(IL)LEGITIMATE SUBJECTS: A Feminist Discourse Analysis of Canada's Response to the OECD's Report on Early Childhood Education and Care

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Introduction

Recently, political scientists have studied how international organizations generate, affect and disseminate ideas for and about domestic public policies (Mahon and McBride 2008). In

particular, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development has been seen as highly influential if not 'hegemonic' (Rubenson 2008) in the production of ideas, rationale, expertise and normative frameworks for domestic policy making. Some have argued that the ideas of the OECD have become a powerful 'common sense' in fields of social policy, labour market policy and education (McBride 2000, Rubenson 2008) and that the OECD has been enormously influential in encouraging the restructuring of states and public management practices (Pal 2008). Some scholars have demonstrated that the OECD has a significant role in orchestrating 'global knowledge networks' and in determining the character of legitimate expertise and 'conventional wisdom' (Porter and Webb 2008, Jackson 2008). Other scholars have demonstrated that the OECD can set the policy agendas around which member states converge (Dostal 2004). The OECD has been credited with a power that has emerged over the past two decades, the power of producing legitimate policy information, both in analysis and recommendations, which is to be taken seriously by domestic governments and has profoundly affected policy change.

In the last decade, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has released several reports in which the Canada would receive a "failing grade" in public investment and attention to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (CBC 2004). In the 2004 Report *Early Childhood Education and Care Policy: Canada Country Note,* the OECD found that "for a significant group of families, the situation [of underinvestment] may be described as one of high stress for mothers and poor quality services for young children" (OECD 62). In 2005, as a part of a OECD comparative series entitled *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Family and Work*, the report on Canada noted that there was a fundamental disjuncture in Canada in the field of childcare policy: while Canada has a 76% female employment rate compared to the OECD average of 64%, "the coverage of formal child care in Canada is patchy". The 2006 OECD Report *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care* confirmed the gaps in the Canadian system by demonstrating that that nearly 70% of mothers in Canada are working mothers, and yet Canada placed last out of 14 countries in public spending on ECEC as a % of GDP – behind the United States and the United Kingdom (Annex C., p 246). Based on this analysis, recommendations in the OECD reports are geared toward increased strategic public investment in the ECEC field based on a goal of 'employability' that links two subjects: children and women. Mahon's (2009a, 2009b) analyses of the OECD ideas on early childhood learning and care suggests that the OECD has made significant steps to include gender equity as a part of the rationale and goals of social policies by linking it with the language and goals of the social investment state (Jenson 2001, Jenson and Saint-Martin 2001). The 2006 OECD Report, provided a rationale for greater public investment and attention to ECEC on the basis that it promotes gender equity in society, understood as reconciling the balance of work and family responsibilities to improve the lives of women; this will contribute to the overall economic success of an internationally competitive society because investments in ECEC provide a disincentive for women to stay at home with their children, thereby enhancing women's human capital potential. This link between the "social investment" language (emphasizing markets over states, work over de-commodified space, potential and future workers) and gender specific claims to public investments in social policy, specifically ECEC, is a new trend for the OECD and can be viewed as a potentially promising policy and discursive window for women's organizations and feminist goals in Canada.

To respond to the OECD's analysis and recommendations on ECEC in Canada, the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology was asked to investigate and offer recommendations on the state of national and provincial ECEC policies and programmes in Canada in the context of the of the OECD's principles and recommendations outlined in *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care* (2006). The Committee released the Report *Early Childhood Education and Care: Next Steps* in 2009 as the culmination of their investigation. Given the studies that have established the power and legitimacy of the OECD's ideas and expertise to translate into policy changes in several areas in Canada and other member states, we anticipated that we would find a reflection or incorporation of the rationale that linked gender based experiences and goals with the social investment discourse seen in the OECD reports on ECEC. Instead we found that gender equity was neither a rationale nor a goal in the Senate's Response Report; that gender was an absent analytic category; and that women, as political subjects and political actors, are being "rendered invisible" (Dobrowolsky 2008b) in the ECEC policy discourse. Instead, as Dobrowolsky and Jenson (2004) have noted, the child and children's education and development are almost alone made as the legitimate subject and rationales of ECEC policy discourse.

Our argument, therefore, follows these themes on two levels: Our overall argument is that domestic politics matters to the discursive boundaries of a policy area which can re-shape, ignore or challenge the knowledge and meanings developed and disseminated by expertise organizations, specifically the OECD. Secondly, and our more focused argument, is that gendered language, claims and rationales do not have legitimacy in the ECEC policy discourse in Canada and are seen as ineffective amongst "insider" activists in this policy field. Children and Children as future workers are the primary legitimate subjects of ECEC in Canada.

