A POLICY IN SEARCH OF A SPOKESWOMAN?
LESSONS FROM THE FAILURE OF UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE IN CANADA

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ABSTRACT

RAHIM MOHAMED: A Policy in Search of a Spokeswoman?
Lessons from the Failure of Universal Child Care in Canada
(Under the direction of John D. Stephens)

This paper addresses a number of issues in comparative social policy through a detailed analysis of the Canada's brief flirtation with a national early childhood education program [2005-2007]. Despite garnering broad public approval and passing through all relevant political veto points, the program was ultimately terminated by the administration of conservative prime minister Stephen Harper at no perceptible political cost.

Employing a methodology of analytic induction, I find that the ultimate failure of the program was in its promotion. Notably, the program lacked a credible female champion, allowing its opponents to characterize it as intrusive and paternalistic. I concurrently develop a theory of early childhood education reform as a "policy in search of a spokeswoman." Accordingly, I present Germany, a country where universalistic ECEC reform succeeded on the strength of spokeswomen Renate Schmidt and Ursula von der Leyen, as a telling foil to the Canadian case.

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For Aneez and Chanelle,

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Working women want to make their own choices. We do not need old white guys telling us what to do.

- Rona Ambrose, MP, Conservative Party of Canada (2005)

INTRODUCTION: ALWAYS THE BRIDESMAID

The emergence of working mothers is a defining problem for the welfare state. With the "stay-at-home mom" becoming an endangered species, families often look to third parties to provide day-to-day care for children who are too young to enroll in formal schooling. This type of service has typically been provided via the private and informal sectors, but governments face increasing pressure to become involved in early childhood education and care [hereafter ECEC].[1] The appropriate role of the state in this sphere remains an open question.

This question has received more public scrutiny in Canada than perhaps anywhere else. ECEC has come to occupy an uncommonly high position on the Canadian political agenda since the turn of the twenty-first century. This is largely due to the efforts of former prime minister Paul Martin [Liberal, 2003-2006] and his advisors. Prime Minister Martin made ECEC his signature domestic issue. He championed a Canada-wide system of state-

[1] Following the lead of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], I favor the term "early childhood education and care" [ECEC] as a catch-all for formal pre-primary children's services. Some experts discourage the use of the terms "child care" and "daycare", arguing that this language neglects the educational component of pre-primary care (White 2011a, p.10). Although I am sympathetic to this sentiment, I sometimes substitute the term "ECEC" with the term "child care" here for stylistic purposes.

supported ECEC that was inspired by the model that existed in the province of Québec. Martin's proposal became a focal point of the 2004 and 2006 Canadian election campaigns. Though Martin's drive for a federal early childhood education framework fell just short; the issue of ECEC remains a prominent and polarizing one to this day. Writes Ottawa Citizen columnist Elizabeth Payne (2011), "Day care has become a perennial election promise in Canada – sort of the bridesmaid of federal politics. Always a promise, never a program."

The salience of ECEC as a topic of Canadian public policy prompts several questions. How did ECEC come to occupy such a prominent position on the political agenda? What does it say about the values and attitudes that permeate ECEC as a political issue? And, most central to the present piece, can lessons from this experience be applied to future reform efforts?

Here, I place the trajectory of the Canadian ECEC debate in context with the dominant perspectives in the mainstream and feminist welfare states literature. My contention is that the visibility of the issue of ECEC in Canada presents a unique opportunity to test and extend theory in comparative social policy. In the present piece, I use the case of Canada to elaborate on the overarching puzzle of institutional change in advanced democracies (see Streeck and Thelen 2005). My methodology would best be described as such: I begin with the dominant theories and, through a process of analytic induction[2] (Znaniecki 1934; Rueschmeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992, p. 36), assess how well they fit the Canadian case. This approach allows me to systematically narrow down possible

[2] In the most basic sense, I mean that I intend to use a disciplined analysis of a small number of cases as a means of producing and testing more generalizable theory.

explanations and, concurrently, develop my research hypothesis that gender matters in terms of framing ECEC policy reform. I argue that a government is more likely to get a relevant policy passed when the lead minister on the policy is female, ceteris paribus. This is because audiences[3] tend to view female politicians as more credible than their male counterparts on "compassion issues" like education and child welfare.[4] ECEC policy reform is *a policy in search of a spokeswoman*. I demonstrate the external validity of my theory by constructing Germany as a contrasting case in the penultimate section of this paper.

The Paper is organized as follows. I begin with a review of relevant literature, culminating in an elaboration of the "puzzle" presented by my case and an introduction of my explanatory theory. I then provide a brisk background on Canadian political culture and the status of women in Canada. This is followed by survey the pre-Martin administration development of Canadian ECEC policy, with an emphasis on the province of Québec's state-sponsored ECEC breakthrough in 1997. My focus subsequently shifts to the ECEC discourse in the 2004 and 2006 federal election campaigns, respectively. I cover the issue's strategic context, the rhetoric employed by elites on both sides of the issue, and how the Canadian media covered the debate. Furthermore, I consider the legacy of the failure of universal ECEC in Canadian politics today, noting that the window for reform seems to have closed. I further elaborate on how the episode challenges existing scholarship and posit a hypothesis that female leadership is relevant to the process of work-family policy reform. Finally, I

[3] Here, I conceptualize the "audience" with reference to how ECEC debates played out in the media, and how they were later analyzed. I do so in part because I was unable to find reliable longitudinal public opinion data on ECEC. Moreover, doing so allows me to emphasize agent-centered political contestation narratives, which my predecessors have largely failed to do.

[4] See Alexander and Anderson (1991), Huddy and Terkildsen (1993)

present the experience of Germany on ECEC as a foil to that of Canada. I show that German Family Ministers Renate Schmidt [social democrat] and, especially, Ursula von der Leyen [Christian democrat] were pivotal players in catalyzing reform and selling the idea of universal ECEC to the skeptical German public. I conclude this paper with a discussion of further means through which my hypothesis can be explored.

I. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND COMPARATIVE SOCIAL POLICY: WHY CANADA MATTERS

Universal ECEC is an idea that has captured the imagination of policymakers and scholars alike in recent years. In fact, several influential voices in comparative social policy argue that state-sponsored, affordable ECEC is a panacea for gender-egalitarianism, fertility, and labor market skill development (Esping-Andersen 2002, pp. 68-95; Heckman and Masterov 2007). The idea of a universal ECEC program is one that holds at least a kernel of support in most industrialized societies. As such, those who study social policy look to instances of ECEC policy reform and near-reform with great interest.

Accordingly, Canada's ongoing child care odyssey has already produced some noteworthy scholarship. Linda A. White (2011a) assesses how ECEC found its way onto the national policy agenda near the turn of the twenty-first century. She identifies the OECD consultation process as a relevant factor. She argues that public shaming associated with the organization's identification of Canada as a "laggard" on ECEC prompted Canadian policy experts to agitate for reform (p. 10). Elsewhere (2011b), she draws from extensive interview work to infer that Prime Minister Paul Martin was "primed" to embrace the idea of national ECEC policy by a domestic epistemic community, led by key policy advisor Dr. Fraser Mustard (p. 12). But White has less to say about what happened when the prospect of a universal ECEC program became a serious topic of discussion. She takes electoral politics as something of a black box, writing: "the vagaries of the electoral cycle thus

brought a halt to reforms in Canada." (2011a, p. 14) This is unfortunate as the perhaps unparalleled salience of ECEC in Canada gives observers a tremendous opportunity to assess public attitudes on the issue.

Other Canadian academics have shed some light into the aforementioned electoral "black box". For instance, Dianne Rinehart analyzes messaging used by Conservative politicians in an effort to turn the public against universal ECEC in the 2006 election campaign; as well as the treatment this rhetoric received in the Canadian news media. She finds that Conservative politicians and their surrogates made clever use of frames that were traditionally associated with feminism. Of particular note was their ubiquitous usage of the term "choice", which is often associated with the abortion rights movement (p. 1). Luc Thériault finds that the editorial page of the right-wing National Post newspaper demonstrated a similar slant in its reporting of the ECEC debate in the run up to the 2006 election. According to Thériault's content analysis, the paper's editorialists repeated the term "nanny state" to paint Martin's plan as intrusive and anti-family (pp. 140, 142-3). Rinehart and Thériault both argue that the media, by and large, let Conservative Party operatives get away with misrepresenting certain data about ECEC research and the characteristics of the Liberal Party's proposed program. Notably, they exaggerated the extent to which Ottawa would control the day-to-day delivery of ECEC under the Martin. The findings of Rinehart and Thériault are a good start, yet more can be done to connect the Canadian experience to some of the big, theoretical questions in comparative social policy.

Here, I endeavor to do just this. Beyond its direct application to Canadian political studies, the present piece is oriented to address the discipline-wide puzzle of institutional change and near-change. My key contention is that the Canadian ECEC story serves as a viable template for the development of abstract theory on [1] when ECEC policy reform is likely to be attempted, [2] whether or not it will be successful. As such, the present piece speaks to both historical-institutionalist and feminist perspectives on the welfare state. In the remainder of this literature review, I situate the present piece within each body of work.

Gøsta Esping-Andersen's welfare regimes theory (1990) is a useful starting point for understanding how social policy systems may evolve over time. The theory holds that "regime type" can be used to predict how a given country's welfare state institutions will develop. Esping-Andersen identifies "three worlds" of welfare capitalism: the social democracies of Scandinavia, the Christian Democratic/conservative states of Continental Europe, and the liberal/residual model of the Anglo-Saxon countries [the United Kingdom, Ireland, North America and the Antipodes]. Esping-Andersen characterizes the liberal welfare state as one in which "means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers [and] modest social-insurance plans predominate." The liberal model is the most hostile to "de-commodification" of any in Esping-Andersen's typology. This means that one's fate is more closely tied to the market here than it is elsewhere (p. 26-7).

Esping-Andersen's characterization of Canada as a liberal welfare state has sparked some debate (see Mahon 2008). This is because Canadian policy outcomes often veer away from what would be expected in a liberal regime. Canada's vaunted system of universal health insurance is the most prominent outlier, but others exist. These include its heavily-

subsidized university system and its historically generous employment insurance scheme (OECD 2004). Moreover, some feminist scholars have observed that Canada's social polices evidence a greater awareness of the trade-offs between labor market participation and familial responsibilities than would be expected of an archetypal liberal welfare state (O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999).

Such deviations from the liberal model are often explained with reference to the success of left-wing parties at the subnational level. Antonia Maioni's Parting at the Crossroads (1998) is perhaps the exemplar of this approach. Maioni contends that the institutions associated with Canadian federalism allowed the upstart social democratic government of the province of Saskatchewan to establish a viable, self-contained system single-payer health insurance. Once the Saskatchewan model proved workable, it became the template for the nationwide Canada Health Act (p. 160). This interpretation is consistent with the work of Evelyne Huber and John Stephens (2001), who argue that sustained periods of left government are a key determinant of the development of progressive social policy. Maioni's scholarship also speaks more broadly to "power resources theory", which holds that shifts in the distribution of power amongst the socio-economic classes lead to variation in political outcomes (see Stephens 1979; Korpi 1983).

