In *Reinventing Political Science: A Feminist Approach*, Jill Vickers identified an enduring tension within feminist policy analysis between the need to sometimes identify sex differences between men and women to ensure appropriate state public policy responses (i.e. in areas of reproductive responsibilities) alongside an argument for identical treatment in terms of “rights, status and opportunities” (1997:157). She goes onto to suggest this tension has meant a “Catch 22” of sorts for feminist policy analysts. She asks:

> how can we demand appropriate treatment, which recognizes most women’s distinctive reproductive responsibilities and sexual lives, without undercutting the argument for identical treatment by the state...? (Ibid)

At the same time, she argues that “contemporary feminists have not made a clear and consistent case that men and women differ in important ways that should be taken into account in determining policies, programs and entitlements” (Ibid).

An underlying assumption in this argument is that this tension has likely been more pronounced in policy areas that Vickers describes as “women-friendly,” or policy that “has not [been] designed specifically for or by women but [can] have positive effects for most women,” such as minimum wage increases (172). However, it is possible that the tension also appears within Canadian women’s movement activism in more “women-focussed” or “traditionally feminist” policy arenas, such as policy aimed at addressing the problem of violence against women as well as child care policy. This tension has arguably been detrimental to ensuring feminist perspectives are advanced inside of policy debates and ultimately in ensuring feminist policy outcomes at the provincial and federal levels in Canada. As some feminist activists have embraced a more gender-neutral policy focus that de-emphasizes the gendered nature of these policy arenas (and thus the differences between men and women), in many cases to widen the likelihood that governments will be open to women’s movement lobbying.

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1. This paper is based in part on a paper I first presented at the Women-Friendly Democracy Conference in Honour of Jill Vickers in November 2007 at Carleton University. I would like to thank Bethany Johnson for her research assistance with this project and the Department of Political Science at the University of Windsor for its financial support.

2. Vickers uses the example of treatment of breast cancer and not the two policy areas that are the focus of this paper.
efforts, the greater goals of ending women’s systemic discrimination move further away from public policy discourse.

Pressure to gender-neutralize policy issues like child care and policies aimed at addressing the problem of violence against women, that were initially put onto public policy agendas by feminist advocates, have also come from the broader influence of neoliberalism and post-neoliberalism (also known as the social investment state) in Canada. Global trends toward neoliberalism encouraged less state involvement and reduced public spending on the welfare state from the 1980s into the 1990s, with detrimental effects on women’s policy. Moreover, feminist women’s groups and women’s issues were increasingly labelled as “special interests” and advocacy claims toward the state were routinely delegitimized by successive provincial and federal governments, although this trend was less pronounced under left-wing regimes than right-wing ones (Collier 2006, 2009). As Canada entered the new millennium, many social policy researchers identified a renewed state interest in re-investing in social programs to better position the state in a competitive global marketplace. This newer shift away from neoliberalism, known as the ‘social investment state’, has been charged with consciously “writing gender out” of social policy debates, particularly in the child care arena (Jenson 2009).\(^3\)

While the paper recognizes the dual pressures of ideological tensions inside of the women’s movement itself alongside external pressure from the state to be seen as more legitimate under shifting eras of social policy development, it aims more directly to understand how child care and anti-violence movements have changed over time and contributed to policy gender-neutralization, if at all. Thus the paper asks, how central are ‘women’ and ‘gender-equality’ to contemporary Canadian anti-violence and child care policy debates? Have feminist women’s movement advocates become ‘less feminist’ in the ways in which they have chosen to frame the need for policy improvements in child care and anti-violence movements over time? Has the state become more or less feminist (or feminist at all) in its framing of public policy responses in the child care and anti-violence fields? Does it matter if feminist concerns are sometimes left out of anti-violence and child care policy debates? If so, how can feminists ensure that these concerns regain the prominence they once held when the issues were first put onto public policy agendas?

In order to answer these questions, the paper will first locate the centrality of women and women’s concerns to both of these policy arenas during the earlier days of their articulation in the Canadian public sphere by feminist women’s movements particularly in the early 1970s at the time of the release of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women report federally and the steep rise of women’s movement activism inside of the provinces. It will also identify the continued theoretical arguments to sustain a strong feminist focus in the present political context. Then the paper will chronicle the ideological tensions between anti-violence and child care advocates within the Canadian women’s movement identified by Vickers - focusing primarily on provincial movement activism in Ontario and British Columbia as representative examples – specifically highlighting questions of whether and to what extent advocates have emphasized the feminist nature of policy demands as part of their lobbying efforts. I draw on the provincial cases because the majority of women’s movement activism in

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3 See also Dobrowolsky and Jenson 2004; Jenson and Saint-Martin 2003; Lister 2006.
these policy areas in Canada has occurred at the provincial level as responsibility for social program/policy delivery falls primarily under provincial jurisdiction. The prominence of the provincial level in these policy areas has grown particularly during the 1980s and 1990s with federal downloading of fiscal responsibility for anti-violence services and child care delivery. The paper will then conduct a discursive frame and content analysis of advocacy and public policy documents from BC and Ontario between the mid-1980s to 2010 (described below) as further evidence to ascertain whether or not women’s concerns or attention to gender equality figures prominently inside of child care and anti-violence policy debates. This discursive analysis will help establish how much impact divisions inside of the movements have had on policy debates and will also show the impact of neoliberal and social investment state pressures on these debates in a more tangible way. The paper will conclude by considering the implications of the findings with respect to the Canadian women’s movement’s longer-term goals aimed at ending discrimination and systemic inequality in Canadian society.

