to influence policy process in that area. Executive federalism contributed to the defeat of the child care policy, since those who would have advocated its implementation were excluded from the decision-making process, while the interests of fiscal conservatives and those concerned with provincial authority were well represented within both the provincial and federal governments.

It would appear then, that federalism and federalist politics did indeed contribute to a particular "configuration of interests"; "the manner in which societal actors organize(d) and participate(d) in policy making"; and to the limitation of "the range of acceptable outcomes" for the Liberal Party’s proposed child care policy.

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75 McRoberts: 164.
Another interesting insight revealed through institutional analysis is the way in which federalist rhetoric was used as an excuse for inaction. In February of 1996, Doug Young announced that the government was abandoning its national child care program as a result of the government's inability to create a package that was acceptable to the provinces. The implication was that while the federal Liberals were still committed to their child care plan, the provinces were uncooperative. However, despite the apparent restrictions imposed by our federal system, the defeat of the plan was by no means inevitable. In fact, it should be noted that the February 1996 announcement was made despite the fact that official negotiations between Ottawa and the provinces never took place, either before or after the announcement. This observation casts doubt on the assumption that the plan failed as a result of provincial objections. Furthermore, it suggests that while perhaps a convenient and politically acceptable excuse, federalist restrictions were not the underlying cause of the policy's failure.

Early in the Liberal Party's mandate, policymakers in HRDC recognized the constraints of federalism and accepted that they would not be able to impose national standards on provincial child care systems. Furthermore, the architects of the plan "purposely left many potentially contentious details vague or unspecified", so as to appeal to the greatest number of provinces possible. "The Red Book reference to regulated care was replaced by the language of high quality child care arrangements, thereby implying more provincial discretion in defining quality." Finally, "the notion of space creation was replaced with the offer to expand and improve child care systems."76 As a result of

these revisions, the official offer made on December 13, 1995 was flexible and accommodating, and was passed by the Cabinet with little opposition. Behind the scenes, the provincial response was varied: Manitoba and Alberta were the most resistant, while British Columbia was enthusiastic. Saskatchewan, Ontario and the Maritimes were interested, but had some reservations; and Quebec was willing to negotiate, provided that exclusive jurisdiction was recognized by the federal government. In short, there was no reason to believe, at the beginning of 1996, that the child care plan would necessarily fail on account of differing provincial attitudes.

At this point, one may object that the restrictions imposed by our federal system did in fact represent insurmountable obstacles to the establishment of a national child care program. There was dissent among the provinces and unanimous agreement would have been virtually impossible. As Kenneth McRoberts explains,

> If the federal government should need unanimous or close to unanimous support before proceeding, even initiatives that have widespread support in the country as a whole may be blocked by one or two provincial governments. 77

While this may be true in certain circumstances, there are two reasons why this observation does not adequately explain the events that led to the demise of the Liberal Party’s child care policy. The first response is that despite the impression later given by the new HRDC Minister, Doug Young, the federal government did not require the unanimous support of all of the provinces before proceeding. According to one of the policy’s creators, the federal government could have engaged in bilateral agreements with each of the provinces separately, staggering the “sign-on” process over an extended
period of time. Furthermore, policymakers at HRDC believed that a staggered sign-on could have triggered a domino effect among the provinces. Thus, the development of a nation-wide public child care program could have resembled the establishment of medicare, when Saskatchewan took the lead in providing public health care services, and other provinces followed suit. Since this option was always known to exist, we must be suspicious of the announcement made in February of 1996.

The fact that a viable option was deliberately overlooked leads to a second response to McRoberts’ observation: the issue of political will. In truth, “constitutional constraints are invoked when it suits the government’s ideological agenda to invoke them, and downplayed when it does not.” Far from discrediting an institutional analysis of the significance of federalism, this observation reinforces such an approach, since federal systems are particularly conducive to different levels of government “passing the buck” from one level to another. The fact that child care falls within provincial

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77 McRoberts: 160.
78 Confidential interview with senior official: November 1997.
79 Ibid.
80 According to Miriam Smith, “Federalism provided particular institutional opportunities for governments at both provincial and federal levels committed to the establishment of medicare... Provincial jurisdiction over health care allowed the pioneering CCF government of Tommy Douglas to establish hospital insurance. The federal government's spending power permitted a federal role in financing the plan and in creating incentives for other provinces to follow the Saskatchewan lead.... By 1961 all provinces had entered the plan. Again, in the field of health insurance, Saskatchewan was a pioneer, bringing in health insurance after a doctor's strike in 1961. Following the advent to the Liberal leadership of Lester Pearson, the Liberal government became and advocate of medicare and put into place a shared-cost program in 1966.” Miriam Smith, “Retrenching the Sacred Trust: Medicare and Canadian Federalism” in Francois Rocher and Miriam Smith, ed.s, New Trends in Canadian Federalism (Toronto: Broadview Press, 1995): 325-26.
82 This is a reference to Kathryn Harrison’s Passing the Buck: Federalism and Canadian Environmental Policy (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996): On page 20 she states that “constitutional ambiguity and overlapping jurisdiction provide an opportunity for either level of government to avoid responsibility for
jurisdiction does not necessarily mean that a national plan was bound to fail.

Constitutionally, the federal government also lacks constitutional authority over health, education, and social welfare. Nevertheless, the federal government has, in the past, been able to use its spending power to influence the establishment and regulation of nationwide schemes. Even during the early 1990s, when provincialist sentiments abounded, the federal and provincial governments, as well as the Canadian people, accepted federal “interference” in such provincial matters.

The difference was that by 1995-96, Ottawa had renounced its commitment to social programs, in favour of focusing on the possible separation of Quebec, discussed above, and the fiscal challenges facing the Canadian economy. By 1995, the federal government was utterly preoccupied by the deficit and debt. Its ratio of revenue to spending had fallen steadily for fifteen years, and interest payments as a percentage of revenue rose to 33.6%. As Martha Friendly explains:

> Ottawa’s reaction was to reduce its spending by downsizing the public service, and downloading the costs of government programs to the next level, the provinces, as well as to individual Canadians through privatization. The 1995 federal budget made massive cuts in transfer payments to provinces and terminated the nation’s last conditional cost-shared program, the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP).

The new block-fund, the CHST represented the federal government’s commitment to the funding of health, social welfare, and post-secondary education. Instituted without electoral mandate or public consultation, the CHST was set at a specific amount over the following three years, and provided no protection for social assistance services in times of environmental protection by pleading inadequate authority and ‘passing the buck’ to the other level.” I believe the same could be said of social issues.

83 Friendly, Doherty, and Oloman, 1989: 11.
recession. This meant that, along with the massive cuts to transfer payments, the provinces would have to absorb future additional social assistance costs without a corresponding increase in federal funds. It is therefore understandable that in 1995-96, some of the provinces expressed concerns about committing to long term national goals, the funding of which was far from certain.

Nevertheless, even in spite of reservation and distrust of future federal funding, most of the provinces (other than those whose own conservative ideologies were well-served by the cuts) were willing to discuss the possibility of a child care program. It would appear then, that, had the federal government been genuinely committed to the establishment of a national child care program, federal restrictions and funding arrangements could have been surmountable. Likewise, if the Canadian people had truly desired a national child care program, they could have overcome their collective amnesia and realized that federalist restrictions and budgetary challenges have always been adaptable to public demands. This does not mean, however, that an institutional analysis is irrelevant to the case of the failed child care policy. On the contrary, without the established traditions, practices, ideology and rhetoric characteristic of Canadian federalism, the federal government could never have claimed that the plan failed as a result of lack of provincial cooperation.

To conclude this section, we must resolve that an institutional analysis of the failed Liberal child care plan, while enlightening, does not entirely explain the events that

84 Ibid: 12.
led to the demise of the proposal. Although institutional features “shape[d] our understanding of politics” and limited “the range of acceptable outcomes”, they did not fully account for the decisions made - and the options eschewed - by the policymakers in the federal government. Furthermore, institutional analyses do not explain the (lack of) reaction from the Canadian public, in response to the government’s decision.

**Ideas**

In order to fully comprehend the Liberal Party’s publicly accepted abandonment of its child care promise, it is necessary to analyze the framework of “ideas” within which decisions were made and accepted. As I have already stated, institutional and interest-oriented analyses fail to adequately explain the fundamental impediments to the child care program, because they do not satisfactorily provide us with both the necessary and the sufficient conditions for the failure of the proposed policy. It is true that the lack of effective interest group pressure, combined with the (albeit surmountable) barriers imposed by federalism, contributed to the political climate within which the policy’s implementation would have been difficult, but the two analytical approaches still leave certain questions unanswered.

In this section I will attempt to expose and analyze the framework of ideas within which the Liberal child care proposal was bound to fail. Although it may seem excessively deterministic to claim that the policy’s defeat was inevitable, I believe that such pessimism is not misplaced. According to Katherine Teghtsoonian, “child care
policy is situated at the intersection of the state, the market economy and families.”85 As this section will show, the ideas upon which we base the ordering of our society were, and continue to represent considerable barriers to the establishment of a national child care program. Such ideas, combined with the institutional constraints imposed by our federal system, and the lack of mobilized interests lobbying for the policy, created a political climate in which the policy could be abandoned without consequence.

As I previously mentioned, the most remarkable political peculiarity of the child care question is the extent to which it has remained a non-issue. Over three million Canadian children require some form of child care each week, and less than 15% of those children have access to regulated care. This means that the employed and/or studying parents of over 2,700,000 children are responsible for arranging whatever ad hoc child care situation they can manage. Yet, despite the gravity of the situation, it has failed to secure permanent status in our collective political consciousness as a “problem”. “Conditions become defined as problems when we come to believe that we should do something about them.”86 Prior to that, they are merely situations, bad luck, or the natural ordering of things.

In order to understand why child care continues to dwell in the realm of “situation”, rather than that of “problem”, it is useful to look at the work of Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram, who insist that social constructions influence the policy

85 Teghtsoonian, “Neo-Conservative Ideology...”; 98.
agenda and the selection of policy tools, as well as the rationales that legitimate policy choices.\textsuperscript{87} Their argument is that there are four basic types of target populations for whom public policies are designed: the Advantaged, the Contenders, the Dependents, and the Deviants.\textsuperscript{88} The manner in which groups perceive themselves and are perceived by others depends on the social construction of their particular “population”. “The social construction of a target population refers to (1) the recognition of the shared characteristics that distinguish a target population as socially meaningful, and (2) the attribution of specific, valence-oriented values, symbols, and images to the characteristics.”\textsuperscript{89} Furthermore, the social construction of a particular target population effects the “framing” of the issues or problems that pertain to that group.