At first glance, the dynamic identified by Maioni appears to fit the story of Canada's experiment with a national ECEC program. Like universal health insurance, universal ECEC only emerged as a national option after it had shown viability at the provincial level. This time, it was in Québec at the direction of the leftist/separatist Parti Québecois. But there appears to be something else going on here. The "provinces as policy laboratories"

narrative does not explain why the Conservative administration of Stephen Harper, which formed a minority government following the 2006 election; was able to simply pull the plug on universal ECEC after it had already passed all of the major veto points in the system. A policy reversal at this stage is a noteworthy anomaly (Immergut 1992). As such, a more complete understanding of the failure of universal ECEC in Canada necessitates going beyond the structural level and examining the issue's political context.

Herein, feminist and alternative perspectives become relevant to this question. ECEC is sometimes categorized as a "woman's issue" due to its relationship with the mobilization of women in the labor force (Esping-Andersen 2002; Morgan 2006, p. 5). It is therefore not surprising that feminist scholars have much to say about cross-national variations in the provision of ECEC and other work-family policies. While this literature is vast, I focus on the relevant contributions of Dorothy McBride Stetson and Amy Mazur (1995) and Kimberley Morgan (2006) for the purposes of this literature review. I do so because these pieces are noteworthy in terms of providing explicit, testable hypotheses about the evolution of aspects of the welfare state that pertain to the output of female-friendly policy. Moreover, each produces an explicit theory that can be readily-applied to the observed case.

Stetson and Mazur cite the expansion of state-supported ECEC as a subset of their "state feminism" model (p. 38). They argue that the state can be used to further feminist aims when some combination of the following criteria is met: political leaders make strategic appeals for female voters; influential women within the government [elected politicians or bureaucrats] champion feminist issues; or the activism of women's social movements prompts policy reform (p. 16). The Stetson and Mazur contribution matters

because it proposes a blueprint for re-orienting the historically paternalistic welfare state to address feminist aims (pp. 272-3). Morgan (2006) contributes the independent variable of religion to the gender and the welfare state discourse. She contends that "organized religion has played a critical role in shaping political ideologies about gender roles and the appropriate relationship between the state and the family" (p. 2). Where organized religion is strong, we see a more decentralized, patchwork system of ECEC. The providers here are often private entities and faith-based organizations. Where it is weak, the state will take greater responsibility for the education and wellbeing of toddlers (p. 67; pp. 133-134). As I show later, the theories proffered by both Stetson and Mazur and Morgan fit the case of ECEC program reform in Québec nicely, but neither can explain the dynamics of the ECEC debate at the federal level.

To my knowledge, the argument that comes closest to the one I will develop here is made by Morgan in the forthcoming article "Path Shifting of the Welfare State" (2013). Morgan uses a "most different systems design" to explain how the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands have each adopted significant female-friendly policies over the last two decades (p. 2).[5] She finds that, in all three countries, the de-alignment of traditional electoral coalitions has made parties of the left and right more receptive to the agitation of women's social movements, both independent and within-party (p. 30). Morgan also notes that that, in Germany and the Netherlands, women occupied key social welfare cabinet portfolios during critical junctures of work-family policy transformation. She writes, "having women in crucial leadership positions can be vital: women may better

[5] The author generously sent me an advance copy of the article. As such, my citations may not match the pagination of the final copy.

identify the issues that matter to female voters and can 'remind' those in power of the importance of this electoral constituency." (p. 9) I concur, but propose one more reason why female leadership matters: female politicians tend to hold greater credibility on work-family issue and; therefore, tend to be better advocates for family-friendly policies.

Accordingly, in the present piece I contribute to the research agenda opened by Morgan by presenting Canada as a noteworthy case of near-reform. To be precise, I will argue that the failure of the Martin government's ambitious ECEC program was due in part to the absence of visible female leadership. The lesson of this paper is that gender matters in terms of *framing* work-family policy. In my view, previous scholars have missed this point by neglecting day-to-day campaign and contestation narratives. As such, I will devote as much space as is feasible to reconstructing the history of Canada's universal child care debate and its epilogue. I also build on the work of Morgan by anchoring my findings in a front end theory: that of universal ECEC as a "policy in search of a spokeswoman."

The present piece also squares with recent quantitative work on the association between female cabinet ministers and the implementation of "female-friendly social policy." In an analysis of bills passed in eighteen parliamentary democracies [years: 1980-2003], Amy Atchison and Ian Down (2009) identify a statistically significant relationship between women in social cabinet portfolios and the generosity of parental leave entitlements. Atchison subsequently reports similar findings for "weeks of child care leave" and "maternity hours" in her doctoral dissertation, concluding: "it appears that women in cabinet, more so than women's movements or legislators, are key determinants of the

female-friendliness of reconciliation policies" (2010 pp. 109-10).[6] My contribution here is to open up the qualitative black box left by the Atchison and Downs' quantitative findings. I do so by showing that having women in social portfolios can help governments sell "female - friendly" policies; thus accounting for at least part of the aforementioned empirical findings.

My argument is somewhat less consistent with scholarship that contends that the advocates of universal ECEC will be most successful when they are able to frame early learning as a "hard issue" that pertains to economic growth and demographic replacement (Auth 2007; Leitner 2007; Rüling 2008, p. 169). This, as opposed to presenting it as a "soft policy" related to gender equality. While I do not all together disagree with this argument, my findings transcend the "hard issue/soft issue" dichotomy. Specifically, I find that, no matter how arguments for ECEC are presented, female politicians tend to be effective advocates for the issue because they tend to carry authority on soft/compassion policies. The upshot is that the perception of ECEC as a "feminine" issue can never be entirely transcended through re-framing.

[6] Atchison's model does not produce statistically significant findings for the relationship between female cabinet ministers and aggregate child care generosity

II. THEORY: A POLICY IN SEARCH OF A SPOKESWOMAN

The present piece uses Canada's experience with universal early childhood education—alongside the analysis of a contrasting case [Germany]—as an illustration of the following theoretical contention: female political leaders will be the most effective advocates for universalistic ECEC reform. In the context of a liberal or Christian democratic welfare state,[7] a government will best be able to pursue a program of state-sponsored ECEC when the lead minister on the issue is female.

The causal mechanism here is the gendering of "compassion issues" such as child welfare. Based on prior research, I infer that voters tend to view female politicians as more credible than male ones on "compassion issues". Accordingly, a given government will be in the strongest position to pursue a universalistic ECEC policy when the effort is helmed by a female political leader. A *spokeswoman*, per say.

The present theory extends from a number of well-established findings in the literature. For instance, the contention that social policy innovation is most effectively promoted by female leadership holds empirical support. Scholars have found that voters tend to rank female leaders as more credible than their male counterparts on compassion issues like education and poverty relief and, conversely, men are perceived as more credible on "hard issues" like economic growth and national defense (Alexander and Andersen 1993;

[7] According to Esping-Andersen (1991), social democratic welfare states embody an ethos of universalism, under which universal ECEC falls.

Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). Moreover, campaign studies have revealed that female candidates tend to emphasize their respective positions on compassion issues (Kahn 1996; Hernson, Lay, and Stokes 2003; Windett 2011). However, to my knowledge, there are only two pre-existing studies that consider the effect of officeholder gender on actual policy output (Atchison and Downs 2009, Atchison 2010) and none that approach this question qualitatively. Ideally, the theory I build here will spur further work in this understudied area.

To fully elaborate this theory, it is necessary for me to briefly review the concept of *issue framing*. The idea of framing is relatively under-utilitzed in political science and warrants a primer here. This is challenging to do as disparate conceptions of framing exist in various fields. In fact, communications scholar Robert N. Entman (1993) refers to framing as a "fractured paradigm." He nonetheless advances what is perhaps the most widely-accepted definition of framing:

> To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (p. 52).

Framing is relevant to my argument because I contend that *the gender of key participants in a given ECEC discourse a frame in and of itself*. Ceteris paribus, a side will better persuade its audience when it has a *spokeswoman*. Here, I conceptualize the "audience" as the news media and prominent political analysts. I do so in part because I was unable to obtain reliable, longitudinal public opinion data that corresponds with the critical junctures in Canada's universal ECEC debate. Although, admittedly, I would be able to make a stronger argument with this type of data, I feel confident with my study as is. As I

mentioned earlier, my findings fit within a pattern of recent research. Moreover, I present universalistic ECEC reform and Germany as an illustrative foil to the Canadian experience in the penultimate section of this paper. This section will use a "most similar system design" [8] to isolate female leadership as a variable that was present in Germany but absent in Canada.

[8] Despite being from different welfare state "families" (Esping-Andersen 1990), I will argue that Canada and Germany are amenable to a "most similar system" design for the following reasons: both are federal, both have experienced left-to-right political transitions over the last decade, and both are on the low end of the OCED in terms of fertility rates (see: the section of this paper entitled *Contrast: Universal Child Care in Germany*)

III. THE CANADIAN WELFARE STATE

Although I expect the story that follows to have far-reaching implications, it is nevertheless a distinctly Canadian one. It must therefore be understood in its proper historical and cultural contexts. As such, I begrudgingly take-on the monumental task of giving the reader an effective primer on the Canadian welfare state. I focus here on the historical, cultural, and institutional factors that have structured Canada's trajectory as a state. The thrust of this section is that it would be difficult to predict, ex-ante, how Canada's debate over universal child care would unfold. Despite Canada's conservative legacy, Canadians have shown some appetite for universalistic policy solutions over the past five decades. Moreover, there is no strong tradition of social conservatism in Canada. This gives validity to a key underlying assumption of this paper: the fate of Canada's universal ECEC program was the product of partisan political contestation.

For the sake of brevity, I neglect the largely distinct evolution of political thought in the francophone province of Québec. I nonetheless feel comfortable that doing so will not affect my overall argument. This is because, during the time period in question [2004 – 2006], Québec voters had largely disengaged *en masse* from the national policy discourse. They did so by giving the separatist Bloc-Québecois overwhelming support at the ballot box.[9] In other words, Québecois political culture does not warrant direct consideration here

[9] The Bloc Québecois won 54 of Québec's 75 seats in 2004 and 51 of 75 in 2006.

because Québec voters effectively sidelined themselves from the debate. Moreover, the stakes were negligible for Québecois because their province already had a functioning program in place by this point in time.

Canada is a sparsely populated, predominantly English-speaking and white, North American settler community. It shares a 5,000 mile long border with the hegemonic United States; a dynamic memorably described by onetime Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau as "sleeping with an elephant." Understandably, it is common for both scholars and the layperson to use the well-defined "American creed" as a foil for the more inchoate Canadian national identity. This applies especially to the Canadian vision of the welfare state. Canadians of all political stripes tend to look upon America's "mean-spirited" [means-tested] welfare regime with smug condescension (Myles and Pierson 1997, p. 452), emphasizing the comparatively universalistic character of Canadian entitlement programs. Write John Myles and Paul Pierson (1997), "Ask a Canadian what distinguishes Canada from the United States and as likely as not she will take out her health insurance card." (p. 452) Universal health insurance is undoubtedly the crown jewel of the Canadian welfare state, but health care is not the only area of social policy in which Canadians have shown an appetite for government intervention. For instance, most of Canada's universities are publicly funded and offer domestic students heavily-subsidized tuition fees. Canadians also tolerate significantly higher taxation than do their neighbors to the south.