The Importance of Women and Gender to Canadian Violence Against Women and Child Care Policy Formation

Movement demands to end violence against women and for improved access to child care represent central pillars of the second wave women’s movement in Canada. Calls for better child care service delivery have been made since WWII and notably formed one of the four key “principles” guiding the recommendations of the federal Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) in 1970. In its report, the RCSW directly linked access to child care to success in ending women’s societal inequality. Specifically, the report stated that “the care of children is a responsibility to be shared by the mother, the father and society. Unless this shared responsibility is acknowledged and assumed, women cannot be accorded true equality” (1970:xii).

Although violence against women was not addressed in the RCSW Report, it became an important policy focus during the second wave of the women’s movement. In the early 1970s, grassroots feminist groups worked independently to establish transition and interval houses to provide female victims of violence with financial support, temporary shelter and legal advice in the face of growing need. As the first feminist transition houses appeared in the provinces during these years, anti-violence advocates turned their attention to the state to help pay for much needed services to aid women victims.

In both policy arenas, feminist activists were instrumental in putting anti-violence and child care issues onto government agendas and ‘women’ and ‘gender equality’ were central to both policy debates as women’s movements argued that freedom from male violence and access to quality, affordable and available child care were central to improving women’s equality in Canadian society.

The need for a feminist focus on the gendered nature of anti-violence and child care policy debates has remained strong into the new millennium. S. Laurel Weldon

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4 For more on this see Collier 2006.
5 Jenson does some of this in her 2009 article on the social investment state, but it is not systematic and is only applied to the federal-level multilateral/bilateral child care agreements of 2003 and 2005. See Jenson 2009:39.
argues that as international anti-violence policy research progresses over time, “the relationship between violence against women and male dominance has become increasingly well established” (2002:13). She cites the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women which argues that violence against women “is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men” (quoted in Ibid:13). Similarly, research on child care not only links its improved availability and accessibility to more equitable employment and living standards for women, but consistently argues that it is an essential component toward achieving gender equality. According to Janet Gornick:

One of the most entrenched and consequential components of gender differentiation is in the provision of unpaid care for children and other family members...In the industrialized countries, the primary responsibility for dependent care work remains delegated to women. The gendered nature of standard patterns of unpaid work affects women throughout the life cycle, since adult work roles are long anticipated and have enduring consequences. The sexual division of unpaid labor, in turn, shapes gender-linked patterns of labor market investments and attachments, and consequently claims on welfare resources as well (quoted in Mahon 2002:3).

Rianne Mahon adds that “many contemporary feminists [see] the demand for accessible, high-quality child care...as indispensable to women’s economic independence” (Ibid:13).

With these arguments in mind, it follows that a continued articulation of the gendered nature of the issues and a feminist focus on women inside of anti-violence and child care policy debates would be essential to ensure successful Canadian policy outcomes in these two policy arenas. Yet tensions within movements between a focus on women’s differences to men as opposed to a focus on women’s and men’s equal interest in both of these areas of public policy, have the potential to cloud the message of the centrality of women and gender equality to these debates. The potential to blunt the feminist nature of both issues is almost certainly facilitated by the tendency of government policy-makers to be more receptive to gender-neutral claims made toward the state (Young 2000; Heitlinger 1993; Burt 1990; Timpson 2001). Thus contemporary movements are encouraged to de-emphasize women’s centrality to violence against women and child care policies and programs in order to secure short-term policy gains, particularly since the mid-1980s as neoliberalism and its related view of women’s issues as ‘special interests’ was adopted by the majority of governments in western democracies, including in Canada (Collier 2009). The deepening of the trend toward gender-neutralizing women’s policy under the social investment state has arguably added to the pressure for women’s advocacy groups to temper feminist demands in favour of arguments stressing the needs of children and for investment in education and human capital (Jenson 2009:41). I now turn to an examination of the provincial anti-violence and child care advocacy movements to ascertain the nature and extent of these tensions over time.

Provincial Anti-Violence Movements in Ontario and BC
Both of the provincial anti-violence movements in Ontario and British Columbia are distinct in a variety of ways – particularly in the ways in which they have chosen to engage with different provincial governments to advocate for better funding for anti-violence services for women victims, better policies to protect victims and enforcement of existing laws to punish offenders and for the state to address the systemic causes of violence against women. At the same time, the movements are similar in that they both have been weakened in lobbying the state by internal divisions, many of which involved tensions between feminist advocates and those less committed to predominantly feminist agendas (Collier 2006).

In Ontario during the 1970s and 1980s, more radical feminist anti-violence groups, such as Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) refused to work alongside other anti-violence groups whom they saw as not “feminist” enough, including any groups that were “non-women-only” (WAVAW 1981: Women’s Movement Archives). These more radical groups were less service-oriented than groups such as the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) and the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) and were much less state-focused in their activism. Although the OCRCC and OAITH also articulated the gendered-nature of women’s violence, they were not as focussed on the more broad-based goals of ending women’s systemic inequality deemed to be the main cause of violence by groups including WAVAW (Ibid). Perhaps not surprisingly, provincial governments in Ontario tended to view the OCRCC and OAITH as the main voices of the anti-violence movement in the province. OAITH specifically grew into this position in the later 1980s and into the 1990s as transition house policy took precedence over rape crisis centre funding with the majority of provincial governments that held office during these years.