In this paper, we first discuss the utility of Jenson's (1989) universe of political discourse and discourse analysis of government documents for understanding power relations in a policy field and community. Secondly, we examine the role and emphasis on gender in the OECD 2006 Report *Starting Strong* II. We then examine the process of what Dobrowolsky (2008b) calls the 'invisibilization' of women in the ECEC policy discourse in Canada through a discourse analysis of the Senate Committee's 2009 report and an analysis of our interviews with several of the witnesses and participants who contributed to the knowledge and investigation of ECEC in Canada contained within this report. Finally, we discuss some of the consequences and implications of gender-less ECEC policy as well as some of the contentious opportunities for change and alternatives.

The Universe of Political Discourse and Discourse Analysis

Jane Jenson's concept of the "universe of political discourse" is useful to understanding to how structure and agency operate on and through discursive strategies to determine which actors participate in decision-making, which claims are thought of as legitimate, which policy options are considered feasible, and what windows of opportunity are available to outside actors to influence policy outcomes (Jenson 1989; Phillips 1996). Phillips (1996) has explained Jenson's concept as "the universe of socially constructed meaning resulting from political struggle". Even while some have argued that the processes involved in complex globalization

have de-centred the state from exclusive power over social, economic and political organization (see for example Paquet 2005) we continue to support Jenson's understanding of power in the 'universe of political discourse', namely, that the state continues to operate as the central authority in legitimizing actors, claims and policy options (Jenson 1989). The state maintains this position of privilege because it still retains the power to make organizational rules and funding decisions (both public and non-governmental); to ultimately make policy decisions that affect and bind citizens; to 'select' or privilege particular actors and organizations involved in formal policy communities and networks; and to commission and create expertise and knowledge. The state uses this power to affect the boundaries of what is legitimate in identifying policy subjects and framing and manipulating policy problems and solutions. (Jenson 1989; Phillips 1996).   The failure to translate OECD rationale as legitimate in Canadian policy discourse on ECEC suggests that domestic states still retain this central authority in structuring the universe of political discourse in a given policy field.

Government policy reports and documents are, therefore, important sites of investigating the universe of political discourse because they can reveal and reflect relationships of power in politics and society. Where "discourse is a historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, term categories and beliefs" (Phillips 1996, 256), government policy reports and documents provide *an instance* of discourse through which we can analyze the language of power in a carefully constructed space of shared meanings, completed rationales, normative beliefs and legitimized evidence in a given policy field at a given time.

In the universe of political discourse, while the state maintains the upper hand, organizations who participate have opportunities to alter and affect the language chosen, permissible knowledge, and legitimate subjects of policy – which have real affect on policy outcomes and future constraints and opportunities for policy community participants. This importantly suggests that the universe of political discourse while dominated by the state is not a closed discursive space by which the power of the state controls all possible meanings and ends. There is space for non-state political actors to affect official politics, but not without constraints. In our study, we consider the role of social organizations, primarily Child Advocacy Organizations, in influencing the universe of political discourse through carefully selected discursive strategies. As selected participants as expert witnesses, where women's groups were explicitly not invited, these groups obtain access to the political process and attempt to influence ideas and manipulate policy outcomes in order to achieve objectives that go beyond their intended invited purpose.

Through a process of analyzing discourse, then, we highlight what is admissible and legitimate and what is excluded in order to better understand opportunities and constraints, structures and agents, that have an effect on the universe of political discourse in ECEC and ultimately ECEC policy outcomes.

Reporting on ECEC Policy: The OECD Report and the Senate Committee's Response

The Report *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care* built upon a previous OECD study of early childhood education and care by adding a second round of reviews comprising of an additional eight countries, including Canada (OECD, 2006). According to the OECD, Canada is ranked last in its spending on early childhood education and care (ECEC) out of fourteen countries (OECD, 2006). The OECD took a holistic approach when looking at ECEC, covering topics such as child development, the education system, appropriate and diverse research methods, issues concerning quality as well as staffing, gender equity and women's roles in child care. *Starting Strong II* aimed to "contribute to the resolution of complex social issues" rather than simply focusing on the child's welfare (OECD, 2006, p.206). The OECD identified four broad challenges to what they considered out-of-date child rearing models guiding the policies of many countries, including: the influx of women into salaried employment, the need for women to be able to more equitably reconcile work and family responsibilities, demographic challenges, and the call to end the cycle of poverty and inequality that begins in early childhood (OECD, 2006). The focus on women and gender equity was therefore an important element of their report; The OECD wanted to "attend to the social context of early childhood development" (OECD, 2006, pg. 206).

Starting Strong II placed gender and gender equity in the foreground of ECEC policy analysis and recommendations. The extensive 437 page publication explicitly addressed women's challenges in balancing work and family and explained and examined gender equity as an essential element of comprehensive early childhood education and care policies. The OECD states that women are still "three times more likely to be in part-time work than men and, in general, make all the sacrifices of careers, salaries and pensions in order to rear children" (OECD, 2006, pg. 206). Within *Starting Strong II*, the OECD recognized that, "[frequently] values and views about childhood or women's roles in society are latent or are not expressed openly. Careful analysis of government and public discourse is necessary to bring them to light and evaluate their compatibility with aspects of contemporary early childhood policy." (OECD, 2006, p. 236).