However, it would be a mistake to conflate Canada's quasi-universalistic orientation with a social democratic political legacy. In fact, scholars who attempt to locate the political culture of English Canada often start with the British Tory [conservative] intellectual

tradition (see Grant 1965; Horowitz 1966; Lipset 1990). This literature presents Canada as a counterrevolutionary foil to the United States. As Seymour Martin Lipset observed, "Two nations, not one, came out of the American Revolution." (1990, p.1) Indeed, some of the earliest and most influential migrants to British North America [Canada's name prior to confederation] were the Loyalists: American colonists who rejected the principles of the Revolution. A minority of Loyalists expressed their dissent by moving northward; resettling in areas that would later become the provinces of Ontario, Québec, and Nova Scotia. About 40,000 in all came to British North America, comprising roughly 25% of the territory's then-population.[10] Loyalists were arguably the catalyst of Canadian federalism. Their mass arrival following the Revolutionary War (1783) led to the partition of Lower Canada [later Québec] and Upper Canada [later Ontario]. The latter would be governed by British common law, pursuant to the wishes of the new residents ("Loyalist Settlers in Ontario").

The Loyalists also gave English Canada its Canada *raison d'être*: to staunch manifest destiny, thereby preserving a place for "God, King, and Country" on the North American continent. This mission spawned a distinct political culture. One that, compared to the US, was "accepting of the need for a strong state, for respect for authority, and [for] deference." (Lipset 1990, p. 2) While Americans strove for "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness"; Canadians settled for "Peace, Order, and Good Governance."

Iconic public intellectual George Grant [1918-1988] provided the seminal account of Canada's conservative streak in the classic Lament for a Nation (2005 [1965]). The book

[10] The population of British North America [Canada] was roughly 160,000 by 1790 (see: " Summaries of census information from 1605 to 1871." Statistics Canada (especially pp. 14-6): http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/98- 187-x/4198820-eng.pdf)

chronicles the valiant but ultimately doomed struggle of the traditionalist Canadian creed. Writes Grant, "to be [Anglophone] Canadian was to build, along with the French, a more ordered and stable society than the than the liberal experiment in the south" (p. 5). Several of the country's cornerstone public policies have reflected this ethos of social order. These include protectionism in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors; as well as the formation of state-led "crown corporations" in broadcasting [the Canada Broadcasting Corporation], energy [Hydro Ontrio/Hydro Québec], and transportation [Canada Rail/Air Canada]. However, Grant believed that Canada's primordial conservatism would ultimately be its undoing:

> The impossibility of conservatism in our era is the impossibility of Canada. As Canadians, we attempted the ridiculous task in trying to build a conservative nation in the age of progress…The current of modern history was against us. (p. 67)

Writing on the heels of Grant, Gaz Horowitz agreed with the basic premise of Lament for a Nation, but found more hope for the future of Canada. The thesis of Horowitz's influential "Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism in Canada" (1966) is that Canada's bedrock Tory creed can co-exist with the more forward-looking doctrine of social democracy. Horowitz argues that conservatism and socialism ultimately have more in common with one another than either do with liberalism. This is because each tradition "protects the public good against private freedom." (p. 159). This thesis is evidenced by the fact that social democracy flourished in Canada in the wake of the Great Depression, a time at which the American left fell in line with President Roosevelt's "New Deal Coalition". A

number of social democratic governments subsequently formed at the provincial[11] level. Moreover, the New Democratic Party [NDP] emerged as a viable third party at the federal level; sometimes holding the balance-of-power in minority parliaments. The irony in Horowitz is that, despite the absence of a [classically] liberal culture in Canada, the Liberal Party of Canada has historically held electoral primacy by triangulating conservative and socialistic sentiments. As we will see later, there were certainly shades of this strategy in the Martin Liberal's marketing of ECED.

The last four decades of Canadian history have largely vindicated Horowitz's vision. Canada has deftly managed to construct an expansive welfare state while retaining its founding symbols and traditions. As Horowitz predicted, province-level social democratic parties have done much of the heavy lifting in terms of social policy innovation. Social democrats have their fingerprints on universal healthcare, post-secondary tuition subsidies, various forms of social insurance and, as we shall see, Canada's proposed universal ECEC program. At various points in time, Canada's federal Liberal and Conservative parties have each co-opted ideas from social democrats. Canada's strange melange of conservatism and socialism is perhaps best reflected by the fact that an entity called the "Progressive Conservative Party of Canada" was the dominant player on the Canadian right for over 50 years [1942 – 1993]. Moreover, commentators sometimes use the term "red tory" to label the distinct hybridization of conservatism and collectivism that pervades Canadian political culture (Horowitz 1967, Taylor 1982).

[11] As is the case in the United States, there is a constitutionally-enumerated division of labor between the federal government of Canada and the provinces. The provinces retain formal jurisdiction over most social policy, including healthcare, education, and child services.

Canadians are decidedly less conservative in the social realm. Issues of public morality are typically kept off of the partisan political agenda and managed through the court system. Court decisions have led to de facto abortion-on-demand (1987) and the legalization of same-sex marriage (2005). Moreover, a strong challenge to Canada's existing anti-prostitution laws is currently making its way through the courts (Makin 2012). At present, the courts are also upholding non-prosecution policies on drug use that are being implemented in major cities ("Vancouver's Insite drug injection clinic will stay open"). Despite the far-reaching influence of Canadian courts, the topic of judicial activism is nowhere near as politically salient in Canada as it is in the United States. Canadians seem to accept the primacy of the courts on such issues. According to the last Canadian National Election study (2011) two-thirds of the population [66.5%] believes that the position of the courts should trump that of parliament on matters pertaining to human rights. The aforementioned Pierre Trudeau perhaps captured the national mood best when he said, "there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation" (1967).

In short, the Canadian disposition can be described as cautiously compassionate on social welfare, and non-interventionist on values. Because Canadian political culture is so multifaceted, I can reasonably assume that there is no pronounced "natural position" on the question of universal ECEC. I would expect the public to be as naturally receptive to "social justice" type arguments as they would be skeptical about the need for an expensive new entitlement program. Moreover, one would not expect to see family values type arguments hold much traction in this political environment. I therefore contend that the outcome of the early childhood education debate can be conceptualized as the product of

partisan political contestation. The side with the stronger, more coherent message should prevail.

IV. WOMEN'S POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN CANADA

Notwithstanding the argument I developed in the preceding section, I will concede that women's political mobilization is the "wildcard" of the present case study. Despite ubiquitous political rhetoric of gender egalitarianism, Canada remains decidedly middling in terms of female-friendliness. Notably, the country's female politicians struggle to attain inner-cabinet positions. Moreover, extra-governmental women's groups have enjoyed only intermediate success in influencing the policy agenda. Here, I provide background on the status of women in Canada, with an emphasis on women's political and social mobilization. I concede that the rather dismal facts suggest that Canadian women face uncommon barriers to exercising political influence. This is a qualifier that should be kept in mind vis-à-vis the larger inferences I make in this paper.

Canadian women do reasonably well in terms of descriptive representation at the national level. Between 2000 and 2010, women occupied an average of 21% of seats in the Canadian parliament.[12] This put's Canada roughly on par with the OECD average [22%] and ahead of the United Kingdom [19%] and the United States [15%] ("OECD Gender initiative data browser" 2012)**.** This number is noteworthy in light of the fact that, unlike many OECD countries, Canada uses a first-past-the-post electoral system. As such, Canadian political

[12] Canada's 2011 election yielded a record 76 female electees, constituting 24.5% of all victorious candidates. This is attributable to the electoral breakthrough of the New Democratic Party. 40 of the 103 New Democrats elected were female.

parties cannot establish hard quotas of female candidates akin to "zipper lists" in countries that use proportional representation. However, Canadian women can look to few examples of influential female parliamentarians. Canada has had only one female prime minister: Progressive Conservative Kim Campbell [1993]. Campbell held office for just 132 days, the third shortest tenure of any prime minister in Canadian history. She left behind no policy legacy of note as she lost power before she was even able to sit in Parliament as prime minister. Canada's top historians ranked Campbell dead-last in two recent surveys on prime ministerial influence [1997, 2011] (Hillmer and Granatstein 1997; Hillmer and Azzi 2011). Furthermore, no woman has ever occupied the top federal cabinet portfolios of Finance, Foreign Affairs, or Defense.

Similarly, extra-parliamentary women's groups have met only intermediate success. The national women's movement is largely centralized around the National Ad Hoc Action Committee on the Status of Women in Canada [NAC], an umbrella organization comprising over 700 member groups. NAC was established in 1971 to oversee the implementation of recommendations made by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, which had tabled a comprehensive report a year earlier. [13] It subsequently played a hand in the development of a number of female-friendly policies, particularly in the areas of employment equity and the prevention of violence against women (see Arscott 2010). At its pinnacle, the NAC successfully pushed for gender-equality language in the 1982 re-draft of Canada's constitution (Manfredi 2004, pp. 43-6). However, over the last three decades, the

[13] Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson [Liberal] convened the Commission in 1967, at the request of the nascent Canadian women's movement. After conducting a three-year investigation, the commission tabled a report in 1970. Key recommendations included a national child care policy, equal pay provisions, and greater criminal code protection for women at risk of violence (see Arscott 2010).

NAC has moved in a radical direction, alienating potential governing political allies. Notably, it has turned sharply against free trade and multi-party efforts to renegotiate Canada's constitution; placing itself out of step with the federal Liberals and Conservatives ("National Action Committee on the Status of Women").

As is fitting for this paper, the Canadian women's movement's most protracted struggle has involved work-family reconciliation policy. Although the implementation of a national child care strategy was an explicit recommendation in the aforementioned Royal Commission report, feminists were ultimately unable to get the idea traction within Canada's corridors of power. Rianne Mahon (2000) argues that feminists lost their place in the policy discourse in the 1970s when ECEC was folded into the means-tested Canada Assistance Plan (CAP). Under the CAP umbrella, child subsidies were channeled towards families who could demonstrate need. The regime eschewed the principle of universality, which had been a sticking point for feminists. The prospects for a universal ECEC program dimmed amidst the austerity politics of the 1980s and early-to-mid 1990s. Mahon calls the feminist struggle for ECEC a "never-ending story" which, as I detail throughout this paper, continues to this day.

Women have had somewhat more success at the provincial/territorial level. The jurisdictions of Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland, Nunavut, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Québec, and the Yukon have each had female premiers. At present, five of the ten Canadian provinces are led by women; as is one of its three Arctic territories.

[15] With one exception, each of these premiers have come to power within the last

[15] These are the provinces of: Alberta [Alison Redford], British Columbia [Christy Clark], Newfoundland-Labrador [Kathy Dunderdale], Ontario [Kathleen Wynne], and Québec [Pauline Marios]; and Nunavut [Ava Aariak]

three years. The effect of this bumper crop of subnational female leadership remains to be seen. I will discuss this anomaly further later in the paper.

Historically, the province of Québec has been an outlier in terms of the recruitment and cultivation of female political leadership. The separatist Parti Québecois [PQ] in particular has been an exemplar in producing capable female officeholders (Praud 2003, p. 126). Shortly after forming its first government in 1976, the PQ established the Comité National de la Condition Féminine, an organ responsible for increasing the number of female candidates and party officials. The Comité gave female PQ members a forum to develop policy proposals. Comité leadership also held workshops on public speaking and organizing. Anchored by the Comité, the proportion of female PQ candidates topped out at rougly 25% in 1989. This compares to roughly 17% on the part of the rival Québec Liberals, who lack an equivalent party organ (Praud, p. 131).