In BC, similar tensions between anti-violence groups that considered themselves more feminist than their sister organizations in the province were evident during a similar timeframe. The movement tried to find common ground at a 1984 anti-violence conference attended by over 200 representatives of BC women’s centres, transition houses, sexual assault centres, crisis lines, native friendship centres, mental health centres and legal service centres for women. However, the conference ended without the formation of a ‘provincial organization for women’s centres’ (Callahan et. al 1984:1). In the years leading up to the conference, the BC branch of WAVAW had a very public falling out with Vancouver Rape Relief (VRR) over what it meant to be a ‘feminist organization.’ WAVAW, which had been working inside of Vancouver Rape Relief in the early 1980s, left VRR in 1982 claiming it was too liberal, hierarchical, elitist, non-feminist

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6 For the purposes of this paper, radical feminist theory generally sees patriarchy as the main cause of women’s oppression and a key division in society. Radical feminists will work with the state if necessary, but see the state as inherently patriarchal and thus are sceptical of state action. By contrast liberal feminists, while willing to debate their levels of state involvement, are generally more open to working with state institutions as these are not seen as inherently patriarchal. Instead, liberal feminists work toward equal opportunity for women by aiming to change the rules of society that put women at a disadvantage. (For more on these theoretical definitions see for example Vickers 1997).

7 Both were more service-driven in their lobbying efforts, working to sustain much-needed funding to expand transition houses and sexual assault centres respectively.

8 The Ontario NDP government did recognize the importance of rape crisis centre funding and paying attention to sexual assault issues during its tenure from 1990-1995, but the transition and shelter movement remained more visible and dominant inside of anti-violence advocacy circles. For more see Collier 2006.
and isolated from the broader women’s movement (Price 1988, Women’s Movement Archives). Similar disagreements between WAWA and the BC Association of Specialized Victims Assistance Programs (BCASVACP) and between the BC Yukon Association of Women’s Centres and the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses (BCYSTH) in the early 1990s left the anti-violence movement weakened by internal fighting (Women’s Movement Archives in Collier 2006). As with Ontario, both of these latter groups were more liberal feminist in orientation and were thus more willing to work with the state to secure funding for women’s centres and transition houses. Similarly, they both were accorded higher standing with provincial governments when lobbying for policy change than the other arguably ‘more feminist’ (and often more radical feminist) groups.

Tensions between more vocal feminist perspectives and those less committed to pressing the feminist nature of the anti-violence issue inside of both provincial movements continued into the 2000s; the more liberal feminist voices within the movement were routinely viewed as the movement leaders with other overtly (and often radical) feminist voices often being pushed to the periphery. In Ontario, the anti-violence movement tried to bridge some of the historical gaps from both sides in order to lobby an increasingly hostile provincial Conservative government under Mike Harris. The Coalition in Defence of Women’s Anti-Violence Services and the Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group were both created in the late 1990s to push the Harris government to do more on the anti-violence file. While these coalitions continued to offer feminist critiques of government action, each made efforts to gain an audience with the right-wing Tories by stressing moderate commonalities (such as the economic costs of violence against women) as opposed to areas where they were less in agreement (including the need to privilege front-line feminist anti-violence workers in policy development) (Collier 2006).

In BC, tensions continued as in Ontario but there was no attempt to bridge the gap between the more radical feminist and more liberal strands of the movement. In the late 1990s, Vancouver Rape Relief created a more radical feminist transition house organization as an alternative to the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses. It also organized an anti-violence conference in 1999 for “frontline anti-violence workers...[and] equality seeking women’s groups” (Jay 2000:160). Neither the BCYSTH nor the BCASVACP were included amongst the approximately 100 attendees. Both instead participated in an alternative anti-violence symposium which demonstrated that divisions continued into the new millennium (MWE 1998).

**Provincial Child Care Movements in Ontario and BC**

While tensions were present in both provincial child care movements, these were less centred around how “feminist” the groups involved should or should not be, but instead on how best to bring attention to the need for child care – from a feminist women’s-equality perspective, a welfare perspective, an educational children’s perspective, or a family’s perspective. Again, both child care movements were different in the ways in which they engaged with their respective provincial governments but they were similar in highlighting the feminist nature of child care early in the second wave and then seeing that focus fade to a large extent over the years as child care coalitions in the provinces grew to include non-feminist groups. In Ontario, the early child care
movement in the 1960s and early 1970s lobbied the state for “free universal day care” to aid women in their broader struggles for equality (Kyle et al. 1991). Yet by the early 1980s, the movement broadened its coalition to include teacher’s federations, the labour movement and early childhood education groups to lobby beyond “hippy-dippy small-scale solutions” to women’s child care woes (Prentice 1987). In 1981, the Ontario Coalition for Better Day Care (later Child Care) was created and the message that child care was an emancipatory tool for women, while still present, took a back seat to the more marketable education and employment links drawn to improvements to better child care.9

The BC child care movement shared many similarities to the Ontario movement in the early 1960s and 1970s, particularly in its commitment to free universal “ideal” cooperative day care services to be fully responsive to the needs of mainly female primary caregivers (Cohen et al. 1973). However, the BC movement remained divided longer than the movement in Ontario. While the BC Day Care Action Coalition (later the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC) was created in 1981, the same year as the OCBDC, it remained a grassroots feminist group that was mainly removed from other potential coalition partners, including early childhood educators, dividing advocacy calls for better child care and highlighting differences within the movement itself.10

By the late 1990s and into the 2000s, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care remained the main advocacy voice lobbying the provincial government for child care improvements. The release of early childhood education research in Canada by child development experts including Fraser Mustard, Margaret McCain, Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky,11 furthered strengthened the educative reasoning behind calls for better child care as opposed to the gendered-nature of the issue. As well, the shift to viewing child care as more of a ‘children’s issue’ than a ‘women’s issue’ was further facilitated by international forces including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the 1990 World Summit for Children.12 The primacy of arguments stressing the educative and more child-centred economic benefits of improved child care service provision was common to BC as well during these years. The child care movement had finally formed a workable coalition under the Child Care Advocacy Forum in 1999, and a similar move away from the focus on feminist child care demands resulted, as was the case in Ontario (Collier 2006).