In accordance with Schneider and Ingram’s typology, children and women seen primarily as “mothers” who ‘must’ work in the paid labour force tend to fall into the category of dependents.\textsuperscript{90} This is because they are perceived in a somewhat favourable manner by the general population, yet they wield little political power. They also comply with the “dependent” criteria because their concerns have traditionally been viewed as the responsibility of families, churches and the private sector.\textsuperscript{91} This construction has a profound effect on the framing of issues that pertain to members of the Dependent


\textsuperscript{88} Ibid: 336.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid: 335.

\textsuperscript{90} I refer specifically to mothers who ‘must’ work in the paid labour force, as there is very little public support of any kind for women with small children who work outside the home for reasons other than (economic) ‘necessity’. Obviously, the characterization of child care as a “women’s issue” is, in and of itself, and idea that merits considerable investigation and deconstruction. This issue will be explored throughout chapters 2, 3, and 4.
category. In contrast to the Advantaged population, Dependents do not feel a sense of entitlement to public goods and services. Likewise, the general population does not see members of this population as having entitlements. Rather, they are perceived as supplicants whose problems are not public problems. Social construction teaches the powerless that their interests do not coincide with important public goals. Their problems are their own and they are expected to resolve them through their own means. It would appear that Schneider and Ingram's typology does apply to the child care problem, or rather, "situation". Despite the severity of the child care shortage, it remains in the public consciousness a "private parental responsibility to be purchased through the market" rather than "a societal responsibility requiring the investment of public finances."  

The issue of framing is particularly interesting in the case of the child care issue, since its representation as a problem pertaining to working women and their children is not the only available alternative. Under different ideological circumstances, child care could be linked to a plenitude of policy objectives such as health, education, child development, poverty alleviation, parental employment support or "investing in the future of the nation".  

In many European countries, for example, child care services were

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91 Schneider & Ingram: 338. The "privatization" of issues relating to women and children will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.
93 Unfortunately, the parameters of this paper do not allow for discussion of the numerous debates surrounding the benefits and drawbacks of child care, in terms of children's health, development, happiness, and general well-being. I take as my starting point an assumption that (good) child care is beneficial for children, independent of its impact on adult individuals and society at large. For a more in-depth discussion of the issues involved, please see: Carolyn Booth, Consequences of Early Child Care: Studying the Contexts of Early Experience in the 1990s (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 1999); Dawne Clark, "Helping Children to Care for One Another", Canadian Children Vol. 24, No. 2 (Vancouver: The Canadian Association for Young Children, 1999); Debby Cryer and Thelma Harms, Infants and Toddlers in Out-Of-Home Care (Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing, 2000); Fergus P. Hughes, Children, Play, and Development (Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, 1995); E.C. Melhuish, S. Martin Mooney and
created because governments saw the need “to ensure a supply of healthy children in the long run, and a need for women in the paid workforce in the short run.” In Canada, however, the issue remains one of parental, and more typically, maternal concern. Our society is not one in which citizens feel entitled to child care services provided by the government. Consequently, the Liberal Party’s abdication of its promise to expand the child care system was not viewed as a reprehensible denial of a service to which parents were rightfully entitled. The abandonment of the policy received very little news coverage in the mainstream media, and the issue quickly faded from the public record. The Liberals were able to renounce their promise with very little repercussion because the framing of the child care issue simply did not facilitate notions of entitlement or betrayal. Accordingly, the Liberals were able to withdraw from the plan with virtually no political backlash.

But why is this so? Why is it that society at large, and parents in particular, continue to perceive child care as a predominantly private issue? What are the ideological tenets that create a political consciousness conducive to such assumptions?

Bruce Doern and Richard Phidd define an ideology as “an umbrella of belief and action that helps provide political and social identity to its adherents and that serves to

94 MacIvor: 372-73.
integrate and coordinate their views and actions on a wide range of political issues."\textsuperscript{95}

They equate ideologies with "the broad "isms" of Canadian political life: liberalism, conservatism, and socialism."\textsuperscript{96} According to Doern and Phidd, one's interpretation of a particular issue will be most significantly determined by preexisting notions premised on one's ideological perspective. For example, "defenders of liberal capitalism avowedly place a higher value on individual freedom and on efficiency than they do on equality", regardless of the specific issue.\textsuperscript{97} Deborah Stone also acknowledges the role of ideology by stating that

where one stands on issues of distribution is determined not so much by the specifics of any particular issue (say, tax policy or student financial aid) as by a more general world view. This world view includes one's assumptions about the meaning of community and the nature of property.\textsuperscript{98}

Public policy shapes and is shaped by ideologies as a result of their mutually reinforcing effect on how citizens perceive the world around them. This contributes to the predominance of certain ideas such as efficiency, liberty, stability, equality, equity, and national unity, to name a few.

In the case of the failed Red Book promise and the public's subsequent complacence, the most significant ideological policy determinants were gendered notions of public and private responsibilities, economic neo-liberalism, and social conservatism. Although the two ideological perspectives do not always accord directly with each other, their coincidence in the case of the child care policy was crucial to the eventual demise of

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid: 44.
the proposal. The ideological standpoints relevant to this case are best exemplified by the actions of the Prime Minister, bureaucrats within the Privy Council Office (PCO) and, most importantly, Paul Martin and his finance officials. Furthermore, these elite officials were able to act on their ideological biases with the confidence that their views coincided with the “national mood” of Canadians at the time. Paul Martin’s agenda, backed by the PMO and the Prime Minister himself, led to the abdication of a promise. The general public did not object to the withdrawal, and the issue of child care all but disappeared from both the institutional and the public agenda. The dearth of public outcry, in turn, reinforced the government’s assumption that it had acted appropriately.

In contrast to Lloyd Axworthy’s attempt to implement plans of a “social” liberal nature, Paul Martin’s agenda was one of “fiscal” liberalism. His strategy, compatible with public concerns, was to focus on debt and deficit reduction, devolution of fiscal responsibility to the provinces, and cutbacks in transfer payments.99 The logical manifestation of his “cost containment policy”100 was budget cuts. In particular, finance officials focused on cuts to social programs, such as welfare and of course, the proposed child care policy. Lloyd Axworthy and his supporters at HRDC struggled to honour the Liberal Party’s commitment to an expanded national child care program, but Martin’s position was fortified by the support of the Prime Minister himself. In the end, fiscal restraint overruled social responsibility, and Martin’s ideological biases prevailed. Canada’s political elite, along with the general public, did not feel that an expanded child

97 Ibid: 36.
care system was significant enough to undermine the more important goal of cost containment.

While these sentiments are indicative of a specific global trend in the 1990s\textsuperscript{101}, they can also be attributed to a more omnipresent fiscal and social conservatism, associated with modern patriarchal capitalist societies. Although it may seem necessary to differentiate between capitalism and patriarchy for the purposes of analysis, I believe that this is not entirely possible, due to the mutually reinforcing nature of the two ideological perspectives. For example, capitalist society relies on the unpaid work that people do outside of the paid labour force. Furthermore, the market cannot and does not accommodate a monetary mechanism for every single exchange of goods and services. Finally, modern industrial societies recognize certain “market failures” which require either government intervention, or the volunteerism of its citizens.\textsuperscript{102}

Likewise, the modern, industrial manifestation of patriarchy assumes that the male heads of households will work outside the home in the paid labour force.\textsuperscript{103} The logical consequence of the coincidence of the two ideologies is that patriarchal capitalist society

\textsuperscript{100} Bach & Phillips: 242.
\textsuperscript{101} I am referring to the globalization of national economies. According to Janine Brodie, this trend creates conditions under which “the demands on all states are roughly equivalent: maximize exports, reduce social spending, and state economic regulation, and enhance the power of private capital to reorganize national economies as part of transnational economic networks.” Janine Brodie, “Shifting the Boundaries: Gender and the Politics of Restructuring”, in Isabella Bakker, ed., The Strategic Silence: Gender and Economic Policy (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1994): 47.
\textsuperscript{102} The Canadian government’s failure to recognize and resolve the market failure of the child care “industry” will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 4; where I will discuss our society’s gendered, classist, racist/neo-colonial attitudes about the care of children.
\textsuperscript{103} It may seem presumptuous and unsubstantiated to assert that our society assumes men to be the heads of households. However, this assertion can be proven by the observation that “female-headed households”
relies on the unpaid work of women (presumed to be unemployed) in order that society can continue to function, while men work in the realm of paid employment. The (presumed) unpaid work of women includes cleaning and maintaining the home; planning, providing and cleaning up after meals; and caring for children, the elderly and dependants who have disabilities. While it is true that not all women do all of those tasks, the fact is that many of our social, political, and economic institutions rely on such assumptions. Remarkably, this is still the presumed role of women, even now, when 78% of Canadian women with children participate in the paid labour force, and must therefore be performing the other tasks in their “spare” time.104

Familialism, as an ideology, is based on the assumption that individuals act in “family units”. Paternalistic familialism, in the capitalist context, is manifested in the historic notion of the “family wage”, which presumes that the (male) head of the household will earn a living in the paid labour force, while the wage-earner’s spouse maintains the household. Clearly this presumption is problematic. First: it is based on a classist and racist perception of who performs paid work. In truth, women from working class or poor backgrounds have always participated in the paid labour force. For example, rural women’s labour has been integral to the success of their families’ farms; and poorer women have always been employed to perform the (“private”) domestic tasks of the wealthy. Furthermore, even if the assumption were at some time reflected in reality, it is no longer the case, even for the middle and upper classes. Over the past forty

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are, by definition, those in which no man resides. Presumably, women cannot, by definition, head households that they share with men.
years, families have suffered the reality of declining real wages. In fact, "by the 1970s, fewer than half of all jobs paid enough to support a family." The result is that even relatively affluent women are trapped in a socio-economic contradiction, whereby they are expected to stay at home and care for their small children, but they are also expected, in many cases, to "supplement the family income". Finally, the paternalistic concept of the family wage assumes at least two adults per household. Today in Canada, 14.6% of households with children are headed by single parents (12.1% single mothers, 2.5% single fathers). For these parents, their wage is the family’s only wage. Either they must work outside the home and try to arrange care for their children, or, they must face poverty, scrutiny, and indignity raising children on social assistance. The concept of the family wage was never entirely accurate, and is even less realistic today.