Jocelyne Praud, who conducted a longitudinal study of the Comité's behavior between 1976 and 2001, found that "the committee [was] largely responsible for the feminization of the PQ organization and caucus." Broadly speaking, she concluded: "In the case of Québec, it appears that the more women activists and officials a party has, the more likely it is to present women candidates and ensure that they are elected." (pp. 134-5) The Comité support structure ultimately gave rise to the women who built Québec's universal ECEC program; a story that I discuss at length in the next section.

V. QUÉBEC'S CHILD CARE BREAKTHROUGH

Paul Martin's aforementioned initiative was not the federal government's first foray into the domain of ECEC. In fact, a national child care program had been on the respective agendas of both Liberal and Conservative governments intermittently since 1970. However, it would be outside of the scope of this paper to document the entire history of the national children's file. This has been done comprehensively elsewhere (see Friendly et al. 2007, Mahon and Phillips 2002).

For the purposes of this paper, it would suffice to say that Martin entered office at a time when the federal government played a supporting role in the provision of ECEC. The Canada Assistance Program [CAP] provided funding to address the needs of low-income families. Moreover, the cross-national Social Union Framework Agreement [SUFA] and Federal–Provincial–Territorial Agreement on Early Childhood Development [ECDA] set guidelines for the cost and quality of services nationwide. Beyond this, ECEC was a prerogative of the provinces.

This arrangement has allowed for experimentation with public and private delivery schemes. Québec has been by far the most bold of the provinces on this front. The province launched North America's first comprehensive public ECEC program in 1997 (Hébert, p. 78). Though it is of only secondary importance to this project, the Québec story is worth

documenting here. This is because it is consistent with both mainstream [power resources] and feminist perspectives on social policy innovation in liberal welfare states. We see:

1. The incumbency of a non-traditional party;
2. A cultural environment of secularism; and
3. The influence of female policy entrepreneurs.

The germ for the Québec ECEC program was planted in the aftermath of the province's polarizing 1995 referendum on independence. Arguably the most dramatic political spectacle in Canadian history, the referendum ended with Québecois opting to keep the province in Canada by a knife-edge 50.58% to 49.42% margin [5,400 of 4,757,500 total votes]. The outcome prompted much soul-searching within the governing Parti-Québecois, which had been heavily invested in the separatist project. Premier Jacques Parizeau resigned the day after the vote. He handed the reins to Bloc Québecois leader Lucien Bouchard, who had never before held office at the provincial level.

This context allowed for the emergence of a group of female policy entrepreneurs, led by the respected Pauline Marois. Marois had been a fixture in the Parti Québecois for over a decade. During her tenure as a member of the Québec National Assembly, she held a number of cabinet portfolios. Just prior to his resignation, Parizeau made Marois his Minister of Finance.[16] She was re-assigned to Education in the cabinet shuffle that followed the ascension of Bouchard, giving her formal jurisdiction over ECEC. One of her first acts in this capacity was to place a moratorium on new licenses to commercial day care centers (Jenson 2002, p. 320). Marois would subsequently use the resources of her office, as well as

[16] Finance is typically considered the most prestigious post in Westminster-style parliaments.

her own political capital, to build the first comprehensive government-supported ECEC program in North America (Hébert, p. 78).

Marois calls her tenure as Education Minister a "miracle moment" for ECEC. During a post-referendum economic summit[17], Premier Bouchard identified education and early childhood issues as key provincial priorities. He gave Marois considerable latitude to address them. By 1997, Marois' Ministry of Education produced a white paper on family policy. The paper, entitled "Children at the heart of our choices" ("La politique 29oeur29al: les enfants au 29oeur des choix du gouvernement"), proposed an ambitious plan to phase out for-profit daycare centers. The provincial government would produce 73,000 pre-primary spaces over 5 years. It pledged to cover 80% of the cost of the new program. This left parents with a user-fee of $5 a day (Adkin and Laban 2008; "Child Care for a Change" 2004). The key recommendations of the white paper were integrated into two bills. The program became open to 4 year-olds in September 1997. It was extended to 3 year-olds the following year (Child Care Resource and Research Unit, n.d).

In the subsequent decade, the Québec model would prove both popular and, according to at least one study, sustainable. As of 2007, the program encompassed 364,572 subsidized spaces; more than double the number available in all other provinces and territories combined [126,541]. [18] A 2011 analysis of the program led by University of Québec economist Pierre Fortin found that, for every dollar the Province invests in the program, it gains $1.05.

[17] The Québec summit on Economy and Employment took place in October 2006 (Jenson 2002, p. 311)

[18] At this time (2007), there were roughly 1.7 million children in Canada who are four or younger (Census 2006). As such, roughly 49% of the relevant population was in the daycare system (838,923) and roughly 29% received cost subsidies (491,113).

Figure #1: Child Care Spaces in Canada (as of 2007)

Province	Number of regulated child care spaces	Children receiving fee subsidies	(%)
Alberta	71,177	11,459	16%
British Columbia	82,386	13,333	16%
Manitoba	26,375	10,677	40%
New Brunswick	14,170	3,530	25%
Newfoundland and Labrador	5,868	1,952	33%
Northwest Territories	1,703	Information not available	N/A
Nova Scotia	13,247	2,798	21%
Nunavut	970	Approximately 80 families	N/A
Ontario	243,488	76,959	32%
Prince Edward Island	4,824	1,547	32%
Québec	**364,572**	All spaces are subsidized	100%
Saskatchewan	8,850	3,718	42%
Yukon	1,293	568	44%
TOTALS: (Excluding Québec)	**838,932** (474,351)	**491,113** (126,541)	**59%** (27%)

Source: Child Care Resource and Research Unit/CBC News (2009)

Insider accounts reaffirm the view of Marois as the architect of Québec's universal child-care system (Jenson 2002, Hébert 2007, Adkin and Abu-Laban 2008). Then-Minister of Employment Louise Harel has also been recognized for her contribution to the program (Jenson 2002, p. 319). Writes noted commentator Chantal Hébert,

> Nobody who knows [Premier Lucien] Bouchard seriously believes that [he] – a deeply conservative man raised on traditional views of the family – would have taken [on] such an ambitious program if he had been left to his own devices." (p. 77)

Hébert calls the program "a strong symbol of the input of women in politics, tangible proof that, given a critical mass at the top, they can make a significant difference to the direction

of a government." (ibid.) This, coming from one of Canada's most respected political journalists, is a strong endorsement of the Stetson and Mazur "state feminism" hypothesis.

The venerable Marois recently acquired a new job title: Premier of Québec. Marois, who became leader of the Parti Québecois in 2007, ran a strong campaign to replace the embattled administration of rival Jean Charest [Liberal] in the fall of 2012. The election saw Marois' Parti Québecois gain seven seats [a 15% increase in total share], securing a four seat cushion over the Liberals. Québec's minority parliament will convene at the end of October 2012. ECEC is high on the new premier's agenda. Marois has pledged $177 million dollars to create spaces for 15,000 children on the daycare system's waiting list (Montgomery 2012).

Taken on its own, the Québec story is a vindication of both power resources theory and the feminist perspectives of Stetson and Mazur (1995). As with universal health insurance, we see innovation on the child care file when a left party is in power at the provincial level. Moreover, it ultimately took an influential cabal of women to force child care to the top of the agenda. This is fitting as the policy promised the greatest upside to working mothers.

Thinking back to Morgan's findings in terms of religion and work-family policy (2008), it also makes sense that Québec would see universal child care before the other Canadian provinces. The province gained its political consciousness during the decidedly anti-clerical Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. It currently sits near the bottom of Canadian provinces in terms of religiosity ("The importance of religion to one's life"). Moreover, the government of Québec has waged a number of high profile battles against religious symbols in the public

sphere.[19] It is therefore not surprising that there was no serious, mobilized faith-based opposition to Marois' plan.

Given the compatibility between the Québec case and existing theories of social policy development, one may be tempted to stop here and conclude that the state of the literature is strong. But the story continues. The idea of universal child care followed a decidedly non-linear trajectory in the federal sphere. Unlike with the story of universal health insurance; there was disconnect between the emergence of universal child care at a regional level and its incorporation at the national level. The next component of this paper seeks to determine what killed the national universal child care program – at least for now – and what this story says about the prospect for future attempts at ECEC reform.

[19] Two recent events are relevant to this point. A 2010 ruling by the Québec human rights commission upheld the decision of a Montreal community college to expel a Muslim student. Also in 2010, the provincial government of Québec passed a law that requires Muslim women to uncover their faces when dealing with government service employees (see: "Québec passes law regarding Muslim veil").

VI. FACE-OFF: MINISTER DRYDEN v. RONA AMBROSE

Prime Minister Paul Martin came into office in late 2003 under distinctly inauspicious circumstances. Martin, a former Minister of Finance, had been ejected from cabinet a year earlier amidst a public feud with incumbent Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. He reemerged from the political wilderness only to see his party embroiled in an embarrassing and deepening scandal involving the misappropriation of public money earmarked for the province of Québec. The imbroglio, known to the Canadian public as the "sponsorship scandal",[20] involved a cabinet minister, members of Prime Minister Chrétien's staff, and reputed mobsters. It threatened to be an anchor on Martin's ambition for a mandate of his own.

Hoping to distance himself from the old regime, Martin called for a new federal election less than six-months into his tenure. The campaign would showcase Martin's ambitious, progressive vision for Canada. A five-year, $5-billion plan to create 250,000 low-cost child care spaces across Canada was at the center of his domestic platform ("Daycare: the debate over space"). The funding would be channeled to the Canadian provinces, contingent on their ability to reach federally-established QUAD [quality, universality, accessibility, developmental] principles. A campaign document entitled Moving Canada

[20] The scandal surrounded the federal government's "sponsorship program" in Québec. The program was established shortly after the 1995 Québec referendum as a means of rehabilitating the federal government's image in the province. It was discontinued in 2004, when Canada's Auditor General discovered widespread corruption in its administration.

Forward outlined the precise details of the Martin plan. It read as a full-throated endorsement of the Québec model:

> [Québec] is the North American leader in early learning and care. In Québec's system, community-based organizations provide child care at a moderate fee. This is a standard to which early learning and care across Canada should be lifted. Learning from each other and embracing what has worked elsewhere in Canada, makes us stronger as a nation and as a people. That's what our federation is all about (p. 29).

The Liberal party frequently invoked the legacy of the Québec program in the marketing of its national child care policy. Party officials also drew parallels between the unfolding child care narrative and that of universal health insurance. The opposition Conservatives criticized the Martin plan for its lack of flexibility during the 2004 campaign, but did not offer a cogent alternative. A blurb on child care on the Conservative Party website simply read, "We will speed progress on existing programs to support childcare centres and create more quality childcare spaces." (Anello 2004) The left-of-center New Democrats promised 200,000 spaces over four years (Bohn 2004).

The hard-fought 2004 election ended with what Martin termed a "stable minority." Martin's Liberals netted 135 seats, 20 short of the amount necessary for a majority. The Conservatives took 99 seats, with the New Democrats and separatist Bloc Quebeois holding the balance of power in Parliament. Martin took the result as a mandate to push forward with his child care blueprint.

Martin selected neophyte Minister of Social Development Ken Dryden to be the point person on the child care file. Dryden, 56, was recruited to run in the 2004 election as one of the Liberal Party's "star candidates." Though new to politics, Dryden already held a

high profile due to his prior career as a professional ice hockey player. Widely viewed as one of the greatest goaltenders of all-time, Dryden led the Montreal Canadians to six Stanley Cups between 1971 and 1979. He would later study at Cornell en route to a law degree from McGill.