Mahon (2009a) demonstrates the OECD is not simply taking a neoliberal approach to social policy, as was seen in other policy areas; instead she argues that the OECD has connected gender based analysis with the social investment approach to public policy rationale. It is not antithetical to but instead expands on the genderless 'social investment state', the overarching paradigm which has arguably re-placed the rationale of the post-war welfare state. The social-investment state is concerned with investing and focusing on the future, forming the new knowledge-based economy, and with facilitating the integration of the individual into the market while preventing social exclusion (rather than a pre-occupation with social equality) (Saint-Martin, 2007). The social-investment state paradigm emphasizes the equality of life chances which involves the distribution and redistribution of opportunities and capabilities rather than of resources as in post-war welfare states (Jenson & Saint-Martin, 2006). According to the social-investment state logics, a key rationale is that investing in adults is not as "cost-effective" as investing in children. Furthermore, social investment state subjects are genderless.

Expanding on the social investment state, however, Mahon demonstrates that the OECD has adopted a gendered understanding of the 'adult worker family norm', that is recognizing and promoting the human capital value and 'employability' of all persons in the labour market by prescribing the elimination of incentives for people not to work; i.e. policies which include those that encourage women to stay at home (i.e. lack of ECEC investment), those that are based on passive income supports during periods of unemployment, and 'generous' social assistance programmes (2009b). This position that the OECD has taken includes an active investment in ECEC not simply to prepare the future child worker, the focus of the social investment state literature, but also frames ECEC as a social policy that encourages the "empowerment" of women to work, gender equity and work-life balance for both men and women. Gender equity is understood as increasing opportunities in the labour market for women, as enhancing employability of women; a lack of investment in ECEC is therefore a barrier to achieving gender equity. Mahon (2009b) demonstrates that therefore with this rationale, "help[ing] mothers reconcile work and family life can be readily justified" (273). The goals embedded in "employability" set the parameters for legitimizing policy claims and subjects of which we have seen its translation into the discourse of many policy fields in Canada, including labour market policy and social assistance (McBride 2000, Graefe 2006). The OECD has been able to connect gendered claims and rationales within the employability goals of the social investment state in ECEC policy discourse.

In the Canadian case, however, there are reverberations of the social investment state discourse in ECEC policy debates and discussions but the links made by the OECD with respect to gender equity did not translate. The Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology released their response to the OECD 2006 Report entitled, *Early Childhood Education and Care: Next Steps* (2009). The Senate Committee's objective was to respond to the specific OECD challenge that "significant energies and funding will need to be invested in the field to create a universal system in tune with the needs of a full employment economy, with *gender equity*, and with new understandings of how young children develop and learn." [*our* emphasis](Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2009, p.1). The Senate Committee, chaired by the Honorable Art Eggleton, set out to examine ECEC programs and policies federally as well as provincially with the principles and recommendations offered by the OECD's Report in mind and to subsequently propose recommendations to the House of Commons (Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2009). The 220 pages of the Senate Committee's Report included a summary of the findings and recommendations of the OECD's comparative study and provided brief overviews of several countries such as that of Sweden and Australia. Although a large portion of the Senate Committee's publication rigorously describes federal and provincial involvement in ECEC, *Next Steps* also covers topics such as child care staffing issues, current research, new data development and alternative program designs. Furthermore, the Senate Report specifically articulated different approaches to addressing ECEC policy, identified by themes of: the support of families through the development of parenting skills and 'choice'; a population health-focused strategy; and integration and accessibility.

The Report came together as a result of the work of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology which included: parliamentary research, key witness presentations from experts and officials in the child care policy community and ensuing Committee discussions. The Committee "heard from child care providers and advocates from across Canada; officials from Human Resources and Social Development Canada; and visionaries and Canadian international experts with respect to human development in the early years" (Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2009). According to the Report's witness list, opinions were limited to the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, professors of economics and social policy design, and three experts in the early childhood development field. It is important to note that there were no participants explicitly from the Status of Women's Office nor from women or gender focused social organizations. We interviewed seven of the committee's witnesses and participants from a range of positions.

The Senate Committee's solution to fix Canada's substandard ECEC policies and services includes a range of recommendations, which are to a large extent are bureaucratic and focus on federal-provincial-territorial relations in this field. The recommendations concentrated on future federal child care policy initiatives which included the appointment of a Minister of State for Children and Youth, the creation of a National Advisory Council to counsel the aforementioned Minister, the assembly of a series of inter-governmental summits to establish a pan- Canadian framework as well as a Council of Ministers and finally, the creation of an adequate federal system of research and data collection. Recommendations surrounding improving federalism in this area are not insignificant ones; however, if women and gender equity are continually constrained in the policy discourse, we need to be wary of the potential of meaningful commitments and investments in ECEC for improving the quality of women's lives.