Clearly tensions between staunchly pro-feminist forces and those less focussed on key structural feminist goals were apparent in both the anti-violence and child care movements. The paper will now examine the policy debates in the provinces in more detail to more fully examine the extent of gender neutralization in these two policy arenas since the 1980s under neoliberalism and into 2010 under the more recent social investment state. In order to determine how central gender has been inside of these debates, I have chosen to conduct a combined qualitative frame analysis and

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9 The educative benefits of child care were emphasized with the OCBDC’s call to have a comprehensive system established inside a separate division of the Ministry of Education by 1990 as a key demand under the policy paper *Day Care Deadline: 1990* (1981).


12 These events also helped convince federal MPs from all parties to sign onto a resolution to eliminate child poverty by 2000 (Mahon and Collier 2010 forthcoming).
quantitative content analysis of both provincial advocacy documents and government policy documents in both provinces, showing both sides of the policy debate.

**Frame/Content Discourse Analysis – Rationale and Method**

Carol Bacchi suggests that most policy-as-discourse analysts are interested in understanding “the reasons progressive change has proved so difficult to accomplish” and tend to “undertheorize” the “power to contest discursive constructions” (2000:47). While this paper does seek to understand how policy has been framed through a discursive analysis, including attention to specific feminist content that is present or absent in policy debate documents, it will also attempt to understand who holds political power in so far as certain actors are able to “put [their] own interpretation of social relations and problems on the political agenda and thus to push for [their] own solutions and proposals” (Kulawik 2009: 265-6). A discursive frame and content analysis of policy debates can aid in this endeavor by helping us understand if feminist voices and actors hold such power in child care and anti-violence policy circles. I ask, what frames and what type of content, including an identification of “patterns in authorship, subject matter, methods and interpretation,” are present inside of these policy debates (Reinharz in Lina Leavy 2007:227-228)? By conducting this analysis, however, I am also interested in starting to understand whether actors can challenge discursive positions and whether or not they are presently in powerful positions vis-a-vis those debates. Thus, although it is beyond the scope of this paper to fully theorize these challenges, I do not assume the present power differential is necessarily fixed.13

Admittedly there are a wide variety of ways in which to construct a feminist discursive frame and content analysis of policy debate texts. For the purposes of this paper, I have based the analysis loosely on the methodology employed under the comparative MAGEEQ project.14 Lombardo and Meier (2006) describe the MAGEEQ policy frame used to establish the level of feminism inside of gender mainstreaming projects in EU policy discourse:

> as an ‘organising principle that transforms fragmentary or incidental information into a structured and meaningful problem, in which a solution is implicitly or explicitly included’ (Verloo, 2005a). For instance, gender inequality in politics can be represented as a problem of ‘women lagging behind men’ or of ‘men dominating power positions and excluding women’...Within the dimensions of diagnosis and prognosis, there emerge implicit or explicit representations of who is deemed to hold the problem, who caused it and who should solve it, and to what extent gender and intersectionality (i.e. gender intersections with race, class, sexual orientation, ability, ethnic origin, religion, ideology) are related to the problem and its solution. When analysing policy frames...it is also relevant to

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13 Jenson seems to sit more on the side of a fixed power differential between feminists and state decision-makers in her examination of discursive trends under a social investment state, particularly when she suggests that advocates that shift “with the political winds cannot account for the winds themselves” (2009:41).

14 MAGEEQ is an acronym for Mainstreaming Gender Equality. The 3-year project titled “Policy Frames and Implementation Problems: the Case of Gender Mainstreaming” comparatively examined policy framing of gender inequality policy, family policy and violence against women policy (among others) in Austria, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and the EU. (see www.mageeq.net for more).
identify who has a voice in defining problem and solution to see whether feminist actors are included (154-155).

While the MAGEEQ frame examined a wider variety of gendered policy issues in Europe that do not completely match the areas currently under study, the identification of a dominant feminist frame inside of policy debates (which goes beyond identifying “women” but fully identifies “feminism” and “feminist perspectives”) is a useful analytical tool to apply to this case. Alongside the qualitative frame analysis, I have also chosen to include a quantitative content analysis of child care and anti-violence policy debates to further establish feminist and gender-neutral frames and trends. Drawing on the feminist child care and anti-violence women’s movement literature (including criteria used in the MAGEEQ frame analysis study), I have compiled a list of feminist child care terms, gender-neutral child care terms, feminist anti-violence terms, and gender-neutral anti-violence terms. These terms were counted each time they appeared in each document under review. Following this, a final tally of all feminist terms and gender-neutral terms was calculated for each policy debate document.