In his years away from the hockey rink, Dryden built a reputation as an advocate for children and education. He served as Youth Commissioner for the Province of Ontario between 1984 and 1986. He later penned a book entitled In School: Our Kids, Our Teachers, Our Classrooms (1995). The book follows his experience sitting in on a semester at a public school near Toronto. On top of his celebrity, Dryden carried credibility on children's issues. Drafting him as the face of child care was an ostensible public relations coup.

But the marketing of the plan hit an early snag. Conservative Intergovernmental Affairs[21] Critic Rona Ambrose, a woman, emerged as an effective opponent of the Martin-Dryden proposal. The telegenic, 36 year-old Ambrose framed the Liberal child care plan as a condescending affront to parents who choose to stay at home. Ambrose's rhetoric often highlighted personal distinctions between herself and Minister Dryden. The following Question Period exchange [February 15, 2005] is telling of the Ambrose/Dryden dynamic:

> **Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, almost 100% of young working moms and dads in Canada have said that if they could afford it, they would stay home part time to care for their own children. Today in the House the Minister of Social Development said that young working moms only say that because they feel guilty.
>
> Instead of offending working women, why will the minister not listen to what young working moms are asking for? How dare this minister ignore their desire for choice?

[21] The portfolio of Intergovernmental Affairs deals with issues pertaining to federal-provincial cooperation.

> **Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just because the hon. Member mischaracterizes and misstates [me], does not make it so. I was speaking of polling numbers. What polls allow us to do is to say yes to a number of different, often contradictory things. As parents, we all want to spend more time with our kids. For reasons such as economic, social and independence [sic.], we do not.
>
> By far the most persuasive polling data we have is, after working through all the choices, that the great majority of parents with kids are both in the workplace.
>
> **Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we fought long and hard for the right to vote, the right to participate in universities and the workforce, and the right to make our own choices. *Working women want to make their own choices. We do not need old white guys telling us what to do*.[22]

Ambrose's remark about "old white guys" went viral in the Canadian media. The next morning's headlines read: "A Verbal Slapshot: MP tells child-care minister Ken Dryden: 'We don't need old white guys telling us what to do'" (Toronto Star) and "Ken Dryden assailed as an 'old white guy'" (CTV News). Pundits would later point to the Ambrose-Dryden skirmish as a turning point in the Canadian child care debate. For instance, Chantal Hébert remarked that the flashpoint "reinforced the image of the federal government as a meddling, paternalistic uncle." (2007, p. 81) Perhaps as a result of this exchange, Ambrose was soon promoted to social development critic; taking the child care plan on more directly in this capacity (Goodyear-Grant 2010, p. 16).

Despite the public relations skid, Dryden was ultimately able to cobble together bilateral agreements-in-principle on child care with all ten provinces. The Early Learning and Child Care Agreements were finalized between April and November 2005. They represented a financial commitment of just under the advertised $5 billion, with the provinces receiving

[22] Emphasis added.

between $27 million [Prince Edward Island] and $2.5 billion [Ontario] each over 5 years ("Early Learning and Child Care Agreements").

The Martin Liberals heralded the agreements as a major policy victory. Observers were less enthusiastic. Notably absent was federal legislation to consolidate and entrench the agreements (Hébert, p. 119-20), possibly because such legislation would not have made it past the minority parliament.[23] There was nonetheless little time for the Martin government to consider such details. Shortly after Dryden had delivered the last of the Early Learning and Child Care Agreements, Canadians returned to the polls.

[23] Together, the Liberals and NDP held a bare majority in Parliament (154 of 308 seats). However, it is unlikely that the two parties would have been able to arrive at a consensus on child care as the NDP supported an outright ban of for-profit care, a stance that would alienate pro-business Liberals. Moreover, the NDP stood to gain electorally from the impending Liberal collapse.

VII. THE "CHILD CARE ELECTION" [2006]

Martin's minority government proved less "stable" than he anticipated. The government collapsed when it failed to pass its budget near the end of the fall 2005 session of parliament. [24] A new election was scheduled for January 26, 2006. With few accomplishments to campaign on, Martin made Dryden's child care triumph a focal point of his 2006 re-election bid. He upped the ante on the nascent program – proposing that it be made permanent ("Liberal Child Care Commitment will be Made Permanent"). This entailed a commitment of an additional $6 billion to fund the initiative through 2015.

This time, challenger Stephen Harper countered with a child care plan of his own. The Conservatives' five year, $10.9 billion plan hinged on the Choice in Child Care Allowance: an annual grant of $1,200 per child for parents of children under the age of six. The allowance would consume $8.25 billion, or 75%, of the child care budget (Rinehart 2008, p. 3). The Conservative plan was designed to emphasize parental choice – a theme the party stressed throughout the campaign. For their part, Jack Layton's New Democratic Party offered $8.7 billion over 4 years to create 270,000 new spaces. The New Democrats also proposed a national child care act, which would outlaw for-profit child care providers

[24] The opposition Conservatives, New Democratic Party [NDP], and Bloc Québecois all withdrew support for Martin's minority government.

[25] I was unable to find a projection of the number of spaces this additional round of funding would create.

and set new licensing standards for non-profit centers ("NDP promises child care on Quebec model").

The media drew significant attention to the distinction between the Liberal and Conservative plans. National Post columnist Andrew Coyne called child care the "decisive" issue of the campaign. Similarly, Norma Greenway of the Ottawa Citizen termed the contest "the child care election." The perceived significance of child care was reflected in the volume of coverage it received in the national press. Over the course of the 56-day campaign, the nationally-circulated, conservative National Post published 53 child care-related articles. Its progressive rival, the Globe and Mail, published 27 (Rinehart 2008, pp. 3- 5).

Unfortunately, a glitch in Liberal Party messaging detracted from the substance of the debate. Party communication director Scott Reid flubbed on the issue when he joked to the media that parents would simply squander Harper's child care subsidy on "beer and popcorn" (Clark et al. 2006). Reid was forced to retract the statement and he put the Prime Minister in an uncomfortable position. Pressed on Reid's comments by reporters, Martin responded:

> "There's no doubt in my mind that parents are going to use [the proposed child care subsidy] for the benefit of their families. They're going to use that money in a way that I'm sure is responsible. Let there be no doubt about that.'' ("Senior Grit staffer apologizes for 'beer' gaffe").

But the damage was done. "Beer and popcorn" contributed to the already persistent narrative of the Liberal Party as entitled, condescending, and out of touch. After twelve years in government, the party had finally worn out its welcome with voters.

January 26, 2006 marked the culmination of Stephen Harper's improbable journey to the Prime Minister's Residence at 24 Sussex Drive. His Conservatives bested Martin's Liberals by 21 seats and 6% of the popular vote. Upon taking office, Harper agreed to spend 1.4 billion to honor the Early Learning and Child Care Agreements through the 2006-07 fiscal year (Rinehart 2008). He would discontinue the Martin/Dryden plan afterwards, moving forward with his own child care strategy.

Harper's decision to scrap universal child care did not come without resistance. Officials from the Ontario, Manitoba, Québec, and Saskatchewan governments publicly urged the incoming prime minister to preserve Martin's five-year plans in their entirety. Only the governments of Alberta and New Brunswick, both conservative, voiced support for Harper's position ("Provinces want Liberal child-care plan honoured"). The provinces were joined in their dissent by a number of prominent interest groups, including the Canadian Labor Congress, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and the National Union of Public and General Employees.

The public also appeared to be skeptical about Harper's child care plan. A June 2006 study published by Environics research found that only 35% of Canadians supported the conservative child care allowance, as opposed to 50% who supported the Liberal scheme [n: 2000]. 40% said that the opposition parties should trigger another election if the Conservatives failed to back down on the issue ("Canadians' Attitudes toward National Child Care Policy", pp. 7, 19).

None of this would change the new Prime Minister's mind. The Choice in Child Care Allowance, re-christened the Universal Child Care Benefit, was folded into Harper's

inaugural budget. Cheques began to circulate in July. In the next section, I show that, despite dissatisfying many, the Harper administration has emerged from the child care debate unscathed.

VIII. AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME – AND GONE: CHILD CARE IN THE 2006 AND 2008 ELECTIONS

From the above account 2006 election in isolation, one is left with the sense that Stephen Harper won the election but lost on the issue child care. It would therefore be reasonable to expect that the Harper government's lukewarmly-received Universal Child Care Benefit would be low-hanging fruit for the next Liberal campaign. Somebody with less political baggage than Paul Martin would perhaps be able to make the case for the revival of the national early childhood education program.

However, the respective narratives of the 2008 and 2011 Canadian election campaigns indicate that the Universal Child Care Benefit has already produced a policy legacy effect (Pierson 1996). Harper's $100 per month child care has become politically entrenched; constituting something of a "third rail" for opposition campaigns. The major parties seem to have given up on Martin's vision of universal child care; instead framing the debate as one of how to make the existing transfer-based regime more effective.

Montreal-area parliamentarian Stephane Dion led the Liberal Party's campaign in the October 2008 federal election. Dion, who had previously served as the federal Minister of the Environment, premised the party's platform almost exclusively on environmental issues. Under his proposed "green shift" tax policy, Dion pledged to create an ecotax on carbon emissions, using the resultant revenue to finance cuts in personal and corporate income taxes. The green shift package included a new tax credit of $350 per child per year

[on top of the Universal Benefit] and a means-tested supplement of $1,225 per annum for low-income families with children under the age of 18. Canada Broadcasting Corporation reporter Mark Gollom characterized the Dion plan as "[pledging] virtually the same amount [of funding] as the Conservative child-care benefit, but targeted only to low-income families." ECEC was ultimately a weak spot for the Liberal campaign as critics on the left criticized Dion for flip-flopping on his prior endorsement of the Martin/Dryden plan. [26] But this was probably inconsequential as Dion's proposed ecotax ultimately struck the wrong chord in a time of economic uncertainty. He led the Liberals to their worst popular vote showing in over a century [26%]. The Harper Conservatives increased their seat share to 124 [+16], 20 seats shy of a majority government.

Michael Ignatieff, the Toronto-based leader of the Liberals going into the May 2011 general election, presented a more ambitious vision for child care. Yet he nevertheless stressed the distinctions between his plan and the one that had been proposed earlier by the Martin government. Ignatieff's child care strategy centered on the endowment of a federal "Early Childhood Learning and Care Fund." The fund would exist to supplement provincial and territorial expenditures on child care. The provinces and territories would be able to apply for grants from the fund on an "as needed" basis. Ignatieff pledged a $500-million investment in the fund's first year, which was to rise incrementally, topping-out at $1 billion annually by the fourth year. However, the fund would supplement, *not* replace,

[26] In an October 2006 Post with the National Post, Dion said, "The [Ken] Dryden plan was much better [than the Universal Child Care Benefit]. We need child-care facilities to provide Canadian parents with real choice. It's a matter of social justice, but also of sound economics: child-care facilities are a good way to encourage flexibility and mobility of our workforce, at a time when, often, two parents are working outside the home." (Gollom 2008)

Harper's Child Care Benefit. A campaign press release expressed this position unequivocally, as follows:

> **Q: Will you maintain the $100-a-month Universal Child Care Benefit?**
>
> A: Yes. A Liberal government will maintain the $100-a-month Universal Child Care Benefit. ("Michael Ignatieff announces Early Childhood Learning and Care Fund")

The New Democratic Party, still led by Jack Layton, also promised to preserve the Universal Benefit in the 2008 campaign; albeit with a higher monthly pay-out (Benzie 2008). The party's 2011 platform pledged means-tested assistance "in addition to the current *Universal Child Care Benefit*.[27]" ("Give your family a break") The issue of child care did not come up in the in either the 2008 or 2011 English-language election debates.