Nevertheless, many of our public policies (including "the realm of potential choices, or choices not made") continue to assume the patriarchal family unit, functioning successfully in a capitalist economy. Canadians’ lack of indignation regarding the severe shortage of regulated child care exemplifies such attitudes. First, it is assumed that, if at all possible, women will stay at home with their children until the

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104 Statistics Canada, Labour Survey Data on Mothers. (Ottawa: Compiled for the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 1999).
106 I use the word "supplement" deliberately, as I believe there still exist prevailing assumptions about male work being more important/necessary/fundamental than the work done by women. This is evidenced by the wage gap, tax policy, employment insurance, and the "ghettoization" of women in part-time, low-paying jobs.
108 Michael Howlett, "Acts of Commission and Acts of Omission: Legal-Historical Research and the Intentions of Government in a Federal State", Canadian Journal of Political Science 19 (1986): 369. The statement refers to the fact that a society’s “public policy” is revealed not only through that which is declared, but also through that which is left unsaid or unregulated.
children are old enough to go to school. Even then, it is up to the women to arrange for private supplementary care, since most parents cannot be home when their children finish school at three o'clock.\textsuperscript{109} Second, it is assumed that if a woman must work, she will be responsible for securing a caregiver and negotiating that person's wage.\textsuperscript{110} Third, most Canadians appear to believe that these matters are not worthy of increased government regulation or public revenues.\textsuperscript{111} For reasons associated with capitalism and familialism, our society presumes that while children over the age of five are the responsibility of the government during the day, children under five are the exclusive concern of their parents.\textsuperscript{112} The end result is that child care remains a matter of private, parental, and usually maternal, concern.

While these observations may seem to be trite platitudes, that is precisely their power. The ideological assumptions associated with modern patriarchal capitalist society are so pervasive that we do not even notice their influence. "Rather than being perceived as potential sources of error, social values such as.... sexism that filter perception, mediate

\textsuperscript{109} If the government of British Columbia successfully implements its proposed plan, British Columbian mothers and their children will of course be the exception to this statement.

\textsuperscript{110} Obviously, it is expected that the caregiver's wage must be minimal. Otherwise, there would be "no point" in a woman leaving her (unpaid) domestic work to participate in the paid labour force. Furthermore, since the care of children has always gone largely unrecognized and unremunerated, it is difficult for people to imagine that the labour is worthy of a decent salary. Why pay a lot of money for something that has always been provided either for free (by wives and other female family members) or at a minimal cost (by nannies and other female domestic workers)?

\textsuperscript{111} This is particularly interesting, in light of the virtually uncontested benefits of early childhood education, combined with the relatively low costs. For example: "In Toronto, the cost of primary education is about $7000 per pupil and students are at school for about six and one half hours during the day from September through June. The cost of licensed child care in Toronto is close to $7000 for about ten hours of care and education per day, 12 months per year." Gordon Cleveland & Michael Krashinsky, The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care: The Economic Rationale for Public Investment in Young Children - A Policy Study (Toronto: University of Toronto at Scarborough, Department of Economics. Prepared for the Child Care Resource and Research Unit, 1998): 76.
arguments, and structure research investigations often escape critical reflection."  
Under such conditions, it seems natural that child care remains a predominantly private issue. We do not expect the government to provide child care for working parents. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, we do not even conceive of the child care shortage as a "problem" worthy of political debate and action. Tragically, even in an era where the vast majority of parents participate in the paid work force and experience the stress of arranging child care, there seems to be no consensus to dedicate political energy or tax dollars to the care of those who we profess to be our most precious citizens and valuable resources. In short, I cannot overestimate the extent to which ideological biases influenced the demise of the Liberal Party's child care policy, and the public's subsequent acquiescence.

**Conclusion**

In February of 1996, the Liberal government announced that it had abandoned its proposed child care policy, promised in the 1993 Red Book. Although the government cited "lack of provincial interest" as the reason for its abdication, further analysis has

112. It is interesting to note that while over ninety percent of children 5 years and older attend regulated educational institutions, approximately ninety percent of children under 5 spend their time away from their parents in unregulated care and education arrangements. (See for example H. Goelman, G. Doherty, J. Tougas, A. LaGrange and D. Lero, *You bet I care! Working Papers, 1999*. Online: http://www.childcarecanada.org/research/inprogress/you%20bet.html).


revealed that Doug Young's explanation was incomplete. In truth, the failure of the child care policy was determined by the complex intersection of interests, institutions and ideas. A lack of effective interest group pressure enabled the government to discard the child care policy, while catering to the fiscal and political interests of more powerful groups, whose agendas reinforced the status quo with respect to child care. Federalist traditions and rhetoric provided government officials with an acceptable language of justification for their actions. Fiscal federalism and national concern for debt and deficit reduction undermined provincial faith in federal funding, and Canadian citizens wanted to see cost-containment, rather than new, expensive programs. Federal-provincial relations (badly affected by Charlottetown and Meech Lake, as well as the 1995 Budget and subsequent uncertainty regarding transfers) were such that the federal government was loathe to propose any sort of national program, fuelling the trend toward decentralization and anti-Ottawa sentiments. Consequently, the ideological assumptions held by both government elites and the general public led to the prioritization of fiscal restraint and provincial autonomy over a national approach to social responsibility. This configuration of interests, institutions and ideas led to the inevitable demise of the Liberal Party's child care policy.

The failure of Axworthy's proposal is particularly notable because it had many of the elements of a "winner" policy: dispersed cost, concentrated benefit, increased employment, and decreased dependence on social assistance. However, proposals that fail to meet these criteria - technical feasibility, value acceptability within the political community, tolerable cost, anticipated public acquiescence, and a reasonable chance for receptivity among
In the case of the Liberal Party's 1993 proposal for an expanded child care system, interests, institutions and ideas created a political climate within which the above criteria could not be met. Consequently, the government abandoned its promise, and the public accepted that decision.

CHAPTER 3: A CRITICAL REEXAMINATION OF THE ISSUES

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this paper is not only to describe and analyze the history of child care as a public policy matter in Canada, but to explore the deeper and farther reaching political implications of societal attitudes toward the care of children. In this chapter I will discuss the ways in which prevailing discourse surrounding child care fails to address problematic assumptions regarding the so-called public/private divide, capitalism, gender, class, and race. By critically re-examining the issue of child care from these perspectives, I hope to enhance the existing child care dialogue by highlighting concerns that are left unanswered - and even unasked - by most examinations of the topic.

In this section, I will describe the ways in which the present condition of child care in Canada is detrimental to women, children, and society at large. The unregulated, 

privatized care of children is necessarily unsatisfactory for the following reasons: First, prevailing attitudes toward child care leave intact a capitalist, market-oriented (non)ethic of care; one which views child care as a private, rather than public matter, to be negotiated among individuals. Given the historical reality of child care being performed for free by most women, child care is both undervalued and underpaid in a market economy. This leads to the second problem with privatized child care, which is that it relies on an underclass of child care workers who are typically vulnerable to exploitation because of their gender, class, and/or (racialized) immigration status. In short, existing child care arrangements in Canada are unsatisfactory not only because of the immediate consequences for children, parents, and child care workers, but because of the way in which the privatized purchasing of child care is rooted in and perpetuates inequitable attitudes about class, gender and race. While historical overview and policy analysis may help us to understand the how the current system came to be, critical analysis enhances our understanding of the problematic nature of the system itself.

Before discussing the impropriety of a privatized, market-oriented approach to care, it is first necessary to address the conceptual placement of child care within the realm of the market (private), as opposed to that of the state (public):

**Public and Private: The Great Divide?**

The terms public and private have historically been used in modern Western philosophy to differentiate between the realm of civic interaction (everybody's concern) and the realm of private relations (nobody's business). As Western societies became
more modernized and industrialized, the two terms came to have various, but interrelated meanings, depending on the context in which they were used. In fact, the tidy syllogistic dichotomy actually represents at least three types of relationships, depending on the context. When speaking of "politics", the public/private distinction is between the 'state' and the 'family'. Commercially, the distinction is between 'the market' (a realm of commercial transaction and remuneration) and 'the family' (the non-commercial, non-remunerated 'haven' from the world of business). Finally, in more recent years, the public/private divide has also come to distinguish between the realm of state regulation and the realm of private economic activity.

However, the public/private distinction referred to in traditional Western political philosophy is a problematic generalized social construct for at least three reasons: First, it is a false dichotomy; one which pretends that polar absolutes can exist in the domain of human interaction. In fact, the "public" and "private" aspects of life are neither entirely opposed, nor entirely separable. Private matters can be public liabilities and public status can translate into private privilege. The presumed mutual exclusivity of the so-called spheres is especially inaccurate in a highly regulated society such as Canada, where the most intimate details of 'private' life are often matters of public concern. Second, it is difficult to apply the public/private distinction to the modern triad of the family, the state, and the market, where all three realms are often implicated in any given context. As such, the reductive and simplistic public/private dichotomy is an inaccurate representation of the complex, multifaceted 'spheres' of modern life.
Finally, the traditional use of the so-called public/private divide is misleading to the extent that it is presented as a neutral form of classification. In reality, the process of categorization is highly consequential to the collective political consciousness. As Nicola Lacey explains,

The ideology of the public/private dichotomy allows government to clean its hands of any responsibility for the state of the ‘private’ world and depoliticizes the disadvantages which inevitably spill over the alleged divide by affecting the position of the ‘privately’ disadvantaged in the public world.\textsuperscript{116}

Thus, the so-called public/private divide, as relied on in traditional Western Philosophy is an unsatisfactory conceptual tool because it depicts a falsely polarized, reductive picture of modern industrial society. Furthermore, it masks the highly political nature of distinguishing between that which deserves government attention and action, and that which is best left to the realm of individuals and their pocket books.\textsuperscript{117}

Nevertheless, many feminist scholars have chosen to retain the distinction between public and private, in order to better understand and reveal its ideological significance and problematic underpinnings.\textsuperscript{118} As Susan Boyd explains,

We employ the public/private divide as an ideological marker that shifts in relation to the role of the state at particular historical moments, in particular contexts, and in relation to particular issues. Rather than demarcating actual spheres of activity that are either regulated by the state or not, we strive for an analysis that conceptualizes and recognizes


\textsuperscript{117} In the case of child care, for example, we have seen that “private” business interests exert considerable influence over public policy, while the de-politicization (privatization) of child care remains virtually unchallenged.

the public/private divide as indeterminate and shifting, but at the same
time connected to identifiable relations of power such as those based on
class, gender, and race.  