Our discourse analysis of the Senate Committee's report and discussion of the participant interviews explicitly employs a gendered lens to attempt to understand the universe of political discourse, including allowable subjects, claims and rationales for policies and to reflect upon the translation of OECD ideas and language in the Canadian discourse. We focus on analyzing the frequency of gender based terms and the context in which they are used. We also have looked for language which stems from the social investment discourse, emphasizing children as future workers and employability.

An important aspect of discourse analysis is to recognize both the context to understanding the meaning of the subjects involved in the document and also to interrogate the document for the meaning of absent subjects in relation to the presented subjects. The utilization of certain words and the disregard of others is a conscious process, which shapes the policy options that are considered viable and determines the policy constraints (Jenson, 1989). What is not there is just as important as what is presented in terms of understanding how power is operating in a policy discourse.

First, we investigated the frequency and context of gender equity specifically in the Senate Committee's response report. We searched for 'equity', 'equality' and the context that

surrounded these terms. We found evidence that the Senate Committee's Report does not explicitly consider 'gender equality' nor 'gender equity' as a part of its investigation or recommendations of ECEC policy in Canada. The report only mentioned gender equity when it quoted the OECD report's rationale for childcare investment: this occurred twice in the 220 pages; this suggests an explicit intention to omit the OECD's attention to gender equity. Both recognizing and refusing to respond to it at the same time. The report also only used the phrase 'gender equality' once, this was in reference to the OECD's report's findings on the rationale for specific funding in ECEC to promote gender equality in Sweden. Although participants in the Senate's investigation confirmed that the purpose of the committee was "assessing things in relation to that [OECD] report", the report itself did not include gender equity or equality as a part of its rationale, recommendations nor findings in ECEC in Canada (Interview B, February 19th, 2010).

Instead, equity was used almost exclusively in a class based sense and was specifically used to define the differential 'access' that *children* had to types and spaces of early childhood education and care. Even in this sense for equity, the children are the focus of the class based differences. One of the Child Care Advocacy witnesses who participated in the report's findings indicated that this was common to express that children are poor rather than the conditions that affect parents and/or women as mothers in particular. She poignantly stated "When we talk about child poverty its' as though somehow children can be poor unrelated to their parents. Of course, all children are poor, children who grow up in the most affluent of home are poor. They don't have their own money. Children are poor because children live in poverty because their parents live in poverty." (Interview, February 19, 2010). Equity is an issue for children, not adults, parents, mothers, fathers, women or men.

Even while gender equity is not a part of the report, because the OECD reports recognized the challenges of social reproduction as primarily women's responsibility in the family, we anticipated that there might be a recognition or analysis of the empirical evidence that supports differential responsibilities of social reproduction, including child care work, for men and women, and therefore, the varying affects that policy and policy change can have on men and women's lives. We analyzed the frequency and context of the words "Woman/Women" "Mother/Mom" "Man/Men" "Father/Dad" and "Parent*" and "Family" and their relationship to each other.

Outside of citations and titles of government departments and social organizations, "woman/women" is used 19 times in the Senate Report and "Mother/Mom" is used in 27 instances. In both cases, the terms are used in contextually specific instances that reflect little recognition of the challenges that women, in particular, face in family-work balance when considering ECEC in Canada. Women and Mothers are contextualized almost exclusively to refer to either a) Aboriginal Women/Mothers and/or b) the health of Expecting or Breastfeeding Women/Mothers and/or c) Mothers in the Prison System. These three areas are areas in which a) the federal government can be seen as having a role in terms of the jurisdictions of federalism in Canada and b) over which the federal government articulates programmes to teach vulnerable women how to be mothers and how to produce healthy babies: both Aboriginal Women/Mothers and Mothers in Prisons were primarily viewed in the

context of education on children's health and development.   This suggests that parents are genderless unless they are Aboriginal or are in the prison system; which also could suggest paternalism on the part of the state for these women.

We see few instances in which women/mothers, child care and labour markets are given meaning together. Two occurrences are in reference to the findings of the OECD's labour force participation rates of mothers in other countries; another is recognition of the Canadian Labour Congress statistics which indicate that three-quarters of mothers in Canada are in the labour force; and third, is within a quote from a witness to the committee that uses the term "women" to describe the participants in a pilot training programme for early childhood educators; another is to encourage single mothers attachment to the labour force. Otherwise, women are not significantly addressed as the primary caregivers for children, the parent who primarily adjusts their career to deal with the requirements of child care, or as the primary gender who engages in working in the ECEC field – subject to challenges of feminized wages and working conditions – all recognized by the OECD in their report. "Man/Men" makes no appearance in this report, and "Father/Dad" makes two: each in a sentence next to "Mother/Mom" next to the phrase "as parents".