At first glance, the behavior of the Liberals and the NDP may appear counterintuitive, but it actually makes sense in light of what scholars know about policy legacy effects (Pierson 1996). Although decidedly less ambitious that the Martin/Dryden plan, the Conservative child care strategy provided a direct, indiscriminate, and instant benefit to all Canadians with pre-school age children. In other words, it turned essentially the entire relevant population into policy stakeholders. By contrast, the Martin plan proposed to phase-in benefits incrementally, covering only small portions of Canadian families at the outset. Going forward, it will be difficult for politicians to take away $100 per -month cheques from parents, even if doing so is a necessary step to building a better ECEC infrastructure.

[27] Italics the authors.

Tellingly, the only party to call for a reconsideration of the Martin/Dryden plan during this timeframe was the fringe Green Party.[28] The Green Party, which held no seats in parliament going into the 2011 election, issued a campaign press release that stated,

> The Greens are committed to a high-quality federally-funded child care program in Canada, accessible to any family that wants to place children into early childhood education. "[The] Greens will work to restore and revamp the 2005 agreements reached between federal government, provinces and territories to achieve a universal access child care program in Canada," said [party leader Elizabeth] May.[29] ("Greens put children first")

The 2011 election gave Stephen Harper his long-awaited majority government. Harper's Conservative Party won 166 of the 308 seats in Parliament, a gain of 23. But the larger story to come out of the election was a reversal of fortunes for the Liberals and the New Democrats, respectively. Buoyed by a strong showing in Québec, Jack Layton's New Democrats surged to 103 seats [+67].[30] This made the New Democratic Party Canada's Official Opposition[31] for the first time in its 50 year history. Meanwhile, the Liberal Party hit yet another low under Ignatieff, plummeting to 34 seats [-43] and—for the first time ever—third-party status. Finally, the Green Party made its long-awaited electoral breakthrough as party leader Elizabeth May won her seat on Vancouver Island. Prime Minister Harper has stated that he plans to call the next federal election in the fall of 2015 (Miller, 2011). The window for a universal child care program appears to be firmly shut for the time being.

[28] The Green Party of Canada is more singularly rooted in the environmental movement than European Greens

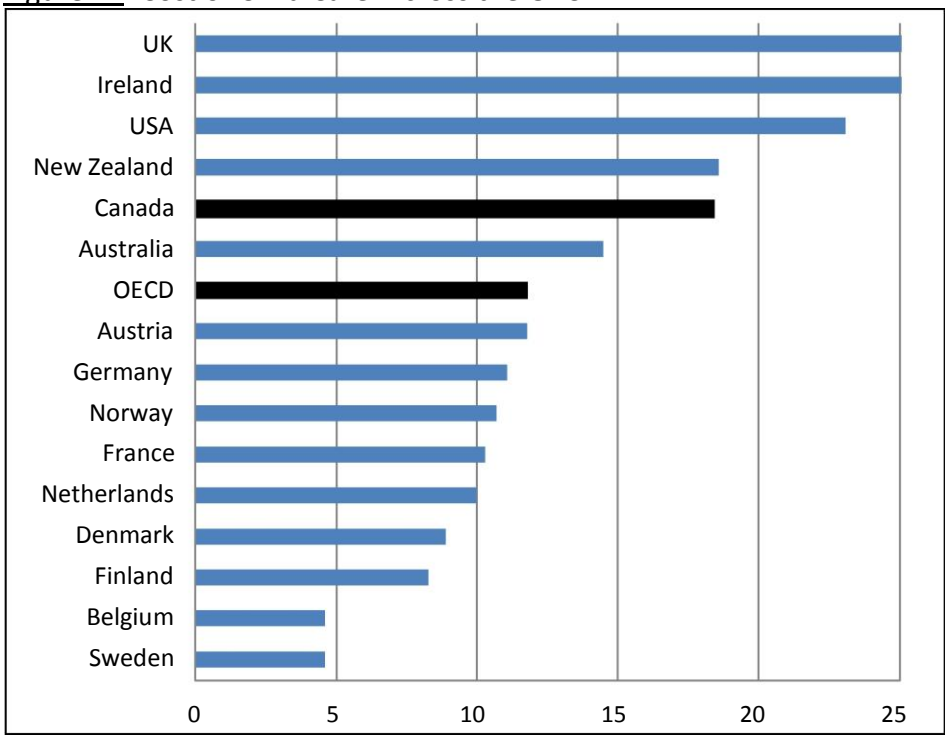
[29] Elizabeth May was, and still is, the only female leader of a major Canadian political party.

[30] Layton passed away two months after the election, losing a lengthy battle with cancer.

[31] The largest party in opposition holds the formal title of "Official Opposition".

With ECEC off of the political agenda for foreseeable future, Canada continues to lag behind international child care benchmarks. According to the latest available data (2008), Canada is the sixth most expensive place for child care in the entire OECD[32] – outperforming only Switzerland, the UK, Ireland, the United States, and New Zealand.

Figure #2: Cost of Child Care Across the OECD



Source: "OECD Family Database**."** OECD. 2012.
In Rogers (2012). "Child care costs: How the UK compares with the world."

Perhaps as a testament to the arrival of ECEC as a perennial election issue, a daycare question was added to the Canadian National Election Study during the 2008 election campaign. The question reads: "What should the government do: fund public daycare or give the money directly to parents?" Over 60% of respondents expressed support for government-funded daycare in both the 2008 and 2011 editions in the survey. This suggests

[32] The cost of child calculated as a percentage of total family wage. Child care costs in Canada are 18.4% of income. The OECD average is 11.8%.

that there will be an appetite for universal child care if and when viable leadership emerges. The thrust of the present paper is that a spokeswoman may be necessary to make universal child care a reality in Canada.

Figure #3: CNES Question on Daycare [2008, 2011]

"What Should Government do?"	2008	2011
Fund public daycare	63.4%	63.2%
Give the money directly to parents	29.5%	29%
Don't know / No response	7.1%	7.8%
Number of Respondents	2451	3362

Source: Canadian National Election Study

IX. MY EXPLANATION: PRIME MINISTER MARTIN'S "LADY PROBLEMS"

The mainstream literature suggests that social policies are difficult to roll back once they have already cleared the legislative process (Immergut 1992). From this perspective, the undoing of Canada's universal child care program is a puzzle. The Martin/Dryden plan went through a number of veto points on its way to becoming a reality. The plan made it past the civil service, the Liberal Party caucus and ten relevant provincial ministries. It also seemed to resonate with a majority of Canadians. How was Stephen Harper able to get away with simply pulling the plug on this ostensible social policy breakthrough?

This sequence of events defies mainstream perspectives on the welfare state. The decision to scrap the universal child care program did not reflect fiscal urgency. In fact, Canada boasted one of the most robust economies in the world at the time; having produced budget surpluses each year since 1997. Moreover, it would be a stretch to categorize the implementation of the costly subsidy-based Conservative child care package as "retrenchment." What this episode says about the Canadian welfare state and welfare states in general is unclear.

But the case may offer some insight into how female-friendly social policy should [or should not] be promoted. As I hint at above, this story was as much about marketing as it was about product. Commentators have noted two factors that were detrimental to Martin's universal child care bid: a dearth of visible women in the Liberal caucus, (Hébert

2007, p. 79) and the Conservative Party's effective use of gendered frames. For instance, Rinehart (2008) finds that Conservative Party officials made clever use of trigger words associated with feminism. They often used the word "choice" discussing their child care plan. Rinehart argues that this was intended to invoke the "feminist pro-choice movement" (p. 1). She is one of several observers to comment on the effectiveness of Rona Ambrose as the spokesperson of the Conservative Party's fight against universal child care (pp. 16, 21; Goodyear-Grant 2010, pp. 15-16; Hébert 2007, p. 81). The thrust of these analyses is that Conservative Party members successfully painted the universal child care program as reflective of an outmoded, paternalistic worldview. At the very least, they neutralized whatever electoral benefit the program would have given the Liberals.

From a public relations standpoint, the Martin Liberals did not do enough to combat this "old boys club" perception. Several missteps going into the 2004 and 2006 elections may well have hurt the Martin government's image amongst women. Sheila Copps, the Hamilton-area MP who had been the leading female in the party for nearly two decades;[33] was one of the earliest casualties of Prime Minster Martin. Copps had stubbornly opposed heir-apparent Martin in the 2003 race to succeed retiring prime minister Jean Chrétien. Martin allegedly used electoral redistricting prior to the 2004 election to extract revenge upon Copps; clandestinely supporting the candidacy of a rival Liberal MP in Copps' new district (Copps 2004, p. 201). Copps would ultimately lose the Liberal Party endorsement.

Copps went public with her dismay over the episode, claiming that people close to Prime Minister Martin had taken steps to ensure that she would lose the Liberal nomination.

[33] Copps held the title of Deputy Prime Minister throughout Jean Chrétien's entire tenure in office. During this period, she held the cabinet portfolios of the Environment and Heritage Canada.

She called for an investigation over alleged electoral manipulation in her primary race (Copps, p. 205). Though Copps' claims were never substantiated, the episode was a headache for the new prime minister.

By leaving the Liberal Party's most prominent woman out in the cold, Martin also made himself vulnerable to accusations of sexism. A statement on the matter issued by the interest group Equal Voice[34] read,

> [The parties] must encourage and support women to run in ridings where they can win. A major example of non-support is the situation of Sheila Copps. She is not receiving any support from the prime minister – the first of the first ministers, the leader of our country, the leader of Ms. Copps' party, is not even supporting her re-election. And this is not a woman who is new to politics. This is a woman who has served as a senior cabinet member in the Liberal government, who has represented her Hamilton riding loyally for years ("Women's Political Action Forum").

Copps reserved harsh words for Martin and his entourage in her autobiography Worth Fighting For, published shortly after the 2004 election. In the book, she doubled down on claims of electoral manipulation (pp. 201-8). Moreover, she recounts being "harassed" by people close to Martin on numerous occasions (p. 188). One such account took place at the 2003 party convention that saw Martin named the new Prime Minister of Canada:

> I was wedged into a tiny corner of the Air Canada Centre [in Toronto] with my hardy band of supporters, and even that small area was almost taken over by ***Martin bullies***.[35] At one point, the now "Honourable" Jim Kargiannis (and I use that term advisedly) came over to try to kick our delegates out of

[34] Equal Voice is a prominent interest group that is dedicated to increasing women's political representation in Canada.

[35] Emphasis added.

> the Copps section. Jimmy K. is a huge man and he used his weight to push around Kieran Leblanc, a female supporter of mine who weighs all of about 100 pounds…There was no doubt that his actions, verbal and physical, were nothing less than assault. (p. 193)

Notwithstanding the veracity of these accusations, the high profile exit of Copps hinted of disunity and perhaps sexism in the Liberal midst. The situation was hardly ideal for a man looking to champion major ECEC reform.