Thus, by retaining and 'deconstructing' the public/private divide, these feminists have
exposed some of the erroneous and/or inequitable underpinnings of one of the
philosophical pillars of Western social construction. While a paper of this length does
not allow for an in-depth discussion of all feminists insights relating to the public/private
divide, I will briefly highlight some of feminist arguments that relate most significantly to
the 'privatization' of child care in Canadian society:  

Perhaps most importantly, the distinction between market and family is relevant to
the child care issue because of the way in which the evolution of patriarchal capitalism
has failed to account for the value of women's work in their homes and communities.
Since work performed by women in the home has always been invisible to ('public')
market forces, it has traditionally had no economic 'value'. This has contributed
significantly to stereotypical conceptions of women as economically dependant wives and
mothers. Furthermore, when 'women's' work such as caring and cleaning is performed
(mostly by women) in the paid labour force, the job is invariably undervalued, underpaid,
and uncertain.  

119 Susan B. Boyd, "Challenging the Public/Private Divide: An Overview" in Susan B. Boyd (ed.),
Challenging the Public/Private Divide: Feminism, Law and Public Policy, (Toronto: University of Toronto
120 See for example, Katherine Teghtsoonian, "Who Pays for Caring for Children? Public Policy and the
Devaluation of Women's Work" in Susan B. Boyd (ed.), Challenging the Public/Private Divide: Feminism,
Law and Public Policy, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).
The state/market distinction is also significant because the struggle for 'public' child care has been so adversely affected by the liberal capitalist assumption that the market is a politically neutral, efficient method of providing goods and services. While this issue will be discussed in further detail in the “Children, Capitalism, and Class” section below, it is important to note the role that feminists have played in revealing the inequities inherent in a capitalist system. In contrast to mainstream economic theorists, scholars such as Frances Olsen have invited us to challenge the presumption that social and economic inequalities in (or caused by) the market are “natural and beyond the proper scope of state activity”.

Finally, the state/family divide is also significant to the issue of child care because of the way in which the ‘privatization’ of ‘family’ issues leaves unchallenged the inequities experienced by women in modern patriarchal capitalist society. As I have already discussed, patriarchal familialism in the capitalist context has contributed significantly to women’s relative social and economic disadvantage. The public/private divide has served to reinforce and render invisible this disadvantage by ‘privatizing’ women’s inequality in the ‘private’ sphere. Consequently, women’s disproportionate burden of care and household labour is considered natural and apolitical; unworthy of state intervention. Even when women enter the ‘public sphere’ of paid labour, their private concerns and burdens, which may impact directly on their abilities to perform in the ‘public’, are considered to be their own private matters, to be resolved without support, assistance, or even acknowledgement.

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In contrast, feminist scholars have argued that “the personal is political” and that ‘private’ inequities should not be considered natural or acceptable. Feminists would therefore argue that parents in the paid labour force must overcome the obstacles to collective action (including patriarchal familialism, as well as gendered notions of citizenship and entitlement in the capitalist context) and reconceive of child care as a “public”, “political” issue. In short, a feminist analysis of the so-called public/private divide reveals many insights into the previously unchallenged errors and inequities underpinning traditional modern Western political philosophy.

Building on feminists’ deconstruction of the public/private divide, Nancy Fraser’s “socialist-feminist theory of late-capitalist political culture” discusses the ‘political’, ‘economic’, and ‘domestic’ or ‘personal’ areas of life. Fraser’s typology is insightful because it explicitly acknowledges and deconstructs the “political” nature of the process of categorization. She points out that “[i]n late-capitalist societies, what is ‘political’ is normally defined in contrast to what is ‘economic’ and ‘domestic’ or ‘personal’.” Since no issue, concern or phenomenon is inherently political or apolitical, and since public response presupposes the politicization of a given issue, “one of the primary stakes of social conflict in late-capitalist societies is precisely where the limits of the political

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will be drawn.” Thus, the aim of those rallying for ‘political’ recognition is to show that their concerns transcend the de-politicized spheres of family and official-economy, and are worthy of public (and therefore governmental) attention. Since all types of people are engaged in this process, civil society is “a site of struggle where groups with unequal discursive (and non-discursive) resources compete to establish as hegemonic their respective interpretations of legitimate social needs.” In many ways, Fraser’s theory is quite similar to a neo-pluralist approach, except that she pays more attention to the power disparities and inequities brought into the ‘political’ arena by groups competing to have their voices heard.

When, assisted by Fraser’s insights, we cease to conceive of matters as either public or private, the complex and potentially ‘political’ implications of an issue are more discernible. For example, child care is “situated at the intersection of the state, the market economy and families.” As such, it influences and is influenced by the politics of federalism, citizenship and entitlement, fiscal policy, education, welfare, equity, gender, class, and “the family”. In addition, opinions regarding child care are ideologically linked to theories of racism, neo-colonialism, regional disparity, urban/rural incongruity, and the relative merits of universal benefits versus targeted populations.

It is indeed curious that in spite of the profound and far-reaching political derivatives of child care, Canadians still consider the care of children to be a

124 Ibid: 205.
126 Teghtsoonian, “Neo-Conservative Ideologies...”; 98.
predominantly private, familial issue; unworthy of significant government intervention. As I have already stated, it is by no means a neutral matter of fact that individual parents and child care workers are left largely to their own devices to negotiate the care of children. By relegating child care to the depoliticized realms of ‘personal’ and ‘economic’ interaction, the government - encouraged by public acquiescence - effectively absolves itself of any responsibility to children who require paid care.

Based on current (regressive) tax deductions and (insufficient) expenditures, it is reasonable to infer that neither the Canadian people, nor their government, value child care as a public goal. While it is true that licensed child care facilities are regulated and occasionally subsidized, we must recall that approximately ninety percent of children who require paid care receive that care in an unregulated setting. It is not my intention to sleight the caregivers or parents of those children; only to draw attention to the fact that over 2,700,000 children, their parents and their unregulated caregivers are presently vulnerable to exploitation and/or abuse without political remedy. Likewise, the allocation of child care within the private sphere exacerbates the vulnerability of those

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127 Once again, Quebec is an outstanding exception to this “rule”. It may also be argued that British Columbia cannot be included in generalizations about “Canadian” attitudes, since it has proposed extensive child care reform measures. Nevertheless, until the proposed programs are in place, I will (albeit cynically) withhold my praise.
129 The *Canadian Criminal Code* provides legal remedies for the most egregious acts of abuse and neglect. Short of such acts, however, parents whose children are in unregulated care have no external standards (such as the *Day Nurseries Act 1984*) by which to assess the care their children receive, nor do they have any recourse other than withdrawing their children from substandard care. For many parents this is a troubling dilemma, since lack of child care will result in an inability to perform paid labour. Likewise, from the perspective of the caregiver, unregulated care is potentially dangerous, since unregulated caregivers are not protected by provincial minimum wage standards or employment standards Acts. Caregivers may have unreasonable demands placed on them, and be unable to refuse conditions, due to the conflicted nature of caring (in all senses of the word) for pay.
children whose parents simply cannot afford child care or do not have access to reliable child care services. In the absence of government-funded, affordable, and accessible care, many economically vulnerable parents – including the working poor - are forced to leave their children alone or with siblings. While most Canadians would agree that such arrangements are unfortunate, very few translate that concern into a politicized notion of the need for public child care. As such, the paid care of children continues to be construed as a ‘private’ - or ‘personal’/ ‘economic’ issue, in spite of its latent political implications.

Finally, the inaccuracy of child care’s classification as a ‘private’ issue is most acutely illustrated by the case of foreign domestic workers, aux pairs, and nannies who live in the homes of their employers. Foreign domestic workers in particular are precariously situated at the cusp of the political, economic, and domestic areas of life; without enjoying the full benefits of any one sphere. Regarding their political situation, the state has played a contradictory role in the organization of domestic work. It has under-regulated working conditions while over-regulating the workers. While the provincial labour standard laws, respecting “the sanctity of the home” have either completely ignored or at best unequally treated the home as a workplace, the federal government, with its jurisdiction over immigration, has over-regulated the workers.

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130 It is difficult to obtain accurate statistics on the rate at which parents leave their children alone or with siblings. Many parents are ashamed to admit resorting to such measures. Furthermore, parents whose children receive unregulated care often have “under the table” arrangements with their caregivers and are reticent to reveal their childcare arrangements. Nevertheless, anecdotal research and interviews consistently support the assumption that many children receive no care whatsoever, or are watched by older siblings.

Domestic workers are also caught in a personal/economic conundrum, as they are in the home, but not of it. They are engaged on a very personal level with the members of the household, yet they are certainly not family. They are employees in a setting that is supposed to be free of economic interaction. The ideology of the home and the family obscures the fact that the relationship is one of employer and employee. "Privileging a definition of the household as private, and thus immune from both market behaviour and state intervention effectively effaces the domestic worker's identity as an employee in a work place." In such a setting, it is difficult for the caregivers to assert their rights as workers.

Likewise, employers who wish to provide a positive, professional work environment for their employees lack models to which they can refer. Business practices in the official economy are inapplicable because they fail to account for the highly personalized nature of child care in the home. On the other hand, historical models of domestic employment practices are unacceptable because they are paternalistic and disrespectful. Some employers (consciously or unconsciously) compensate for the

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132 Foreign domestic workers are regulated by the Live-In Caregiver Program, which will be discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter, in the "Child Care and International Racialized Exploitation" section. I only raise it in this context to illustrate the way in which traditional concepts of public and private fail to capture the complexity of paid child care.