"Parent*" instead is articulated 353 times in this report and "Family/families" is used 183 times in this report outside of citations and organizational titles. The enormous difference between using gender specific language and gender neutral language is stark. At the same time, while parents and families are legitimate subjects of ECEC policy and yet, they are also not significantly thought to be involved in the labour force as an important element of this discussion. Out of the combined 536 times parents and families are the subject of discussion in the report, only twice, do we see "working parents", both in reference to programmes operating in other countries – Cuba and Sweden. Furthermore, we see "increased labour force participation" of parents as a demographic change cited as a rationale for Alberta ECEC programming; we see an instance of "support for labour force attachment" as a rationale for a policy in Saskatchewan – although there is no subject of the attachment; and we witness one account of policy designed in Canada to encourage "labour force participation" of low income families. This suggests that in Canada, not only do discussions on ECEC generally ignore, avoid, elide gender based language, observations but they also tend to downplay the relationship that adults in general have to the labour market and work. Instead, the report focused on engaging parents in their child's development, teaching and supporting parents on how to encourage the best educational development for their children so that the children will have the best future labour market outcomes.

One of the interesting aspects to this discussion of women, work and child care in a discussion headed by the federal government, is that there is no mention of the Live-In Caregiver programme. This federally run programme facilitates a path for primarily racialized foreign women with precarious citizenship to immigration through providing live-in child care for Canadian mothers (Baines and Sharma 2006, Bakan and Stasiulis 1995, Stasiulis and Bakan 2005). The absence of a discussion of this programme is significant. It avoids talking about the race, class and marketized elements of child care provision in Canada and the significant ways

in which differences between groups of women need to be addressed in discussing ECEC. This also avoids an important discussion on the vulnerability of daycare workers and how the federal government facilitates various forms of exploitation of women to resolve supply side issues for Canadian women who are searching for adequate child care. Through this programme, the differences between women with respect to citizenship, race, class and their relationships to the labour market are exploited by the federal government to facilitate options for women to 'replace themselves' for social reproduction in terms of child care activities – conversations and actions between women (not gender neutral parents). This applies to ECEC field more broadly but is particularly demonstrable through the Live in Caregiver Programme.

In a report on ECEC, it is not surprising that Children were the primary subject of the policy discussion through frequency and all contexts of the report. However, with the absence of the gendered aspects of employability in the Senate Committee's Report, we looked to those concepts that are central to understanding the report and children framed in terms of the social investment state. Keywords here are "Future" and "Investment" which together comprised 39 instances in which children were to be the subject of the investment, which will pay off in future employment benefits. This suggests that children's employment was more legitimate a rationale, than either parent's employment or women's labour market opportunities and gender equity.

The Senate Committee's report placed children's education and development at the centre of ECEC policy discourse in Canada, and indeed attempted to move away from "care and care-giving" towards "education" as the central approach to making ECEC decisions.   In order to understand why there was little to no gendered lens when researching and analysing the policy area for this report, we interviewed seven of the witnesses and committee members on their participation, their understanding of gender as it relates to ECEC, and why it might have been absent in this study despite OECD's emphasis in their report.

The Participants and Witnesses Respond: Reasoning the Lack of Translation

We interviewed seven witnesses and participants involved the Senate Committee's investigation, and since it was absent in the report, we primarily inquired as to whether not these participants saw a relationship between women's experiences, gender equity and child care policy. All of the participants recognized that both women and gender equity were connected to and important in the ECEC field. One Child Care Advocacy expert indicated "Of course it's a women's issue. It's not solely a women's issue but early childhood education and care policy has a tremendous impact on women's lives; on their economic security, on their ability to fully participate in their communities... so it's definitely a women's issue." (Interview A February 19, 2010). In follow up questions in which we inquired as to whether the report addressed this relationship specifically, most indicated that it was not explicitly recognized as a focus of neither the committee nor an explicit part of their discussions.

In exploring the reasoning for the disconnect between the gendered rationale of the OECD ECEC policy discourse and its relative absence in the Senate Committee's Report, we have identified three primary themes in the answers of the participants. First, the participants

tended to argue that women and gender are assumed or implicit in the ECEC policy field, even suggesting that the relationship need not be explicit. One Senator on the committee suggested that "we intuitively know...when we're talking about support for families... that means women primarily." (Interview March 2nd, 2010). One bureaucratic participant from the HRSDC indicated that while he didn't hear the exact words regarding gender equality or gender equity, but it was part of the assumed underlying issues to the conversations they had (Interview February 23rd, 2010). The tension that exists in these statements confirm that there remains an underlying and hidden assumption about the social and economic interdependence of women and child care policy, yet at the same time the ability of women to make gender based claims in this field is significantly diminished by their absence.