Furthermore, it would be fair to say that Prime Minister Martin presided over a weak bench in terms of female leadership. Jane Stewart, who had been the Liberal Party's other leading female parliamentarian, also saw her fortunes fall with Martin's rise. As Minister of Human Resource Development[36] [1999-2003], Stewart was Jean Chrétien's lead on children's issues; a role analogous to the one that Ken Dryden would later play for Prime Minister Martin. Stewart has been widely acknowledged for her role in getting the issue of ECEC on the policy agenda near the turn of the twenty-first century (White 2011b, p. 12). But Stewart's implication in a misappropriation scandal and her status as a Chrétien loyalist boded poorly for her political future in a Martin Government. To the surprise of few, she was relegated to the backbenches in Prime Minister Martin's first cabinet shuffle in December 2003. She chose to retire from politics in 2004.

Before his first term was up, Martin would lose yet another female cabinet member. This time, it was Judy Sgro, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Sgro found herself caught-up in a bizarre scandal involving the unauthorized allocation of a special immigration permit to a Romanian exotic dancer living in her district—a scandal that members of the

[36] The Department of Human Resources Development was rebranded the Department of Social Development following the 2004 election.

Canadian press gleefully dubbed "strippergate." ("Immigration Minister Under Fire for Strippergate") Sgro stepped down from cabinet in January 2005 as she was under ethics board investigation for conflict-of-interest.[37]

This left Prime Minister Martin with a total of eight women in his cabinet of thirty-eight ministers [21%] (Carty 2005). Minister of Public Safety and Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan was the only member of this group who could be said to have been in Martin's inner-cabinet. In all, Gender representation was not a strength of the Martin cabinet. It is indeed puzzling that the prime minister would take a gamble on ECEC reform with such an overwhelmingly male team. The argument I have made in the preceding sections is that Martin's neglect of the gendering of ECEC as an issue contributed to the ultimate failure of the idea of a universal child care program in Canada.

As informative as it is, Canada is just one case. In the next section, I construct the successful German push for universalistic ECEC reform as an illustrative foil to the Canadian case. In doing so, I demonstrate my theory's external validity and the necessity of more systematic inquiry into this topic.

[37] Sgro was ultimately cleared of all wrong-doing in the affair by the federal ethics commissioner. The commissioner found that Sgro was unaware that two of her subordinates had put her in a position of conflict of interest when they made contact with the woman at the center of the investigation. (see "Ethics probe will clear Sgro, sources say.")

X. CONTRAST: UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE IN GERMANY

While The Canadian child care debate was perhaps the loudest, Canada is far from the only country to have ECEC on the political agenda recently. In fact, as Kimberly Morgan (2013) observes, a number of European welfare states have moved in a parent-friendly direction over the last two decades. Morgan singles out recent reforms implemented in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Germany; calling the trio "path shifters". She notes that governments in all three countries have made major changes in the areas of ECEC and parental leave. Writes Morgan:

> These and other changes have altered the basic architecture of these welfare regimes, moving them away from decades of passive, male breadwinner-sustaining policies towards active family-oriented programs that aim to support mothers' employment. (p. 1)

However, not all of these reforms were truly "path shifting" in terms of welfare regime logic (Esping-Andersen 1990). The initiatives implemented in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were largely transfer-based. ECEC in these countries remains a private good, supplied primarily by for-profit centers (Lloyd 2009). Philosophically, these demand-side initiatives do not differ greatly from the tax-credit program implemented in Canada by Prime Minister Harper. Only the changes implemented in Germany under the governments of Gerhard Schröder [2002-2005] and Angela Merkel [2005-2009] truly embody the principle of universalism. Between 2004 and 2008, German governments have secured funding for 750,000 daycare spaces – covering roughly 35% of the three-and-under

population. Moreover, German legislators have declared that access to regulated daycare a will be a universal right for all pre-school aged children[38] by 2013 (Rüling 2008, p. 19).

Accordingly, I present the German experience as an illustrative foil to the Canadian one in this section of the paper. By doing so, I demonstrate the external validity of my theory and show why it warrants further consideration. Specifically, I will show that Germany Family Ministers Renate Schmidt [SPD] and especially the charismatic Ursula von der Leyen [CDU] were effective spokeswomen for universal ECEC in Germany; successfully framing child care as matter of economic and demographic necessity (see Rüling 2008a, Henninger and von Wahl 2011). Set against the Canadian case, my reconstruction of Germany's ECEC debate will illustrate the importance of having credible female leadership at the helm of the reform effort.

Canada and Germany are apt for comparative analysis for a number of reasons. The cases largely overlap temporally as the German reforms took place between 2004 and 2007. In Germany, as in Canada, the ECEC debate took place at a time of political flux, with a progressive government ceding authority to a more conservative one – and neither able to hold the legislative majority. Finally, Germany and Canada share a number of institutional similarities. Both have evolved into highly-decentralized federations. This is directly relevant to the topic at hand as ECEC reform efforts in each country entailed extensive negotiations with provincial/Länder governments. Moreover, Canada and Germany have roughly the same number of effective parties in parliament [four and five, respectively]. Given these similarities, I can justifiably infer that female leadership may explain why universal child

[38] The decree covers children between the ages of one and three.

care ultimately succeeded in Germany but failed in Canada, in accordance with the "most similar system" design (Mill 1843).

The obvious objection to this comparison is that Germany is typically considered part of a different welfare state "family" than Canada. In fact, Esping-Andersen (1990) characterized Germany as the most classically conservative welfare state in Europe. Accordingly, Germany drags appreciably behind Canada in terms of both female labor force participation and the proportion of employed women working full time.[39] However, this makes Germany an even more difficult test of my theory because Esping-Andersen also argues that traditional gender roles are most culturally and politically entrenched in conservative welfare state. As such, one would expect the idea of universal ECEC to encounter stronger resistance in Germany than in Canada. To be thorough, I should also note that Germany is more strongly bicameral than Canada. This again stacks the deck against Germany as stronger bicameralism means that is should be more difficult to implement new policies.

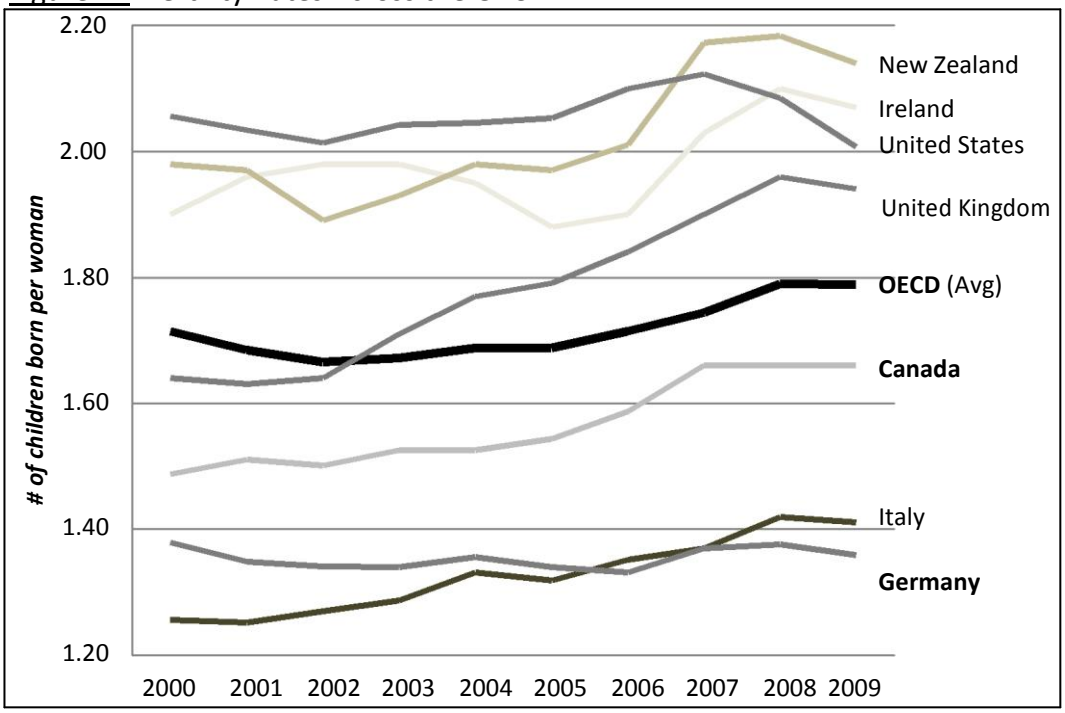
Another possible intervening factor I considered was fertility as the downward trend in Germany's birthrate has been well-documented. Yet Canada's fertility rate is also below the OECD average at 1.57 children born per women[40] [compared to 1.36 in Germany]. In fact, the latest Canadian census [2006] found a 2.4 percent [or 146,000 person] decline in the country's under-15 population over a period of five years ("Canada finds itself running out of kids"). Canada has the lowest fertility rate of any liberal welfare state**.** As such,

[39] Female labor force participation is at rougly 67% in Germany and 73% in Canada [2000-2010 average]. Working German women are 10% more likely to work part time than their Canadian counterparts [37% to 27%] (source: OECD Gender initiative data browser. 2012)

[40] 2000-2009 average.

demographic stagnation is an issue that could well have been pushed by the Canadian advocates of universal child care.

Figure #4: Fertility Rates Across the OECD



Source: "Society at a Glance", OECD 2011.

Having addressed possible obstacles to the Canada-Germany comparison, I now turn to the story of universal ECEC in the latter. It begins at around the turn of the twenty-first century when, like Canada, Germany became the target of criticism from the international social policy community. During this critical juncture, both the EU and OECD launched major studies of ECEC, exposing Germany's "backwardness" in this domain. This attention, coupled with widespread concern over the country's stubbornly low fertility rate, "de-legitimized" Germany's longstanding non-interventionist approach to family policy. German progressives, who had hitherto been hesitant to address the taboo subject of child care provisions, finally had a chance to put ECEC on the political agenda (Weishaupt 2011, p. 272).

Social democratic Minister for Family Affairs Renate Schmidt (2002-2005) seized this opportunity, emerging as a political entrepreneur on ECEC. Schmidt, a long-time parliamentarian, had been a prominent advocate for work-family reconciliation prior to becoming Family Affairs Minister. Her exploits in this arena included a book entitled S.O.S Family: Without Children we Look Old (2002). Accordingly, she commissioned a number of studies on work-family policy as Minister. The major recommendation to come out of this research was that Germany move towards a strategy for "sustainable family policy." That is, an evidence-based approach to family policy that enables "society [to] sustain and reproduce itself." Family Affairs' sustainability agenda included stimulating women's labor force participation, eliminating child poverty, and increasing Germany's fertility rate to at least 1.7 children per woman (Rüling 2008a, p. 171).

"Sustainable family policy" became Schmidt's ECEC mantra. In her statements in the German legislature and in the media, Schmidt emphasized the association between work-family policy modernization and demographic renewal. ECEC was, in Minister Schmidt's words, the "first pillar of sustainable family policy" (Clasen 2011, p. 98). Accordingly, Schmidt submitted the Daycare Expansion Act[41] to the German legislature during the 2004 session. The bill proposed an annual outlay of 1.5 billion euros to subsidize ECEC across Germany; with the goal of creating 230,000 spaces over five years. This would cover roughly 20% of German children under the age of three (Rüling 2008b, pp. 16).

As has been noted elsewhere (Rüling 2008a, p. 162), Schmidt's new paradigm of "sustainable family policy" encountered surprisingly little ideational resistance as the

[41] This is an English translation. The act is known as Tagesbetreuungsausbaugesetz (or TAG) in Germany.