134 Unfortunately, some Canadian families do not want to provide a positive, professional work environment for their employees. On the contrary, they deliberately hire foreign domestic workers in order to exploit the women's vulnerability. It is not uncommon for employers to demand that their employees work extra hours, while enduring highly irregular or substandard living accommodations. Many workers have even been subjected to verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. For a more detailed account, please see Abigail B. Bakan & Daiva Stasiulis, Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).
domestic worker’s de-professionalized status by declaring her\textsuperscript{135} to be ‘one of the family’. However, family analogies are inappropriate because they distort “the actual power relationship between employer and low-paid and vulnerable household employee.”\textsuperscript{136} Furthermore, they “obscure the fact that domestic workers have families of their own”\textsuperscript{137}, families they have been forced to leave behind, while they work to care for the families of their employers. Without regulated, monitored norms upon which to model their practices, foreign domestic workers and their employers must negotiate their working relationship on an ad hoc basis. While this is not \textit{necessarily} a negative working environment, it is highly contingent and susceptible to abuse.

In short, the classification of child care as a predominantly ‘private’ or domestic/economic issue is both inaccurate and unsatisfactory. In reality, the child care situation in Canada is a matter of domestic, economic \textit{and} political concern. Parents, children, child care workers and society at large are all affected by the lack of regulated child care in Canada. However, prevailing capitalist patriarchal assumptions - discussed later in this chapter - ensure the continued conceptualization of child care in its current privatized context. Such attitudes will prevail until Canadians experience a conceptual revolution: one which revises collective assumptions about gender, work, families, the economy, and the nation’s responsibility to its children. Until that time, progressive child care policies will continue to fail in the face of powerful capitalist interests and patriarchal ideas.


\textsuperscript{136} Bakan & Stasiulis: 19.
Children, Capitalism and Class

But why does it matter if child care is perceived as a predominantly privatized, market-oriented service? Is it not the case that demand will stimulate supply, and that consumers will determine the price through their purchasing power? Why should the child care 'industry' be different than any other service industry? The purpose of this section is to show why a market-oriented approach to the care of children is not only misconceived, but also potentially harmful.

A capitalist society is one in which most of the instruments of production as well as the objects of consumption are privately controlled. Sale occurs for profit in markets, which while variously organized, are free in the sense that, subject to the constraints of law, entrepreneurs are at liberty to enter or depart, to expand or contract, and purchasers to buy or not buy. Moreover, the profits from these transactions are the rewards to entrepreneurship and are the property of the owners of the enterprise. As an ideology, capitalism contains a doctrine of social justice, an implicit assertion that inequalities of income and wealth measure, however roughly, the economic contributions of the men and women who embark their energies and resources in the productive process.138

Canadians, on the whole, have a great degree of faith in capitalism; both as an economic system and as an ideological perspective. We tend to think of the market economy as a neutral arena of interaction which results, in all but the most exceptional cases, in the most stable, efficient and just form of exchange.

In the case of child care, however, there are many ways in which the accepted norms and practices associated with capitalist interaction do not hold true. For example, in a capitalist paradigm, prospective entrepreneurs are motivated to provide goods and services in large measure, because of the increased profit margins associated with

137 Ibid.: 11.
economies of scale. However, "unlike many economic goods, the cost of child care cannot be reduced by pursuing economies of scale without seriously jeopardizing the quality of the care provided and placing children at risk." Small children in particular require the almost constant attention of at least one adult, and even preschoolers demand enormous care. Therefore, in regulated child care facilities in Ontario, for example, the caregiver-to-child ratios are required to be at least 1:3, 1:5 and 1:8 for infant, toddler, and preschool care, respectively. The proportion of child care workers to children cannot be reduced beyond a certain ratio, regardless of how many children the facility serves.

Consequently, in a patriarchal capitalist society, where child care is undervalued and underpaid, it is simply not advantageous for many potential providers to enter the child care market. Likewise, parents face the dilemma of choosing between regulated care, which is prohibitively expensive due to the high cost of even paltry wages; and unregulated, less expensive care, which may not meet the parents' standards of child development, health, or safety.

This dilemma highlights another way in which a privatized, market-oriented approach to care is unacceptable: Supply and demand are:

the usual term[s] for the market forces governing prices, in the absence of administrative control... These forces make themselves felt through the price mechanism, as responses in the quantities offered for sale

139 The term 'economies of scale' refers to "circumstances that cause the proportionate increase in the total cost of supplying a good or service to be less than the proportionate increase in the amount produced." Bullock et al.: 252.
(supply) or the quantities that consumers are prepared to buy (demand) when the market price changes. When left unimpeded by administrative control, supply and demand tend to have an equilibrating effect on the market. There are, however, two exceptions to the rule: First, the forces of supply and demand will create a disequilibrating effect when a change in price excites speculation. Second, the laws of supply and demand do not deal efficiently with market failures such as public goods, externalities and monopolies.

In Canada, it is commonly acknowledged that certain goods and services markets are characterized by market failures, and therefore require government intervention. Transportation, communication, utilities, health care and education are but a few examples of the Canadian people and government accepting the need for administrative intervention and regulation of a given 'market'. In the case of child care, there are also numerous market failures that require rectification by government intervention. As Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky explain,

> To argue that child care markets work perfectly and that no government intervention is required, one must assume that there is no public interest in the raising of children...and that parents of young children make the decision to work and purchase child care with perfect information about all the outcomes of their decision and with the ability to borrow against future earnings to deal with any expenses.¹⁴³

After noting that this is clearly not the case, the authors then proceed to list the numerous market failures associated with the care and education of preschool children. The first and most persuasive point from an economic perspective is that there is a market failure because of the public interest in child care: A well-educated and well-adjusted workforce

¹⁴² Bullock et. al.: 830.
is crucial for economic growth and political vibrancy. Poorly-educated and cared-for children will be the voters, workers, care providers, and policy makers of the future. All of society has an interest in ensuring that children’s most crucial years are characterized by adequate care and stimulation. Furthermore, there is a public interest in early childhood care and education because while parents have different abilities to provide for children, equal opportunity for all children is “a vital social value that transcends individual interests”.

Cleveland and Krashinsky also list numerous other arguments for government intervention. They explain that the child care market is characterized by market failures...

a) because parents cannot accurately judge the quality of their childcare arrangement, nor its long-term effects;

b) in the labour market for mothers of young children;

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145 Cleveland & Krashinsky, (1998): 12. As I mentioned in footnote 93, I have taken as my starting point an assumption that (good) child care is beneficial for children’s development and well-being. In this paper, my concerns and arguments are related to sex, class, and race-based issues of equity and social justice. While it is important to consider the benefits and drawbacks of non-parental care for children themselves, the issue rests beyond the scope of this paper. Once again, for an overview of discussions in this area, please see the works cited at footnote 93.

146 Cleveland and Krashinsky cite Morley Gunderson, who assesses the 30-40% wage gap that exists between men and women and estimates that only 5% of that gap is actually attributable to wage discrimination. The remaining 25-35% is due to “labour market decisions women have made, nearly all of which are associated with their primary responsibility for the rearing of children.” According to Gunderson, ten percentage points of the wage gap are due to occupational segregation, whereby women “choose” more flexible (lower paying) jobs that are easy to enter and exit, with flexible hours. Seven percentage points are due to the effects of unionization and human capital, and close to fifteen percentage points of the wage gap are due to differences in hours worked. Morley Gunderson, Implications of Daycare Policies on Female Labour Market Behaviour, Report to the Special Committee on Child Care, (Ottawa: House of Commons, 1986). Cleveland and Krashinsky also point out that the labour market decisions made by lone mothers are
c). in the taxation of earnings;\textsuperscript{147}
d). in borrowing against future earnings;
e). in assessing payoffs to labour market attachment; and
f). because of the existence of welfare.\textsuperscript{148}

In short, Cleveland and Krashinsky argue that there are many reasons why child care should not be left to the capitalist economic default setting where it is assumed “that a free competitive market for product “x” will produce the best possible economic results”\textsuperscript{149}. On the contrary, they insist that, under relatively cautious assumptions, the benefits of affordable, accessible, accountable child care significantly exceed the costs. In fact, they estimate that for every dollar spent on an adequate child care system\textsuperscript{150}, approximately two dollars worth of benefits are generated for children, parents, and the public.\textsuperscript{151} Therefore, even on strict economic terms, publicly-funded, accessible child care is simply more cost-effective.

\textsuperscript{147} The authors argue that from a fiscal perspective, regulated child care contributes to the tax base because parents who are in the work force (as opposed to home with children because they cannot find adequate, “cost-effective” care) pay income taxes. (Cleveland and Krashinsky, (1998): 49). In addition, regulation of child care arrangements would result in a tremendous increase in the number of child caregivers paying income tax. In the absence of government intervention, unregulated, under-the-table child care creates and externality because of the hidden incomes earned by child care workers.

\textsuperscript{148} The existence of welfare is a market failure associated with child care because the transition from dependence on social assistance to gainful employment is virtually impossible without regulated, highly subsidized child care. In the absence of such policies, parents may “choose” to stay on welfare because they are “farther ahead” than they would be if they worked in the labour force. As Cleveland and Krashinsky explain, these parents’ ‘choice’ to stay home creates and externality because the general, income tax-paying population is affected by those parents’ decisions.

\textsuperscript{149} Cleveland & Krashinsky, (1998): 8.

\textsuperscript{150} More specifically, the study done by Cleveland and Krashinsky is a policy analysis of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada’s 1994 “First Step” proposal. The proposal calls for a federal/provincial/territorial/aboriginal plan with strong federal leadership and bilateral negotiations. Implementation of the plan would result in 1) the provision of sufficient, high-quality, publicly funded child care services to accommodate 50% of all children between 3-5 years of age by the year 2005; and 2) the provision of sufficient, high-quality, publicly-funded child care services to accommodate 50% of children outside of this core group whose parents are in the paid labour force. Cleveland & Krashinsky, (1998): \textit{Forward}. 