A total of 59 advocacy policy papers and government policy documents were examined from Ontario and British Columbia between 1984 and 2010. The paper does not attempt to examine every document available over this period of time, instead it aims to review a fairly representative sample of dominant advocacy documents and main government policy position papers and policy texts available over this time frame. Advocacy documents prior to the 1990s in both Ontario and British Columbia were not included as they were not immediately available to the author in primary form. Thus the conclusions are limited by a shorter time frame of analysis for the

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15 Lazar argues that “to speak from the position of a ‘woman’ is not the same as speaking from the political perspective of a feminist. To know as a ‘woman’ means to know from the perspective of the structure of gender, whereas a feminist perspective means that one has a critical distance on gender and on oneself” (2007:145).
16 Note, the MAGEEQ study was only a policy frame analysis, not a content analysis.
17 Some of these terms were the same on both lists, but each list was specific to the feminist analyses germane to each policy arena (see Collier 2006) as well as common gender-neutral analyses which de-emphasized feminist perspectives in each policy arena. Feminist terms for child care included “women’s equality”, “feminist or feminism”, “women’s movement”, “structural inequality”, “gendered nature of child care issue”, “patriarchy”. Gender-neutral terms for child care included “family responsibility/issue”, “children’s issue”, “economic benefits of child care”, “parents equality” instead of “women’s equality issue”. For violence against women feminist terms included “women’s equality”, “feminist or feminism”, “women’s movement”, “structural inequality”, “gendered nature of violence”, “patriarchy”. Gender-neutral violence against women terms included “family violence”, “spousal violence/domestic violence”, “female violence against males”, “economic costs of violence”, “law and order issue”, “women and children” used together instead of violence against “women”. We applied this list broadly so that terms that were close to these or embodied these ideas were counted in our tallies as much as possible. The content analyses were conducted manually alongside the frame analyses.
18 A list of documents analyzed is appended to the end of the paper. Advocacy documents included were from main child care and anti-violence groups in each province (see discussion above and Collier 2006). Government policy documents included major significant policy discussions in each province between 1980 and 2010 (also see Collier 2006). The more detailed content and frame analyses are on file with the author.
19 Many of these primary documents are not available at all as only a limited number are on file at the Women’s Movement Archives, University of Ottawa. I have secondary notation of those documents that were available, but the originals were not immediately accessible for this specific study. I hope to expand the analysis to include these documents as this research project continues in the future.
advocacy documents than was available for the government policy documents. The main results of the frame and content analysis are presented in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 below. An average of the content tallies of feminist (fem) versus gender-neutral (g-n) terms is included in brackets inside of the tables where appropriate.

### Table 1.1 - Frame and Content Analysis Child Care and VAW Advocacy Documents in Ontario and British Columbia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/Policy Area</th>
<th>Dominant Feminist Frame</th>
<th>Dominant Gender-Neutral Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontario VAW Advocacy (N8 – yrs. 1997-2010)</td>
<td>7 (38 fem to 17 g-n)</td>
<td>1 (13 g-n terms to 6 fem terms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC VAW Advocacy (N10 – yrs. 1984-2010)</td>
<td>6 (13.5 fem to 6.5 g-n )</td>
<td>4 (13 g-n to 6 fem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Child Care Advocacy (N4 – yrs. 1998-2010)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (content average 23 g-n to 0.5 fem – 3 with 0 fem terms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC Child Care Advocacy (N12 – yrs. 1999-2010)</td>
<td>1 (6 fem to 2 g-n)</td>
<td>11 (14 g-n to 1 fem – 6 with 0 fem terms)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 1.2 Frame and Content Analysis Child Care and VAW Policy Documents in Ontario and British Columbia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/Policy Area</th>
<th>Dominant Feminist Frame</th>
<th>Dominant Gender-Neutral Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontario VAW Policy (N4 – yrs. 1984-2010)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (69 g-n to 43.5 fem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC VAW Policy (N8 – yrs. 1984-2010)</td>
<td>2 (38.5 fem to 32.5 g-n )</td>
<td>6 (62.6 g-n to 29.2 fem – 1 with 0 fem terms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Child Care Policy (N8 – yrs. 1986-2010)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8(content average 46.5 g-n terms to 2.5 fem – 2 with 0 fem terms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC Child Care Policy (N5 – yrs. 1991-2010)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (52 g-n to 10.5 fem – 1 with 0 fem terms)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Provincial Anti-Violence Policy Debates

When we look at Tables 1.1 and 1.2, we see that despite divisions inside of the provincial anti-violence movement, Ontario advocates on balance retained a dominant feminist frame in seven out of eight advocacy documents examined. Overall, there was a significant presence of both feminist and gender-neutral frames in all of the reviewed documents, with gender-neutral language slightly increasing over time. The presence of gender-neutral language had a tendency to detract from the dominant feminist frame in many instances, particularly in movement lobbying efforts in 2000 for all-party cooperation on the anti-violence issue. We also see that term ‘patriarchy’ was used prominently in a 1997 advocacy document in opposition to the Framework for Action on the Prevention of Violence Against Women. Even though the term appeared once again in a separate 2008 advocacy document, that overarching frame was predominantly gender-neutral. Thus feminist frames on the advocacy side did not disappear over time and often dominated, despite the fact that gender-neutral language was also prominent and rose slightly over time in Ontario.

Advocacy documents in BC were predominantly framed by feminist ideas but we also see more gender-neutral frames advanced than was the case in Ontario. These gender-neutral frames emphasized a law and order approach and the effects of violence on the broader ‘family’ – themes echoed in government policy documents examined below. It is not immediately clear why BC advocates were more ‘mixed’ in their policy lobbying than in Ontario. In the end, however, it is important to note that all anti-violence advocacy documents in both cases continued to include a feminist frame and feminist terminology (for example, no documents registered zero feminist terms) even though gender-neutral terms were also always present.