A second theme of the participant interviews when discussing the absence of women, gender and gender equity in relation to the Senate Committee's Report is that making gender based claims in their own right is no longer politically viable, possible or effective in the current environment. Working within the current politics directed by the Conservative government at the federal level, witnesses felt that they could not make arguments about gender equity a part of their rationale and goals for ECEC policy. An expert Child Care Advocate also indicated that using these arguments not longer has any political viability: "I think [women's equality] is a very important argument and the people who recognize the importance of ECEC to women's equality also recognize that perhaps that's not the most useful argument to make, to popularize, or gather more public support for moving forward with early childhood education and care." (Interview A February 19th, 2010). In responding to why this is the case, the witness indicated that she thought it was "about ideology. There is a risk... an ideological risk of coming out and saying that child care is for women. When we have a current federal government who goes out of their way to say that women have achieved equality, women are equal, and they removed the word equality from the mandate of the Status of Women – it demonstrated a particular world view that I think makes it more difficult to move ECEC forward in Canada under the idea of it being for women's equality. It is much more palatable, to people, to citizens, to talk about the wellbeing of children and what we need to do for children. (Interview A February 19th, 2010). Another Child Care Advocacy witness indicated that she thought that it "reflects a broader reality of our current context. I think that the brain research and the child development research is carrying a lot of interest today. I think that the Senate [committee] just reflects that." She continued to say: "We've argued very many ways.... I'm not exactly sure what's going to be the successful argument in the future." (Interview B February 19th, 2010) Furthermore, an expert researcher indicated that this perspective was perceived as antiquated, he indicated that: "Now in 2010, it's almost the old-school traditional view of thinking about these programs. In the 1980s we cared about these programs affecting women's labour participation, now I sound like an old fuddy-duddy worrying about these things." (Interview February 16th, 2010)

The Report itself, therefore, embeds this political perception about what is a legitimate subject and goal of child care policy – as both directed and self-selection to fit into current government language. One of the bureaucratic participants suggested that the report is driven by the language that appeals to the government of the day, indicating that "this government, it

just doesn't speak that way....the Report is crafted in ways that are trying to find the right language that would have the most appeal to decision makers of the day." (Interview February 23rd, 2010). But another participant indicated that it is a wider social perception rather than one that is 'given' to society by the government; he indicated that the Conservative government's position to renders women and gender equity invisible simply reflects the belief of the wider electorate that women are indeed already equal (Interview February 16th, 2010).

The third rationale given for the absence of women and gender equity in the Report was because of Canadian federalism. Two witnesses indicated that the division of powers directed the Senate's attention away from talking about women and gender equality. One expert witness defended the absence by indicating it was because the attention was on "cash transfers" from the federal government to the province instead (Interview February 16th, 2010). The senior level bureaucrat argued that the topics of gender equity as they relate to ECEC are not a topic for discussion at the national level because "that's not the way the national government participates in this field [ECEC]"; he suggested to us to examine this topic with the provincial governments instead of the federal level. (Interview February 23rd, 2010). Federalism indeed poses many possibilities, tensions and challenges for social policy and achieving national equity coupled regional diversity but it was troubling to see that it was used as a rationale for the absence of women and gender equity goals in ECEC at the federal level. Federalism has been and can be the scapegoat to avoid policy initiatives altogether (McRoberts 1993), and apparently, in this case, close the discursive space for broader social goals.

The translation of the OECD report, therefore, has confronted Canadian domestic politics (cultural gendered assumptions, party ideology and institutional arrangements) in a way in which the opportunities opened by the discursive window of gendered inclusive liberalism have been narrowed. These intersecting elements of domestic politics constrain the discursive strategies to achieve gender equity and participate rendering women invisible as political subjects and actors in the ECEC field.

Consequences

The absence of women, of gender, and of gender equity goals in the Canadian policy discourse on child care has serious consequences for gender equity for a number of reasons. We consider the consequences of this failure to include gender equity and the "invisibilization" of women in the frame of the three intersecting forms of justice conceptualized by Nancy Fraser (1995, 2005): Political (Representation), Economic (Redistribution), Cultural (Recognition). We argue that these elements are a part of some of the central or common (rather than divergent) struggles of women's movements, feminists and feminism.

Political

In terms of representation in the political process and the universe of political discourse, there is an iterative effect between the absence of women's interests invited and represented as actors and organizations in the political process and the political outputs of the process which define, name subjects and goals of policies (Jenson 1989). As we saw in the Senate's Report, the absence of women's organizations in the process of investigation was accompanied

by the absence of women in the final Report. Genderless political discourse of ECEC has feedback effects which then eclipse and further undermine the legitimacy of the consideration and participation of women, women's experiences, and women's organizations in future policy discussions.