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Nevertheless, Canadians continue to perceive child care as a parents' (women's) problem that should be addressed through the private sector, with public dollars spent only on targeted “needy” groups. These target populations include children with special needs, Aboriginal children, and children deemed “at risk”, by virtue of being from poor families. Throughout the provinces and territories, parents of children with special needs receive varying degrees of assistance with the cost of caring for and educating their children. Likewise, provincial and territorial governments across the country fund “Head Start” programs for Aboriginal children (although the extent to which the funding actually ‘trickles down’ to accessible children’s programs is variable). Some provinces also offer subsidized childcare to parents on social assistance, in order to facilitate skills enhancement and job searches. In Ontario, for example, parents on Ontario Works can receive a subsidy of $390.00 per month for a child 0-5 and $346.00 per month for a child 6-12 (often from unregulated childcare providers performing the job as a Workfare requirement), while they meet their Workfare and job search requirements. The maximum amount allowed is the same whether the child is in “formal” (regulated) or “informal” care. Since formal care is almost always more expensive, Workfare participants are much more likely to use informal care arrangements, in light of their relative affordability. It is also interesting to note that “provinces like Ontario, New Brunswick and B.C., as well as some federal programs, now encourage social assistance

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151 Ibid, Executive Summary: 5.
154 Ibid.
recipients, as part of their ‘transition-to-work’ packages, to use their subsidies for informal care (read babysitters, neighbours, relatives), because it will remain ‘affordable’ when or if they get a job.”

Finally, all provinces provide some form of child care subsidy to certain families in need. Of course, each province has a ceiling on either its total fee subsidy budget or the total number of families that can receive a subsidy. The result is that many eligible parents never receive assistance with their child care costs, even though they qualify for the assistance. In addition, the limitations of the subsidy approach are further exacerbated by the fact that regulated child care facilities only allot a certain number of their spaces to “subsidized children” (a problematic and discriminatory concept, in and of itself). Consequently, even if a parent receives a provincial subsidy, s/he must try to find a facility in which to ‘spend’ it. It is also important to realize that, even if all qualified parents were eligible to avail themselves of the subsidy system, the approach would still be flawed. As Jane Beach explains:

It is not cost-efficient, effective, nor equitable to set up targeted programs for particular populations, which are often in flux.... Money is only well-spent when it is directed to programs that promote good child development. There is no guarantee that the hundreds of millions of dollars currently spent through the Child Care Expense Deduction

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and "vouchers" [subsidies] to low income families are helping families access quality care and education.  

Nevertheless, Canada’s current child care ‘system’ is largely a free-market approach, with special programs and subsidies for targeted populations. The arrangement is remarkable, given the numerous economic arguments against such an arrangement. As has already been mentioned, the cost of caring for children is such that it is both unenticing to child care providers, and prohibitively expensive for purchasers. Regarding the child care ‘market’, the laws of supply and demand are further undermined by market failures particular to Canada’s political/demographic composition. The fact is that demand simply does not stimulate supply of any kind, in certain parts of Canada. Regional and rural/urban disparities, as well as the unique circumstances of those living in the far north, are such that the market cannot provide an efficient equilibrium of supply and demand in the care of small children. In comparable situations, including education and health services, the Canadian people and government have responded to market failures by regarding those services as public goods. It would therefore be reasonable to view child care in a similar way. Unfortunately, this has not occurred, and the child care crisis persists.

Finally, I would like to address a shortcoming of the privatized, market-oriented approach to child care that goes beyond problems relating to economies of scale or supply and demand. Until now, I have been discussing the ways in which a capitalist model fails to apply to the situation of child care on its own terms. However, at this point, I would

like to question one of the fundamental tenets of the capitalist framework: and that is the notion of ‘the market’ as a neutral arena of ‘free choice’ in economic exchange.

To begin, I am skeptical of the capitalist assertion that child care purchasers and providers can exercise “free” choice in a market economy. In reality, choices are not free, but rather highly constrained by preexisting circumstances. “Markets, like other institutions guided by social relations, are very likely to reflect and reify existing resource allocations and socially constructed divisions of labour that influence endowments.”

When we acknowledge the fact that individuals come to the market privileged or handicapped by preexisting political, economic and social circumstances, the market is revealed to be a more biased arena than capitalist ideology would have us believe. Rather than accepting the market economy as a venue for apolitical financial exchange, we must instead understand and challenge its purpose:

The evaluation and analytical understanding of markets should include a consideration of the structural power of the market to discipline social relations, structure power and the access and control of resources, and the feedbacks on the process of human development. If markets are recognized to be as much political and cultural institutions as they are economic, then the standard efficiency analysis is insufficient to tell us when and where markets should allocate goods and services and where other institutions should be used.

In the case of child care, for example, it is inaccurate to portray the ‘market’ as a free realm in which purchasers can choose to buy or not buy a service. For most people, working for pay out of economic necessity is hardly a matter of ‘free’ choice. While it is true that individuals could ‘choose’ poverty, that choice is hardly unmitigated.

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159 Ibid: 4-5.
Furthermore, employed people with children must arrange care for their children if they are to work outside of the home. Once again, they could 'choose' to leave their small children unattended, but would that choice really be 'free'? In truth, "the market is a realm of free choice only for those people who have financial access to all its options."  

From the child care workers' perspective, their 'freedom' is therefore constrained by the fact that they are negotiating payment for a service that is both undervalued and underpaid in a capitalist patriarchal society.  

This is because a privatized approach to the care of children "tacitly assumes that child care workers should subsidize the inadequacy of the social child care system through their underpaid and overworked conditions."  

Child care workers are forced to negotiate the best possible wage for themselves within a system that has always taken the care of children for granted.  

Patriarchal capitalism has traditionally relied on the unpaid production and reproduction of those who are not employed in the official economy. Patriarchal customs assume that the male heads of households will work in the paid labour force, and that their female dependents (wives) will, in turn, be responsible for those aspects of life for which there is no remuneratory mechanism. "Thus it is said that the wages of a man

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buy the labour of two people.”\textsuperscript{163} While it is no longer the case that the majority of women work without pay in their homes, “the reproduction of labor, although necessary, is a cost that [patriarchal] capitalism seeks to decrease.”\textsuperscript{164} As such, it is extremely difficult for child care workers to secure wages that reflect the tremendous importance of the service that they provide.\textsuperscript{165}

In summary, it is both erroneous and potentially harmful to conceive of the child care ‘industry’ in a privatized, market-oriented context. First, certain capitalist assumptions, such as those pertaining to economies of scale, as well as supply and demand, do not lend themselves well to the business of care. Second, even if the market were a technically appropriate framework for the child care industry, its current price mechanism is detrimental to parents, children and child care workers. The prevailing conceptualization of child care as a successful and healthy privatized, market-oriented service is ill-founded because most parents are paying more than they can comfortably afford to child care workers earning less than they deserve.

\textbf{Child Care and Gender}

Feminism is a rich and diverse analytic perspective that at its core involves a transformative politics committed to removing gender-based

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{165} In Canada, province-wide wages for [regulated] child care providers range from minimum wage to five or six dollars above minimum. In contrast, the average wage for a warehouse worker, a job requiring less skill, less education, less experience, and less responsibility, is 58\% more.” Doherty, Friendly, and Oloman: 31. For an in-depth discussion of the wages and working conditions see Goelman, Doherty, Tougas, LaGrange & Lero (2000) \textit{You Bet I Care!} Online: \url{http://www.childcarecanada.org} (released May 11, 2000).
\end{itemize}
injustices and empowering women in their communities, workplaces, and families, as well as through public policies. 166

Current child care arrangements in Canada are detrimental to men, women and children because they leave intact antiquated and harmful assumptions regarding gender roles and the relative value of men’s and women’s contributions to civil society. Until recently, patriarchal capitalism has presumed and relied upon the unpaid work of women in the home. 167 Since the late 1960s however, many Canadian women have increasingly left the private sphere of the home to work in the official (paid) economy. This trend has undermined the ideological synchronicity of patriarchy and capitalism. While patriarchal customs rely on the free domestic labour of women, the ‘global economics’ characteristic of modern capitalism necessitate women’s’ participation in the paid work force. Thus the role of women in contemporary patriarchal capitalist society is rife with contradictions. Despite the fact that most women work in the paid labour force, they are still presumed to be the principal caregivers of their children. “Primary female caretaking of children is so much a part of normal female identity that its social organization has become invisible. Because it is invisible, it seems natural and spontaneous.” 168

Now that the majority of mothers 169 work for pay outside the home, the care of children, previously taken for granted as the ‘natural’ role of women, must be

167 While the ideologies of capitalism and patriarchy are not necessarily inextricably linked, each has reinforced the other in modern industrial society.
169 According to Statistics Canada, approximately 76% of mothers with children under the age of 12 work or study outside the home. On line: www.plumadge.com/ccaac. November 20, 1997.
commissioned to paid child care workers.\textsuperscript{170} However, patriarchal capitalist assumptions have been slow to adapt to new circumstances. Reflective of the low status of unpaid household work historically performed by women, child care remains an undervalued and underpaid service. Not surprisingly, a privatized, market-oriented approach to the undervalued care of children results in an industry that is overwhelmingly comprised of female workers.\textsuperscript{171}

As such, current child care arrangements ensure the continuation of the assumption that child care is women's work, both in the 'private' \textit{and} the 'public' spheres. Under these conditions, women's collective liberation from sexist patriarchal practices is compromised, since the "liberation"\textsuperscript{172} of some women comes at the expense of the exploitation of others. While individual women are able to mobilize out of certain subordinate positions and occupations (thereby challenging gender stereotypes), they rely on the undervalued, underpaid work of other women, in order to achieve that end. In contrast, for those women who service the wealthier classes, "performing 'domestic' tasks for money (as well as for love) can only mean that undervalued domestic labour will assume greater prominence within their individual identities."\textsuperscript{173} Accordingly, 'women's liberation' is conceived as being "compatible with general devaluation of the subordinate

\textsuperscript{170} It is perhaps obvious, but important to note that women's increased participation in the labour force doesn't just mean that there are fewer mothers at home: It also results in the diminished availability of unpaid care that might otherwise have been provided by (female) relatives, friends and volunteers.\textsuperscript{171} According to the Canadian Child Care Federation, 96.6\% of all child care workers are women. See Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association & Canadian Child Care Federation, \textit{Caring for a Living: A Study of Wages and Working Conditions in Canadian Child Care} (Ottawa: Canadian Child Care Advocacy Association, 1991).\textsuperscript{172} I am of course aware that for many women, the experience of working for pay outside the home is not liberating, but merely necessary.
positions and occupations many women hold." In the long run, assumptions of this kind can only hinder women’s collective liberation from harmful sexist attitudes.