There was more of a distinction between anti-violence government policy in Ontario and BC in the way in which governments tended to frame the issue of violence against women. In Ontario, violence against women policy was predominantly gender-neutral in all instances. Feminist lenses were present, however, including a reference made to patriarchy in the 1997 policy, but gender-neutral law and order approaches (including announcements of adaptations to the criminal justice system, mandatory arrests, etc.) were the preferred Ontario policy direction in each case. By contrast in BC, feminist frames were dominant in 2 government policy documents: in 1984 when the anti-violence movement arguably had agency to help define and shape the issue of wife assault which was new to the provincial government at the time and in 1996

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20 Patriarchy is a key analytical term in feminist theory so I have drawn attention to its occurrence where applicable. It did not appear often in the content analysis, appearing 25 times in 15 of 59 documents.
21 Law and order approaches to ending violence against women are criticized by many feminist activists because it marginalizes women as experts and service providers. Gillian Walker argues that law and order approaches “transform women who are beaten and their abusers into abstract victims and perpetrators, members of ‘the violent family’ that must be helped to handle ‘its’ violence (1990:192). Lee Lakeman further argues that deference to law and order enforcement agencies perpetuates “the patriarchical order” in society which is a main structural cause of violence against women (Lakeman 1999:28).
22 The province did not have a specific policy addressing domestic violence until the mid-1980s and was open to feminist advocates at the time to help create this more comprehensive policy, albeit within a strong gender-neutral law and order frame.
under the stewardship of the free-standing Ministry of Women’s Equality (MWE). The recognition of ‘patriarchy’ was also the most prominent in BC anti-violence government policy documents compared with all other documents reviewed as part of this study, appearing in 6 out of 8 instances. This also was likely attributable to the influence of the MWE and its lasting impact inside of the BC bureaucracy, particularly since it took the lead on violence against women research and policy development during the 1990s. Some feminist framing did continue after the MWE was disbanded in 2001 but we also see the only instance of a policy document devoid of any feminist terminology in 2007 under the Ministry of Public Safety and the Solicitor General. Also in 2001, Liberal Attorney General Geoff Plant suggested that the main provincial anti-violence program should have its name changed from “Violence Against Women in Relationships” to “Violence Against People in Relationships,” ostensibly in order to recognize that “women, too, can initiate violence” (O’Neill 2002:2). Even though this change did not occur, recognition of male and female victims of female violence was included in gender-neutral frames in the 2010 policy document Domestic Violence Response: A Community Framework for Maximizing Women’s Safety. Thus gender neutrality was dominant on the government side of the policy debate, but a favourable feminist institutional climate under the BC MWE helped facilitate feminist terminology and frames until its influence began to wane into the later 2000s.

**Provincial Child Care Policy Debates**

Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show a striking difference between child care debates and anti-violence debates with child care debates coming up predominantly gender-neutral, even on the advocacy side (the one exception is a single dominant feminist-framed advocacy document in BC). We also see the most instances of advocacy documents registering zero feminist terms (9 occurrences) with three policy documents also devoid of any feminist reference terms. Clearly the feminist frame is much weaker inside of child care policy debates in the two provinces compared to anti-violence debates. Documents reviewed illustrated the strength of the social investment state’s elevation of ‘the child’ as the dominant policy frame inside child care and family policies as opposed to ‘women’ and ‘gender equality’. The related strength of early childhood education advocates inside of the child care advocacy coalitions was also evident in both provinces.

In Ontario, advocates predominantly cast child care as a ‘family’ issue and emphasized the economic benefits of child care provision inside of a gender-neutral frame. BC advocates followed suit with little change in direction over time noted in either province. BC was also more apt to stress the educative benefits of child care and to cast it as a children’s issue following trends set nationally and internationally mentioned above. Even though they did not dominate, feminist frames were present, including references made to ‘patriarchy’ in 2003 and 2009 BC advocacy documents, but these frames were only dominant one time out of 12 documents under review.24

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23 The MWE was created in 1991 under the Harcourt NDP government. It was the first and only free-standing women’s ministry in the country with a central mandate to advance women’s equality (Collier 2006).
24 Interestingly this occurred in 2010 under a new CCCABC campaign emphasizing child care as a fundamental “right”. 
On the government policy side, all documents examined in both provinces were predominantly gender-neutral. The most ‘feminist’ of these was the 1991 *BC Task Force on Child Care* report which received submissions from a wide variety of child care advocates across the province, including feminist groups, which might explain the increased feminist framing. Nonetheless even in this instance, the balance of coverage emphasized ‘children’, ‘the family’ and the ‘economic benefits of child care to society’ above issues surrounding ‘women’s equality’. The trend in both BC and Ontario into 2010 in child care policy was more solidly gender-neutral. The Ontario 2009 early learning planning document making the case for full-day kindergarten to be provided by the province for 4 and 5 year olds was overwhelmingly gender-neutral in frame. The content analysis for this document counted 233 gender-neutral terms opposed to only 9 that were feminist. Similarly in BC, the Early Childhood Learning Agency’s expansion document querying the potential for full-day kindergarten for 3 to 5 year olds (only 5 year olds are planned to receive it by 2011) was also overwhelmingly gender-neutral; it tallied 104 gender-neutral terms to just one that was feminist in the content analysis. While child care may have been seen as a gender-equality feminist issue in the early 1970s, this had certainly changed through the 1980s to the 2000s. As a former director of the Child Care Policy unit inside of the BC Social Development and Economic Security Ministry noted in 1999, child care was “beyond a feminist issue now.”