Daycare Expansion Act made its way through the legislature. The major parties appeared to agree on the contention that ECEC is an important tool for the reconciliation of work and family life. The debate over the bill largely focused on more technical details, like how ECEC should be financed and how much authority the Länder should have on the issue (ibid.). The Daycare Expansion Act came into force on January 2005, shortly before Schmidt's social democratic party lost its hold on the chancellorship.

Yet it was ultimately Schmidt's successor at Family Affairs, the iconic Ursula von der Leyen, who pushed through the most expansive reforms on ECEC, formalizing access to child care as a "right" for Germans in need. Von der Leyen ascended to the portfolio following the 2005 German election, as her Christian democrats prepared to lead a grand-coalition government with the rival social democratic party.[42] As a mother of seven and former medical doctor, von der Leyen carried an instant aura of credibility in the area of work-family reconciliation. In her capacity as Family Affairs Minister, she would push the envelope even further on ECEC. She re-opened the Daycare Expansion Act in 2007, and was ultimately able to secure funding for 750,000 child care spaces – tripling the number supported by the original act. By the time von der Leyen was finished at Family Affairs in 2009, ECEC had been proclaimed a right for all children aged one and older and plans were in place to secure child care for 35% of the country's eligible population by 2013 (Rüling 2008a p. 9; Henninger and von Wahl 2011, p. 16).

In her marketing of ECEC, von der Leyen largely preserved the "sustainable family policy" orientation of her predecessor, but took perceptibly more brash tone. Her rhetoric

[42] As part of their coalition treaty with the social democrats, the Angela Merkel-led Christian democrats reaffirmed the principles of the Daycare Expansion Act.

centered forcefully on the potentially dire economic and demographic consequences of keeping mothers sidelined from the German workforce. In her most memorable sound bite on the ECEC, she stated, "The question is not whether women will work. They will work. The question is whether they will have children." (Landler 2006) Moreover, she was not shy in referring to her own history as a working mother to underscore the necessity of reform.

Von der Leyen had some help as members of the press were transfixed by her ready-wit, camera-friendly appearance, and wholesome appeal. Journalists often used von der Leyen's own image as a "super mom" to frame the reforms she planned to pursue in Family Affairs (Bakst 2007; "German Parents Get More Daycare Options"). For her part, von der Leyen appeared keen to play along. Images of the minister flanked by her photogenic family were ubiquitous in the German news media. The movie star treatment that von der Leyen received in the press ultimately helped her become one of Germany's most recognizable and popular politicians.

Figure #5: Minister von der Leyen poses with her family

Found in "Quoth the Raven: I Bake Cookies, too." New York Times (23/04/2006)

The Minister's immaculate image also enabled her to persevere through inevitable questions about the social implications of her ECEC plank. In fact, her position on the issue was bolstered when criticism from prominent Bavarian bishop Walter Mixa backfired. In February 2007, Mixa told the press that von der Leyen's ECEC plan would reduce wome n to "birthing machines" – a loaded statement that invoked the memory of Germany under the Nazi party. Mixa's comments were roundly criticized by members of the CDU ("German bishop slammed for calling women 'birthing machines'") and faith-based objections to the von der Leyen reforms soon petered out. A write up on the episode in Financial Times Deutschland read, "The excessive criticism of Bishop Mixa can only help the CDU…Not even von der Leyen's opponents want to agree with what he said." A columnist for Bavaria's Süddeutsche Zeitung added, "The conservatives are setting the [ECEC] agenda right now. In Ursula von der Leyen they have a successful minister who is prepared to defy bishops. The mother of seven is a living example of how child and career can be combined." ("Is Germany Turning Women into 'Breeding Machines'?") In any event, the charismatic Family Minister decisively won the ECEC public relations battle. A poll published in Der Spiegel at the height of the controversy indicated that upwards of 80% of the German public supported the van der Leyen reforms (Young 2007).

An similarly taxing battle took place behind the scenes as von der Leyen struggled to get the more conservative elements of her own party on side with her plans for child care. Politicians from the Christian Social Union, a Bavarian sister party of the Christian democrats, were especially adament in their criticisms of the von der Leyen reforms (Rüling 2008b; Bennhold 2010). And although von der Leyen's reforms were pursued within the context of

a grand-coalition government, it is clear from the accounts that I have surveyed that the Minister herself was the driving force behind the changes. In fact, van der Leyen's ECEC was panned by many on the German left because it included a €150 monthly care credit for stay-at-home mothers (Rüling 2008b). Among scholars who have studied Germany's ECEC breakthrough, the consensus position is that recent changes are attributable to Minister von der Leyen's personal popularity and her savvy as a coalition-builder (Rüling 2008a, 2008b; Willarty 2010; pp. 179-183; Henninger and von Wahl 2011) Notably, Annette Henninger and Angelika von Wahl (2011) assess her tenure as follows:

> [Von der Leyen] took over the progressive ideas from the former red-green Minister of Family Renate Schmidt. The economic discourse of the family was mobilized as an issue of 'sustainability' where progress and stability were understood as necessary for keeping Germany in its place as a European economic powerhouse. This discourse then produced a coherent definition of the problem with seemingly logical solutions. Von der Leyen's ideas [effectively] conveyed pragmatism rather than normative emotionalism (Leitner 2008; von Wahl, 2008).[43] (p. 20)

Von der Leyen's influence is especially pronounced when documented in light of the failure of ECEC reform in Canada [compare her experiences to those of Minister Dryden]. When cast against the Canadian experience, the German case provides strong evidence that universalistic ECEC is a *policy in search of a spokeswoman*.

[43] Cited by authors.

ALTERNATE EXPLANATIONS

Although I have presented female leadership as a plausible explanation for why universalistic ECEC reform succeeded in Germany yet failed in Canada, I must concede that it is not the only possible one. Unfortunately, institutional, cultural, and idiosyncratic differences between my cases make it impossible for me to fully isolate the observable implications of my theory. Here, in the interest of transparency, I survey the strongest alternative hypotheses.

The most obvious incongruity is that Germany also had a female chancellor during much of the timeframe in question. As such, there is a distinct possibility that the German public acceded to the paradigm change because they associated it with the head of government. If this were the case, Angela Merkel would be the "spokeswoman" in question; rendering my hypothesis that universal ECEC reform needs a female *lead minister* erroneous. But Merkel conspicuously took a back seat on ECEC reform, withholding formal support for the von der Leyen reforms until it was clear that there were on solid political footing. Elsewhere, it has been hypothesized that Merkel remained intentionally non-committal on family policy so as to de-emphasize her relationship with the women's wing of the CDU (Williarty 2010, pp. 182-3). As such, it would be hard to argue that the presence of a female chancellor was a decisive factor in this story.

The next competing explanation stems from asymmetries in Canadian and German legislative norms. Historically, there tends to be a greater deal of inter-party cooperation in Germany than in Canada. Coalition governments are exceedingly rare in Canada, even when seat share is highly fragmented. This is relevant to the present comparison. Unlike Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats, Stephen Harper's Conservative Party did not have to grant any formal concessions to opposition parties prior to forming government—this despite falling well short of a parliamentary majority. Had the Christian democrats not been constrained by the terms of their formal coalition treaty with the social democrats, they too may have reversed course on ECEC.

Another may rest in the ideological differences between the leadership of the Christian Democrats and that of the Conservative Party of Canada. It is entirely possible that Harper's Conservatives were simply more programmatic than Merkel's Christian Democrats. Throughout his tenure as the prime minister, Stephen Harper has demonstrated a strong tendency to play to his conservative base, even when doing so is unpopular with a majority of Canadians. Shortly after becoming prime minister, he cancelled the Kelowna Accords, a popular series of economic and social agreements struck between the Martin government and various aboriginal groups. More recently, he removed Canada's signature from the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, drawing the ire of environmentalists. Harper has also courted controversy by taking measures to roll back gun control. He even managed to anger Canadian political scientists when he discontinued Canada's mandatory long-form census.[44] Given this track record, it would not be a stretch to argue that less programmatic

[44] see "Census call is part of data-collection trend", by Stuart Soroka [McGill Political Science Professor]: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/census-call-is-part-of-data-collection-trend/article1387924/>

conservative government may have preserved the national ECEC framework built by the previous administration.

But perhaps the strongest competing hypothesis pertains to differences in Canadian and German attitudes towards immigration. As I mentioned earlier, fe rtility rates in both countries are below the OECD average. However, demographic replacement was a significantly more salient discussion point in the German ECEC debate. Canadians may in fact be less anxious about fertility due to Canada's historically open posture toward immigration. The logic here is that demographic issues created by low fertility rates can be addressed through increased immigration. Canada has the third highest per capita population of immigrants in the OECD [18%], trailing only Switzerland and Australia (UN, 2006). Moreover, Canada became the first country in the world to adopt a formal policy of multiculturalism in 1971. The ideal of multiculturalism has since become a cornerstone of Canadian identity. Children in Canada are now taught at a young age to view their country as a "cultural mosaic."

Compare this to the situation in Germany, where the Chancellor recently declared that "multiculturalism has utterly failed." The tribulations of German immigrants–especially those from Muslim backgrounds—have indeed been well documented; and public opinion data reveals hardening anti-immigrant sentiment across the country (Dempsey 2010). With immigration becoming a less attractive option for demographic replacement, it is perhaps unsurprising that the fertility frame was used so effectively by Germany's leading advocates of ECEC. I could in fact envision fascinating research being conducted on the relationship

between attitudes towards immigration and societal support for natalist policies. This is, however, a topic for another study.

CONCLUSION

Canada's high-profile flirtation with a universal child care program was more than an historical footnote. The episode constituted a real-time test of theories proposed by mainstream and feminist social policy scholars. Pursuant to each of these perspectives, left government and female political entrepreneurship played a role in hoisting child care onto the national agenda. However, the story went decidedly off-script from here. What was supposed to be a break-through social policy lasted a scant two years. An upstart Conservative administration was able to dismantle the popular program at little political cost.

This story is a puzzle from the macro perspective, but perhaps the devil lies in the details. Before taking office, the Conservative Party embarked on a disciplined campaign to paint the Liberal ECEC plan as inflexible, patriarchal, and unresponsive to the modern woman's desire for choice. This strategy was perceived as effective by commentators and shifted the media narrative away from the possible merits of universal child care. Moreover, it was an easy characterization to make as the administration of Prime Minister Paul Martin was almost devoid of credible female leadership.

Employing a mixture of analytical induction and the comparative method, I have determined that the Canadian ECEC experience indicates that universalistic ECEC reform is a "policy in search of a spokeswoman." By this, I mean that reform efforts are most likely to

succeed when helmed by a credible female politician. I believe my case to be especially convincing when the Canadian story is set against the corresponding German narrative. In all, my findings suggest a somewhat distressing paradox: in orde r for the Canadian welfare state to shift in a more woman-friendly direction, Canadian political parties will have to do more to cultivate female leadership.

It would nonetheless be premature for me to conclusively draw this type of inference from the present study. I concede that this paper is just the start of a larger research project. Going forward, I must identify ways to study the proposed effect of female leadership on social policy development with greater rigor. I imagine that my next step may be to systematically assess the evolution of social policy in the Canadian provinces. As I mentioned earlier in the paper, three Canadian provinces have female premiers and a fourth may elect one soon. By comparing the policymaking tendencies of Canada's female premiers to those of their male counterparts in a disciplined manner, I may discover more about how gender matters in terms of comparative social policy. In any event, I continue to view Canada as fertile ground for the development of theory on the welfare state.

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