As we have seen, conceptions of gender and women’s work played no small role in the configuration of interests and ideas that led to the demise of the Liberal Party’s 1993 Red Book promise. Employed men did not mobilize to lobby for change alongside employed women, parents and caregivers failed to see the compatibility of their interest, and the general public failed to object when the government withdrew from a policy that would have benefited women, children, and society at large.

Current child care policy continues to be damaging to the lot of women in general because it perpetuates objectionable differentiations among mothers, based on their economic and marital status. For example, upper and middle class women with partners are encouraged through public policies such as taxes, employment legislation and education laws to stay at home with their small children. In contrast, single women on social assistance are encouraged to work, through the provision of subsidized day care and, in some cases, mandatory work, in exchange for social assistance. The implied message from the government is that ‘motherhood’ is not something to be valued in and

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175 While some relatively wealthy stay-at-home mothers may not perceive the economic benefits they enjoy, the truth is that their households benefit from regressive tax benefits, the untaxed goods and services generated by their labour, and their partners’ ability to claim substantial tax deductions by virtue of having a “dependent” spouse. While these benefits may not feel particularly empowering or validating to women who work in the home, these women are nevertheless relatively much better off (at least, economically) than women who subsist on either low-incomes or social assistance.
of itself. Rather, the government seems to be intimating that different kinds of mothers and children deserve different kinds of policies. "Apparently, they think the answer to the question Does an infant or small child need its mother to stay at home to take care of it? depends on the income of the child's parent(s)."176 Sadly, these prejudicial practices contribute to the increased marginalization of poor and/or single women and their children. This cannot be acceptable to those who claim to be concerned with women's interests.177

Current child care arrangements are injurious to women in general because they are divisive and discriminatory. While some individual women are able to liberate themselves from the economic and socio-political periphery that is the household, it is at the expense of the exploitation of other women. Furthermore, present child care arrangements contribute to the devaluation of the so-called private sphere, and all of the labour and skills that go into the activities of that realm.178 In addition, an ad hoc, privatized, capitalist (market-oriented) approach to care contributes to the perpetuation of gendered attitudes regarding the roles of men and women. This is harmful to both sexes, because women are excessively burdened with child care concerns and men's parental experiences are accordingly circumscribed.

177 It is interesting to note that even non-progressive women's organizations such as REAL Women of Canada advocate for adequate and non-punitive social assistance to women with young children, so that they may stay at home to care for their young children. See REAL Women of Canada, Child Care: Who's Responsibility? A Position Paper, (Ottawa: REAL Women of Canada, 1999).
A feminist interpretation of the child care situation reveals the ways in which current child care arrangements are detrimentally gendered. Even wealthy parents who can afford to pay decent wages to child care workers suffer under the current, gendered approach to care. This is because prevailing sexist attitudes toward the care of children devalue the roles of motherhood and private life in society. Since the status of women is so intrinsically linked to the institutions of motherhood and the private or personal sphere, devaluation of those "signifiers" results in the devaluation of women. Finally, some feminist critical race theorists' insights into the child care system "direct our attention to systems of domination, and to the interrelatedness of sex, race, and class oppression."  

**Child Care and Internationally Racialized Exploitation**

Intertwined with sexism and classism, racism as an institution is insidiously woven into the fabric of modern capitalist society. As such, it is difficult to extract racism as an explicit practice from the complex tapestry of social, political, and economic interaction. However, "it is only by analyzing racism and its function in capitalist society

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178 In 1996, for the first time, the Canadian Census acknowledged and attempted to quantify unpaid labour. Nevertheless, I believe that "women's work" in the home is still largely invisible, unappreciated, undervalued and un- or under-paid.

179 While it is true that individual women may not identify with motherhood or the private sphere, the very concept of "woman" is constructed and reproduced through assumptions about "motherhood". Even in the realm of paid work, "women are given caring work on the grounds that they are mothers, or may become mothers, or should have been mothers."


that a thorough understanding of class and gender relationships can emerge.\textsuperscript{181} The Canadian child care 'system' provides an excellent case study.\textsuperscript{182} As part of a patriarchal capitalist paradigm, the child care system in Canada reifies racism in at least two ways: First, racial discrimination and disadvantage create a socio-economic climate within which undervalued and underpaid work is overwhelmingly performed by people of colour (in this case, women). Second, racist attitudes and practices are particularly evident in the federal response to Canada's child care crisis, the Live-In Care Program (LCP).

The LCP is perhaps the most classist, sexist, and neo-colonial feature of current Canadian child care policy. Implemented through the federal government, the aim of the program is to provide wealthy families with foreign labour in the 'privacy' of their own homes. Immigration and Citizenship Canada is quite forthright and unapologetic about the fact that the Live-In Caregiver Program "exists only because there is a shortage of Canadians to fill the need for live-in care work."\textsuperscript{183} It is interesting in and of itself to consider the appalling implications of a program designed to import people to care for dependent and vulnerable individuals, under conditions that no Canadian citizen beneficiary of employment standards legislation would tolerate.

\textsuperscript{181} hooks: 3.
\textsuperscript{182} Once again, I draw the reader's attention to the issue of "aboriginal child care" in Canada. The federal government's approach to the paid care of aboriginal children is far too interesting and complicated to be appropriately addressed in this paper. For more in-depth discussion of the issues involved, please see the works listed at footnote 30, as well as: C. Coehn, "United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Relevance for Indigenous Children", in D. Behera (ed.), Children and Childhood in our Contemporary Societies (Delhi: Kamla-Raj Enterprises, 1998); J. Colbert, "Child Care and the Family-Work Balance: An International Perspective on Needs and Responses in Aboriginal Communities", The Canadian Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education, Vol. 7, No. 4, 1999; Perry Shawana and Margo Greenwood, "First Nations Quality Child Care: "In the Words of the People": Themes that Emerged", Linking Research to Practice: Second Canadian Forum (Ottawa: Canadian Child Care Federation, 2000).
Foreign domestic workers, 98% of whom are women, come to Canada to live and work in the homes of their employers. They are granted visitor, rather than landed immigrant status, and their status is entirely contingent on abiding by the conditions of the program. They risk expulsion from the program if they change jobs, or try to live outside the homes of their employers. Furthermore, they belong to one of the few categories of employment exempted from most provincial employment legislation. According to one survey, this resulted in 65% of those surveyed working over 44 hours per week, 44% of whom were not paid for their overtime. While the letter of the law states that the workers can complain, most do not, since their employment, housing, and immigration status are all completely dependent on the person making demands on them.

Another feature of the LCP is that foreign domestic workers are not permitted to bring their children or partners with them, while they work in Canada. As Ruth Roach Pierson explains,

An immigration policy that has facilitated the “temporary” entry to Canada of third world mothers to work as nannies... at the same time denying entry to their own children exposes even more dramatically not only the race- and class-specific character, but the racism of an official rhetoric that speaks of the sacredness of the mother-child relationship.

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184 Ibid.
185 Ibid.
At this point, one may argue that these policies are not fundamentally racist, but rather they happen to impact on women of colour because it is those women who apply to the Live-In Caregiver Program. This assertion can be challenged in three ways: First, historical research indicates that the conditions of foreign domestic workers have deteriorated increasingly as the racial composition of foreign domestics has shifted from British, to European, to Caribbean and South East Asian.\(^{188}\) Second, I believe that the policies are indeed fundamentally racist because they rely on and perpetuate the neo-colonial exploitation of people from countries oppressed under the global capitalist economy. As Sue McWatt and Sheila Neysmith explain, "the existence of the LCP implicates Canada in an international flow of labour that is part of a response by Third World countries to the restructuring demands made on their economies [by the IMF and World Bank] in order to service their international debt."\(^{189}\) The neo-colonial implications of the Live-In Caregiver Program are such that

State regulations restricting the rights and freedoms of migrants imposed by both ‘host’ and ‘sending’ governments reflect unequal relations between first world and third world countries. A recognition of the capacity of more advanced states to carry out actions beneficial to its citizens and prejudicial to migrants from third world states, and which are thereby successful in pitting the strategic interests of citizens against non-citizens, is integral to this approach.\(^{190}\)

Of course, the sending countries are typically inhabited by racialized populations.

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\(^{188}\) Sedef Arat-Koc, “From ‘Mothers of the Nation’ to Migrant Workers”, in Bakan & Stasiulis: 53-79.


\(^{190}\) Bakan & Stasiulis, “Foreign Domestic Worker Policy in Canada and the Social Boundaries of Modern Citizenship”, in Bakan & Stasiulis: 46.
Finally, the racism inherent in the LCP manifests in the actualization of the program itself. It is well ‘known’ among employers and domestic workers themselves that certain (racialized) women are expected to perform certain tasks, while others are not. According to the stories of women on the LCP, agencies ‘market’ candidates to potential employers according to race, on the understanding that “British nannies “don’t clean” whereas Filipina nannies “have to clean””.\(^{191}\)

Advocates of the FDP insist that the wealthy employers of foreign domestic workers provide the women and their families with exceptional economic benefits that they could not possibly accrue in their own countries. While this is certainly true in a neo-colonial context, where first world wealth is maintained through the exploitation of third world poverty, it is by no means a desirable state of affairs.\(^{192}\) In truth, the FDP is both dependent upon and complicit in the perpetuation of racist discrimination and neo-colonial exploitation. While the individual purchasers of foreign domestic labour are not necessarily responsible for the injustices of the system, they do ensure its continuation.

In short, current child care practices in Canada contribute to the perpetuation of racial discrimination and neo-colonial exploitation. Systemically, predominantly privatized child care arrangements contribute to racist practices through the low status and low pay of an underclass of workers. As with other labour that is undervalued and underpaid, child care is a field in which people (women) of colour are overrepresented.

\(^{191}\) Ibid: 222.
As such, women of colour are disproportionately affected by the devaluation of child care work. More patently, Canadian child care practices rely on and perpetuate racist discrimination and neo-colonialism through the continuance of the racist and exploitative Live-In Caregiver Program.