### What’s wrong with Mixed Frames and Potentially Leaving Gender Equality Out of Women-Focussed Policy Debates?

From the BC and Ontario cases above, we can see there has been movement away from initial iterations of anti-violence and child care as mainly ‘gendered’ policy areas since the 1970s. Yet it is important to note that in both cases the shifts have been incomplete. Feminist frames are still present in child care debates and actually remain dominant inside of anti-violence advocacy documents, although even here gender-neutral frames are present, particularly on the government side. Advocates and policy-makers on the child care side are more apt to debate the merits of child care from a gender-neutral perspective, yet feminist frames are also still present albeit in much smaller numbers than with anti-violence policy actors. The evidence thus demonstrates that overall both policy debates occur inside of mixed frames.

The advocacy strategy of watering down feminist frames and language and varying the messages inside of child care and anti-violence policy debates has not been without certain benefits. For example, the first steps towards a universal child care program in BC occurred briefly under the Dosanjh NDP government in 2000 with its announcement of a seven-dollar-a-day after school program, which was the initial stage of a promised universal program to be revealed over the next few years. This small success was couched in gender-neutral frames from the outset, evident when Dosanjh announced the child care plan, invoking data from the Cleveland and Krashinsky study citing the strong economic benefits associated with better child care services (Collier 2006). Thus an argument could be made that using gender-neutral child care language in this instance, as well as working alongside non-gendered advocacy partners in coalitions, helped facilitate a positive policy result, even in a neoliberal/social investment state context.

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Short-term goals notwithstanding, I argue instead that there is a real danger to any shift away from gender equality in the anti-violence and child care policy debates. When we look back at the BC example above, it is important to note that even this watered down reasoning for a step toward universality in child care delivery resulted in a short-lived ‘gain’. The Liberal party that won office in 2001 was quick to cancel the seven-dollar-a-day program and the issue of universal child care delivery was removed from the BC government’s agenda (Collier 2006). Indeed, feminist child care researchers have noted similar dangers with the national-level child care movement:

The risk involved is that the measures eventually adopted...may be a vastly watered down version of what advocates want. Thus, child care advocates might achieve success – that is, the establishment of some kind of child care and early childhood development programs in each province and territory – only by sacrificing their core goal, which is to achieve a comprehensive national daycare system (White 2001:111).

This phenomenon has been noted in frame-reflective policy research. While not mentioning gender specifically, Rein and Schon argue that different and competing perspectives on issues will likely fail to be properly represented within policy debates themselves and also in the actual policy results, when one frame dominates. They suggest that, “different frames...lead [policymakers and interest groups] to see different things, make different interpretations of the way things are, and support different courses of action concerning what shall be done, how it shall be done, and by whom” (1991:264-5). If feminists, then, are not in control of these frames or are the weaker voice within advocacy coalitions, it follows that their perspectives will likely not be seen or adopted by decision-makers, a phenomenon the evidence shows in both BC and Ontario with policy in both arenas that is dominated by gender-neutral framing. When feminists are not making a ‘clear and consistent case’ for gender equality, this further compounds the situation. With neoliberalism/the social investment state privileging gender-neutral language and demonizing feminist frames, it is clear that mixed feminist language and an increase in gender-neutral discourse will likely lead to non-feminist policy results.

For feminist child care movements, this has meant that a publicly-funded, quality universal child care program available across Canada continues to be an elusive goal. According to Mahon, the policy environment that child care activists operated in beginning in the 1990s saw “universally accessible care [as] increasingly utopian” (2002:15). She argues that neoliberal welfare state restructuring has made the terrain for child care lobbying increasingly difficult as “employability concerns, calls for great ‘choice’ and/or the projected demands of an emergent ‘knowledge based economy’ jostle with gender equality as possible rationales for new child care initiatives” (2002:14) and the latter seem to be losing the fight for legitimacy. Sonya Michel adds that the coalitions in which feminists find themselves often are a “source of frustration”:

The terms of such alliances may require feminists to cloak their own support for child care in the rhetoric of another interest group (early childhood education, as we have seen, being the most common). In consequence, though the
resulting provisions may well benefit certain groups of women and children, they may also do little to advance the cause of feminism (2002:334).

There are obvious parallels with the Canadian feminist anti-violence policy debate as we’ve seen in both the BC and Ontario examples. The larger feminist goal of addressing systemic power relations and inequalities between men and women - one of the key causes of violence against women – has been either absent from or mixed up with more gender-neutral claims inside of contemporary anti-violence policy debates, oftentimes confusing the central messages. While anti-violence advocacy has remained feminist on balance, government policy responses remain stubbornly gender-neutral, widening in scope to include all members of the “family” that may be impacted by domestic violence, including men. This trend is evident at the federal level as well with Statistics Canada renaming violence against women “family violence” and conducting surveys showing that men “are as likely to face abuse from their partner as women” (Newman and White 2006:187).