In our case study, the state did not select any women's organization or any witness from the Status of Women Office but Dobrowolsky (2008a) urges us to look for ways in which women and feminists are participating in these discussions with women's interests in mind. The witnesses that we interviewed who belonged to children's advocacy organizations all articulated that they have women's/mother's interests and feminist objectives; that they belong to and build relationships with women's organizations; and that they perform research on gender equity, women and early childhood education and care. According to Dobrowolsky (2008a), the child care policy community in Canada is an example of how the women's movement is working within conventional structures under a different moniker in order to be heard and represented. These organizations could have the legitimacy to achieve certain feminist goals in conventional policy circles, even without naming their feminist intentions. There are multiple contending positions which assert whether or not feminist objectives need to be named, women need to be present *as women* or whether they can use alternative identities and politics to achieve arguably the same ends. While it can be viewed as subversive or an alternative but not ideal path to political participation, it can also represent a slippery strategy to achieve feminist goals; accepting and using the language of the current government in order to participate, can lend an inadvertent legitimacy to their goals instead, particularly if support is given to processes where gender and women continue to be written out of public and political discussions and debates. The issue is that this type of political participation can fall into the trap of supporting rather than struggling to overcome those liberal notions of the 'universal citizen' that have historically undermined gendered experiences in social policy and politics (O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999). This leads to an important question for women's activist organizations: can feminist objectives be achieved if gender, gender equity and women are not a part of the articulated goals?

Furthermore, if gender equity cannot be an objective in its own right, what is the potential for achieving meaningful gains in this direction without discussions in formal policy circles that work toward this end? One of the challenges of having policy goals directed at children's development and education alone is that subsequent policy evaluations will be geared towards measurements of this success towards these ends. Without specific categories that focus on gender, gendered impacts, and gender equity, it will be unlikely that policy considerations will be evaluated on these ends. Even though the women's movement fought in the 1990s to have gender-based analysis included in the federal government's policy cycle, the effectiveness of this strategy has begun to ring hollow in the current context (Morris 1997). In 2009, the Auditor General released a report which indicated that despite the federal government claims to performing gender based analysis across the federal government, the Auditor General found that few departments implemented only some parts of the gender based analysis and that most of the central agencies and Cabinet policy directions did not (Auditor General, April 2009). Only Indian and Northern Affairs had a Gender Based Analysis framework and an evaluation of

how this policy framework was working. The Auditor General found that even where there were gender based analyses of particular policies, the considerations of the gendered impacts rarely affected policy outcomes or decisions; in only 4 of 68 policies reviewed across 7 departments. The absence of gender equity and the role of gender in analysing and determining policy outcomes limit the effectiveness of achieving these social objectives and of making and evaluating policies that work toward these goals.

Economic

In terms of economic justice and the challenges to redistributive politics, feminist scholars have long demonstrated the ways in which policies which intervene into the processes of social reproduction can facilitate or constrains women's labour market opportunities and economic independence (O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999).   By having a gender-less discourse dominate the ECEC field, we are unlikely to develop child care policies that are designed around women's labour market experiences, including the challenging hours-wages-daycare cost relationship that many working mothers and ECEC workers are engaged in (Teghtsoonian 1995, Jenson and Dobrowolsky 2004, Newman and White 2006).   One can draw attention to child care policies like the part-time, part-day program where children are away from their parents a few hours a week or programs which require the parent to be present (Interview B, February 19, 2010). Part-day child care policies are focused solely on the child's well-being, their development and education. This evolution in child care policy does not meet the needs of working families and particularly not of working mothers. This type of child care policy may lead women to have to seek part-time or contingent employment to care for their children; contingent work causes job insecurity and higher female poverty rates, and thus these policies can lead to the exacerbation of gendered economic inequalities (Teghtsoonian 1996). An additional danger is that this also appears to be voluntary choice for women, rather than a constraint. The genderless discourse of ECEC policy in Canada has spillover effects in other areas; as women become gender-neutral parents, according to Yates and Leech (2008) they have also become gender-neutral workers. Their research demonstrates that while women still bear the majority of responsibility for social reproduction they are less able to legitimately make these gendered claims in the workplace, for example refusing overtime or requesting "check in" telephone calls for child care purposes is seen as illegitimate for "gender-less workers" (Yates and Leech 2008). They argue that "by denying women's gender-specific position in society, theses provisions end up setting into play some new dynamics of gendering that reinforce economic and labour market inequalities between men and women and result in working women's social exclusion." (Yates & Leech, 2008, p. 21). Ignoring the differences of men's and women's family and work experiences exacerbates gender inequalities and challenges for women in both arenas. ECEC policies need to be geared towards the ends of improving the family-work balance for women as workers, mothers, and child educators; comprehensive ECEC policy must therefore include women as subjects of the policy and as participants *as women* in the process of policymaking.

Cultural

Finally, in terms of cultural justice as understood by Fraser (1995) and applied to this study, means the recognition of women, of the cultural interpretations of feminine, and of the

differences between women based on other social identities, as existing, as significant, as valuable in social, political and economic arena. This is essentially justice that is rooted in the understanding that equality can be built on the deep recognition of difference.   Cultural injustice or misrecognition occurs when particular identities are de-valued, despised or ignored and have significant effects on the quality of their lives as individuals and as participants in families, communities, politics and labour markets. Gender neutral language ignores the very "physical, social and economic positions and life experiences between men and women, as well as amongst particular groups of women" (Morris 1997). One of the important struggles of feminists and women's movements in Canada in the last century is to be visible as women, to be recognized as differentiated from men in "the family" (McKeen and Porter 2003), as equal to men as 'persons' and of equal cultural value to men as women. By dismissing the importance of women and gender in ECEC policy circles, women become invisible actors without value in voice as women in the family, in politics and in the workplace (Jenson 1989).