Finally, the LCP is detrimental to Canadians themselves, since it allows the federal government to provide a "solution" to the child care crisis for an elite (and potentially powerful) group of parents. At the same time, the government is able to evade responsibility for developing a national political solution, accessible to all citizens, to the national child care problem. Thus, the program undermines the potential for parents to realize their common interests and rally for meaningful reform. As long as wealthy parents are permitted, with government intervention, to import non-citizens to perform care in their homes, they will not feel the need for universal child care. "The result is to reinforce disparities within and among Canadian families at the same time that the policy contributes to the debasement of caring labour."193

Summary

To conclude, I would like to draw attention to the interconnectedness of the different sections of this chapter. Although the so-called public/private divide, capitalism, sexism, and racism have been discussed separately, they are in fact interrelated and interdependent. As part of a patriarchal capitalist paradigm, sexism,

192 A comparable ethical argument might assert that one ought to buy NIKE running shoes because their purchase provides employment for children who might not otherwise have wages to contribute to their families' sustenance.
classism, and racism intersect to form a nexus within which exploitation and
discrimination are virtually inevitable. In the case of the Canadian child care system, the
prevailing discourse surrounding the issue fails to address the ways in which current child
care practices are rooted in classist, racist and sexist attitudes. It is these unchallenged
attitudes which continue to inform the configuration of interests and ideas that preclude
the implementation of progressive child care policies.

The current child care 'system' in Canada is harmful to parents, children and
society at large. Predominantly privatized child care arrangements leave intact an
inappropriate capitalist, market-oriented approach to care; one which relies on
negotiations among individuals. Under these conditions (especially within a patriarchal
context), child care is both undervalued and underpaid. As such, the care of children
depends on an underclass of child care workers who are already vulnerable to
exploitation, due to their sex and/or class and/or race. In short, existing child care
arrangements in Canada are unsatisfactory not only because of the immediate
consequences for children, parents, and child care workers, but because of the way in
which the predominantly privatized purchasing of child care relies on and perpetuates
racism, classism and sexism in a patriarchal, capitalist context.

193 Sue McWatt and Sheila Neysmith, “Enter the Filipina Nanny....”: 219.
As I have argued throughout this paper, the consequence of a sexist, racist, classist system is that people who might otherwise benefit from comprehensive reform are unable and/or unwilling to overcome their immediate, conflicting objectives in order to achieve that end. Thus, the final problem with current child care arrangements is that as long as the liberation and economic advancement of some parents can only be achieved at the expense of the exploitation of other people (often parents themselves), fundamental change will be difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish.

The present "politics of fragmentation" is largely attributable to the omnipotence of patriarchal capitalism, combined with the reactive politics of liberal feminism. Inspired by Betty Friedan and subsequent feminists, white middle- and upper-class women have chiefly fought for economic and social equality with their male counterparts through the medium of paid employment. Unfortunately, these liberal aims have failed to challenge the fundamental systemic injustices upon which affluent white male privilege relies. Thus, in patriarchal capitalist culture, "as long as.... any group defines liberation as gaining social equality with ruling class white men, they have a vested interest in the continued exploitation and oppression of others."

194 Gregson & Lowe: 236.
195 hooks: 15.
In the case of child care, predominantly white middle- and upper-class women are able (at considerable cost) to liberate themselves from the “drudgery” and marginalization of the domestic sphere by hiring others to care for their children. Since child care is both undervalued and underpaid, these ‘liberated’ women are necessarily (albeit unintentionally) complicit in the continued exploitation of child care workers. Under such conditions, the individual liberation of some women and their families is attained at the expense of the continued devaluation of women and families in general. This is an extremely difficult cycle to overcome.

In addition, a predominantly privatized approach to child care is ultimately conservative because it “discourages a struggle for socialized services and more flexible work arrangements. Rather than easing the public/private split in society, therefore, this solution polarizes and deepens it with added class and racial dimensions.”

In short, the current conceptualization of child care in its predominantly privatized context practically precludes the likelihood of comprehensive reform. Prevailing attitudes about the paid care of children, as part of a patriarchal capitalist paradigm, contribute to discrimination and exploitation based on race, class, and sex/gender. Under these divisive conditions, it is understandably difficult for parents, child care workers, and society at large to overcome their apparently conflicting objectives, in order to achieve widespread improvements. Likewise, ad hoc, reactionary policies such as the LCP tend

to reflect the immediate interests of comparatively privileged parents. This, in turn, contributes to the perpetuation of systemic biases that impede cooperation among those who might otherwise mobilize for change.

The evolution of Canadian politics in the past five years has contributed significantly to preventing the development of a universal, accessible, affordable child care system for Canadian children and their parents. The budget cuts and federal upheaval of the mid 1990s effectively quashed the establishment of the Liberal Party’s Red Book proposal. Subsequent federal/provincial negotiations and the signing of the Social Union Framework Agreement virtually entrenched the federal government’s withdrawal from leadership in the area of child care. While some provinces have since demonstrated commitment to accessible and affordable childcare, others have taken advantage of the federal government’s abdication to advance their own fiscally and socially conservative agendas. In addition, while the existence of previously universal programs such as Medicare is threatened by financial strain, provincial governments and their constituents are likely to focus whatever political energy they may have toward

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197 It should be noted at this point that from the perspective of many caregivers in the LCP, the program actually has several positive characteristics. Many women have come to Canada under the LCP and its predecessor the FDP, and have subsequently obtained citizenship for themselves and their families. For these women, the program represents an opportunity for immigration to a country that might not otherwise welcome them as citizens. Even for those who do not stay in Canada, the LCP is arguably a good program, in that it provides live-in caregivers with an opportunity to earn wages unavailable in their home countries. Nevertheless, it must be noted that these benefits are meaningful only to the extent that they assert that the situation for subordinated women of colour is relatively better in Canada than elsewhere. This does not detract from my argument that the program is inherently racist and exploitative of caregivers, whose employment, housing, and immigration status are at the (unregulated) mercy of their employers. While I am not arguing that the program must be eliminated, I do believe that its current manifestation only serves to undermine possibilities for progressive child care policies. However, it is possible to imagine an LCP that provides opportunities to women from overseas to work in the country, but with greater security regarding their immigration, their employment status, their families, and their dignity. Such a program might in fact
stabilizing established programs, before embarking on an entirely 'new', 'marginalized' issue, such as child care. Under the Social Union, emphasis is on deregulation, devolution, privatization, and community and individual responsibility; and in the absence of federal leadership or standards, advocates fear that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to establish national programs with equitable costs, access, and standards among the provinces. As such, institutional barriers to progressive child care policies not only remain, they seem more deeply entrenched than ever. When institutional barriers are considered along with the deeply entrenched ideas and configuration of interests that continue to preclude the advancement of child care as a significant political issue, change for the better does not seem likely. In short, it is difficult to imagine in Canada’s near future a system where child care is universal, accessible, affordable, standardized and child-focused.

However, genuine reform is imaginable, in spite of the formidable obstacles described in this paper. “Change is possible because discourses are multiple.” This statement is potentially encouraging for two reasons: First, it alludes to the multitude of voices capable of participating in a given discussion. Presumably, the ever-increasing diversity of political discourse creates an environment conducive to increased awareness and empathy. This, in turn can lead to policies that are sensitive to the legacy of race, class, and sex discrimination. Even in the absence of increased sensitivity, a pluralistic discourse accommodates the empowerment of previously marginalized groups who might

\[\text{enhance progressive child care policies, if implemented in a manner that consciously countered exploitation and the politics of fragmentation.}\]
otherwise be overlooked. Secondly, the multiplicity of discourse facilitates the conceptualization of an issue from a multitude of perspectives. As such, it is conceivable to envision a time when child care is thought of as a matter that influences and is influenced by the politics of citizenship and entitlement, education, welfare, equity, fiscal policy, 'family', gender, and class. Indeed, child care is already gaining gradual recognition among experts in fields as diverse as child psychology and economics. In addition, many European countries with thriving economies already have extensive, if not universal, systems of state-provided child care. This increased salience is encouraging, since it leads to a broader-based popularity; which may, in turn, lead to political action.

In summary, my prognostication for Canadian child care is neither optimistic nor fatalistic. Under the current conditions of predominantly privatized child care arrangements, the immediate interests of parents, child care workers, and society in general are at odds. Furthermore, prevailing attitudes about the paid care of children are conceptually linked to discriminatory and exploitative practices associated with sexism, classism, and racism; all of which are difficult customs to transcend. However, the processes of patriarchal capitalism are not inexorable, and the possibilities of reform are conceivable, albeit remote. In short, comprehensive child care reform in Canada will only transpire in the event of a conceptual revolution in attitudes toward women, work, and the nation's obligation to its children.

198 Amy Rossiter, From Private to Public: A Feminist Exploration of Early Motherhood (Toronto: The
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to describe and analyze the history, material conditions, and political implications of prevailing attitudes toward child care in Canada. In Chapter 1, I discussed the historical evolution of public child care, beginning at the turn of the century and culminating in the failed Liberal promise of 1993. I also provided a brief overview of the current child care situation in Canada. In Chapter 2, I analyzed the interests, institutions and ideas that created the political environment in which the Liberal Party's proposed child care policy was bound to fail. In addition, I attempted to explain the Canadian public's acquiescence and subsequent apathy regarding the abandonment of the national child care program, in terms of a standard policy analysis. In Chapter 3, I outlined the ways in which existing child care arrangements are unsatisfactory for parents, children, and society at large. Consistent with patriarchal capitalists assumptions, current attitudes toward child care are necessarily harmful because they rely on discriminatory and exploitative practices associated with sexism, classism, racism and neo-colonial exploitation. Finally, Chapter 4 summarized the obstacles to comprehensive reform, as well as the (remote) possibilities of improvement to the Canadian child care system.
In conclusion, I will emphatically reiterate that existing child care arrangements are both inadequate and harmful for several reasons: First, prevailing attitudes toward child care leave intact patriarchal capitalist assumptions which view child care as a predominantly private matter to be negotiated among individuals. Under these privatized, ad hoc conditions, child care is both undervalued and underpaid. As such, the child care ‘system’ in Canada relies on an underclass of child care workers who are typically vulnerable to exploitation because of their gender, class, race and/or neo-colonial status. This, in turn, leads to divisions among people who would otherwise benefit from the comprehensive restructuring of child care in Canada. In short, current child care conditions in Canada are harmful to parents, children, and society at large because they reify discriminatory and exploitative customs, and gravely hinder the process of reform.
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