S. Laurel Weldon’s 36 country comparative analysis of state policy responsiveness to feminist anti-violence movement activism makes a strong case for the necessity of a feminist gender-based analysis:

This study focuses on policies that address the victimization of women. This should not be taken to imply that violence against men is nonexistent or unimportant. The violence that afflicts men, however, is a different phenomenon from violence against women and must be analyzed as such. Men and women tend to be victims or perpetrators of different kinds of violence, under different circumstances. Men are more likely to be assaulted by strangers (usually men), while women are more likely to be assaulted by intimates or people they know, usually men. This is because violence against women is largely a result of women’s economic and social dependence on men, as cross-cultural studies have demonstrated. The phenomenon of violence against women is part of a network of social practices that devalue women and render them dependent on, and therefore vulnerable to, men in a wide range of situations (2002:10).

Thus the focus on other forms of violence and a watering down of the gendered nature of violence against women as a social problem, increases the likelihood that policy responses will not get close enough to offering adequate solutions to the problem. Those solutions need to address ‘women’s economic and social dependence on men’ by acutely focussing on systemic gender inequalities; which arguably are only visible from a feminist perspective that sees differences between men and women. Lombardo and Meier further argue, “[t]he rare presence of gender experts and the almost non-existent voice of feminist movements in official texts means that the contribution they could offer to the framing of the problem and solution of gender inequality in politics is de facto limited” (2006:160).

Conclusions

While debates and tensions within women’s movements are inevitable and in most cases are healthy ways for those movements to be fully representative,
particularly with respect to issues of intersectionality or diverse ideological perspectives, this paper has argued that there are troubling consequences when movements approach women-focussed policy advocacy from a gendered perspective alongside a more liberal gender-neutral one. While the limited discursive frame and content analysis of child care and anti-violence policy debates presented here for Ontario and British Columbia notably show that ‘women’ and ‘gender equality’ are not completely absent from policy discussions, in many cases feminist messages are muted or confused with more state-friendly gender-neutral frames. The evidence presented here also suggests that feminist institutions, like the freestanding Ministry of Women’s Equality in BC, can help facilitate gender-equality dialogue and framing, but more research is needed to further establish this institutional link and potential.

It is evident that in the eras of neoliberalism and the social investment state it has certainly become more attractive for advocates to pursue short-term anti-violence and child care policy gains by casting lobbying demands in non-threatening language that appeal to government policy-makers. Yet, when those policy gains make scant or no mention of women’s equality, we should question whether or not they are ‘gains’ at all. A shift in lobbying focus that obscures the centrality of women inside of anti-violence and child care policy debates may further dampen women’s movements’ policy influence as the issues and policy responses are increasingly seen as gender-neutral. In the end, feminist voices are not sources of power in these policy circles and this continued trend suggests they may lose what little legitimacy they currently have to continue to speak on these issues.

The challenge for movements in the new millennium will be to reassert the gender-equality reasons for ending women’s experiences of male violence and for the provision of universal, affordable, quality child care.26 Between the 1980s and well into the new millennium, this message has been largely de-emphasized. The longer this occurs, the greater will be the danger that gendered analyses will disappear altogether. Perhaps the first place to start rebuilding the feminist policy project is to address the tensions within movements between those who emphasize women’s differences to men and those who emphasize their similarities as reasons for equal treatment. Only then can feminists put ‘women’ and ‘gender equality’ back into contemporary women-focussed policy debates by making a “clear and consistent case that men and women differ in important ways that should be taken into account in determining policies [and] programs” (Vickers 1997:157). Maybe then feminist advocates can regain some of the power and legitimacy they once held inside of child care and anti-violence policy debates and can expand their influence to achieve true policy success.

Appendix A: List of Analyzed Policy Debate Documents (A=advocacy document; G=government policy document)


26 We see a potential for this with the 2010 CCCABC project, Child Care is a Right, although notably even this dominantly feminist-framed document confuses its message by including gender-neutral language.
2. Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services (2007) *Best Start: Helping Young Children Get the Best Start in Life: Programs and Services.* (G)
6. Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (1999) *Child Care: Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.* (G)
11. Ontario Women’s Directorate (1997) *An Agenda for Action.* (G)
15. Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (2009) *Implementing Early Learning – Bulletin #2 Funding and Quality.* (A)
24. Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (2009) *Response to the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Consultation.* (A)
34. BC Task Force on Child Care (1991) *Showing We Care: A Child Care Strategy for the 90s, Complete and Summary Reports of the Task Force on Child Care,* Victoria: Government of British Columbia. (G)
35. Government of British Columbia (1998) *Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada.* (G)
36. BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2009) *Child Care in British Columbia.* (G)
37. BC Early Childhood Learning Agency (2009) *Expanding Early Learning in British Columbia for Children Aged Three to Five.* (G)
43. Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (2009) *Reaction to the Provincial Budget 2009: Child care crisis not a priority for this government.* (A)
44. Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (2009) *Imagine a child-care system that works for B.C. families.* (A)
45. BC Child Care Advocacy Forum (2008) *Submission to Early Childhood Learning Agency Consultation.* (A)
46. BC Child Care Advocacy Forum (2007) *For the Record – Child Care in BC: What they Say – What they Don’t Say.* (A)
48. Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia (1999) *Child Care Advocacy Forum.* (A)
50. Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (2010) *Child Care is a Right: 2010 New Project launched.* (A)
51. Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (2009) *What is behind BC Government’s new stand on Big Box child care?* (A)
55. Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (2010) *Starting Principles for an Integrated System of Early Care and Learning.* (A)
57. Thomas, Sandra (2002) *Women’s Shelter Prepares for Cuts.* (A)
58. Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter - Jiwa, Fazeela (2010) *Death Does Not Become Her: Pre-Mortem Initiatives.* (A)

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