In recent struggles within the women's movement over the past 20 years, we've also seen a push towards recognizing different values, roles, experiences and cultural practices between women and feminists based on unique challenges and intersections of race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship status, age, ability, class and sexuality (See for example Nadeau 2009; Gehl 2000; Newman and White 2006; Phillips 1996). All participants interviewed explicitly recognized that race and ethnicity was not a part of the considerations in the ECEC discussion, this recognition existed even though considerations for Immigrants and Refugees were made in the Report. There was no mention of gay or lesbian families, or women with disabilities in relation to child care within the Report. One of the challenges of the "invisibilization" of women and the illegitimacy of gender equity as an end goal of ECEC policy, therefore, is that the cultural value of women, of the feminine, of diverse practices and experiences of women is undermined. The consequent gender neutral child care policies may deepen inequalities between Canadian women and men, as well as amongst Canadian women.

Conclusion

Despite the OECD's repeated efforts to include gender equity as a part of its ECEC policy discourse as a common sense approach to making social policy, it has not translated into the Canadian ECEC policy discourse. Domestic politics matters. Since the Harper government came to power in Canada in 2006, gender equity based organizations and movements have faced greater challenges in terms of access to resources to both provide social goods and to participate in the political process. Following their election, a combination of acts altered the terrain for gender based claims in Canada: significant funding was cut from the Status of Women's budget resulting in the closure of 12 of 16 regional offices; the word 'equity' was removed from the mandate of the Women's programme which funds women focused organizations; and advocacy work could no longer be conducted by publically funded women's organizations. This environment led the World Economic Forum to move Canada from 14th (2006) to 25th (2009) out of 115 participating countries in its *Global Gender Gap Index*.

Because the state dominates the universe of political discourse, the government is able to organize, fund, limit, and control who are experts, what is knowledge, what is a legitimate

argument and the way that this reverberates into the policy community, where actors self-select language to make it fit within the government decision-makers frames and politics. While international organizations can have an impact on the policy discourse, their power is not all determining, and perhaps, it is only accessed and mobilized by domestic governments to legitimize their own goals and purposes, rather than acting as ``policy discourse takers`` from these organizations. Further comparative research is needed to bear out the causal variables that determine the OECD's influence on domestic policy discourse more concretely.

Gender-specific arguments have been rendered inadmissible, illegitimate and ineffective and as such women have had to find other ways to gain access to the closed doors of child care policy discourse in Canada. There have been two potential avenues for feminists to engage in the formal political discussions and policies within the ECEC field. One, women have joined coalitions and forged alliances with child care advocates and organizations. The objective is to downplay feminist objectives in formal politics in order to achieve feminist objectives in public policies. The challenge as discussed is that forging these coalitions has forced women to compromise their goals as well as make arguments in the name of children rights and education rather than for the goal of their own equality and rights. Women cannot act as women or specify gender-specific interests or experiences as relevant in order to affect public policy decisions that will ultimately affect them. This avenue of alternative participation is both promising and troubling – revealing the tensions that exist for women in this policy field and beyond.

A system of federalism in Canada presents the second potential opportunity and/or constraint for resisting or building alternatives to this genderless policy discourse. Federalism can encourage policy experimentation at the provincial level and open spaces to challenge dominant federal frames of gendered claims to politics, but it can also diminish the resources for women's organizations to mobilize and affect the federal government's contribution to provincial portfolios that support gender based objectives in the ECEC policy arena. Federalism can also contribute to a declining equity framework and standards for women in all parts of the country but can provide diverse opportunities to capture the needs of women's organizations in different regions. It can also, as we've seen, diminish the rationale for having national discussions on broader social objectives like gender equity. Federalism, however, may provide the schism in which social organizations can use the provinces as launching points to change the federal agenda may be the only way to force a re-engagement and make `gender equity` an issue for national discussion. As provinces more readily articulate investments in ECEC policy as a central piece of a successful society over the past 10 years, we will be watching to understand how OECD ideas might translate and spread to and through provincial governments and policy communities in the ECEC field and/or whether this will have an effect on policy discourse at the federal level.

A final point is to note that politics of visibility is not always progressive and expanding. Even though democratic arguments and rights based politics have expanded to include greater number of groups of people over the past century, arguments for political legitimacy, for social and political importance, for analytic relevance, must be continually struggled over and re-produced to be a part of changing political contexts. Forty years after the Royal Commission on

the Status of Women, women still must continue to engage (even in hostile political environments) in the arguments and recommendations underlying Commission's purpose and report in order to have their concerns, needs and experiences meaningful addressed in policy: gender analysis is important; women's collective and diverse experiences and voices matter to effective and legitimate public policymaking; gender equity does not yet exist and is still an important social and political goal.

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