Gendering the Governance of Child Care: State, Community and Nancy Fraser's Étatism[1]

Tammy Findlay
Post-doctoral Research Fellow
Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), University of British Columbia
tammy.findlay@ubc.ca

*DRAFT Please do not cite without permission from the author

In the fall of 2009, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) launched a national campaign for *public* early childhood education and care. On its face, this isn't really controversial. It is consist with CUPE's broader anti-privatization efforts. And for more than 40 years, the women's movement in Canada has argued that a national, public child care system is fundamental for gender equality. Yet the call for not only public funding, but also public *delivery*, is a significant strategic shift. Until now, child care advocacy organizations, both provincially and nationally have finessed the question of service delivery, entrusting the public and/or non-profit sector.[2] CUPE's campaign and cross-Canada tour has challenged this tactic by defining non-profit delivery as 'private,' and has put the difficult questions of governance front and centre.

So what should a feminist child care system look like? I seek to answer this question through the lens of feminist political economy, with reference to the notion of étatism elaborated by Nancy Fraser in her 2009 article in *New Left Review*. The paper analyzes the gendered contradictions inherent in two distinct models for the governance of child care in Canada. The first approach is reflected in the proposals made by Ontario's Special Advisor on Early Learning, Dr. Charles Pascal in his 2009 report, *With Our Best Future in Mind*. This school-based model embodies feminist principles of universal citizenship and social entitlement, while at the same time raises the specter of feminist critiques of welfare state hierarchy and paternalism (what Fraser calls "second-wave feminism contra étatism") (2009). The second vision, espoused by child care advocates, particularly in British Columbia, is the community-based model. It is indicative of feminist interest in participatory democracy, popular control and empowerment, but runs the risk of reprivatizing responsibility for social reproduction, and falling into the same neoliberal trap as Fraser's "feminist anti-étatism resignified" (2009). I argue that these child care models contain the tensions that exist within feminism itself – between liberalism and socialism and between procedural and substantive democracy, and consider whether "post-neoliberal anti-étatism," as proposed by Fraser, provides a way forward in child care governance.

The paper proceeds in five sections. I begin by outlining Fraser's basic framework. In the next two sections, I describe the school-based and community-based models respectively, and identify their strengths and weaknesses. I then explore the potential for reconciling these models in practice and conclude that child care provides an opportunity to imagine truly democratic social services.

---

[2] See, for example, CCAAC (2004); CCCABC (2007); CCCM (2001); OCBCC (2008a); NBCCC (2006).

Nancy Fraser's Étatism

Fraser (2009) traces the history of the second wave women's movement in the US in relation to four key characteristics of post-war capitalism: economism, androcentrism, étatism, and Westphalianism. I will focus only on étatism here, as it is expressly relevant to the governance of child care.

Étatism refers to the organization of welfare states based on bureaucratic forms and professional, technical expertise. The result, Fraser argues, is that, "[f]ar from being empowered to interpret their needs democratically, via political deliberation and contestation, ordinary citizens were positioned (at best) as passive recipients of satisfactions defined and dispensed from on high" (2009: 102). Second-wave feminism developed a critique of étatism, based on concerns about *process*. Influenced by their experiences with consciousness-raising groups, feminists sought alternatives to top-down, masculine forms of organization and emphasized democratic (i.e. participatory, anti-hierarchical, grassroots) organization (Fraser 2009) through user-controlled women's shelters, health, legal aid, and child care services. This did not entail a rejection of the state, but rather "re-imagining the relation between state and society, they sought to transform those positioned as passive objects of welfare and development policy into active subjects, empowered to participate in democratic processes of need interpretation" (Fraser 105). The goal was to make state institutions more accountable to citizens (106).

Unfortunately, in unintended ways, the feminist critique of étatism ("second-wave feminism contra étatism") has worked to reinforce neoliberal attacks on the welfare state and to legitimize reliance on the voluntary sector to pick up the slack (Fraser 2009). Feminist arguments were used in the US to justify Clinton's welfare reform and in developing countries as NGOs work to offset state retrenchment. Fraser notes that it was "but a short step from second-wave feminism's critique of welfare-state paternalism to Thatcher's critique of the nanny state" (111). This convergence of feminism and neoliberalism acted "to resignify feminist ideals. Aspirations that had a clear emancipatory thrust in the context of state-organized capitalism[3] assumed a far more ambiguous meaning in the neoliberal era" (Fraser 2009: 108). Feminist notions of democratic control have been subverted to promote "individual self-help and community networking" (111).

Fraser proposes a "post-neoliberal anti-étatism" in order to resist this coalescence of feminism and neoliberalism. She suggests that the answer is "a new organization of political power, one that subordinates bureaucratic managerialism to citizen empowerment. The point … is not to dissipate but to strengthen public power" through participatory democracy (Fraser 2009: 116). While she is not specific about what this alternative would look like, Fraser provides an important framework for thinking about the organization of social services. She has identified a central tension in child care governance: the desire to avoid top-down control without reinforcing neoliberal state retrenchment. This dilemma is at the heart of current contestations over public and non-profit delivery of child care services in Canada.

Public Child Care: The School-Based Model

The trend internationally has been to house child care within Ministries of Education (Neuman 2008). This is the case in Iceland, New Zealand, Spain, Slovenia, Sweden, England and Scotland, Norway and the Netherlands (Bennett 2008). Under this approach, municipalities or school boards take on the direct delivery of services. In its call for an integrated, universal, public system of early childhood education and care, CUPE appears open to either option (CUPE 2009). Based on recent developments, the school-based model looks to be the direction that Ontario is moving in (as well as BC and PEI), at least for four and five year olds.

In November 2007, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty appointed Dr. Charles Pascal, executive director of the Atkinson Foundation, to the position of Early Learning Advisor. His task was to make recommendations on the best way to implement full-day learning for four and five year-olds in the province. Dr. Pascal released his report in June 2009, recommending a universal entitlement of two years of free full (school) day early learning for every child who turns four by December 31, delivered by school boards. In addition, the fragmented programs for children and parents (including early learning and care, pre- and post-natal care, family resources, etc.) would be brought together under the Best Start Child and Family Centres, and parental leave would be expanded up to 400 days. This system would be

---

[3] Fraser defines state-organized capitalism as "the hegemonic social formation in the postwar era, a social formation in which states played an active role in steering their national economies" (2009: 100).

governed by a new Early Years Division within the Ministry of Education, which would be responsible for putting the Early Years Policy Framework into action and coordinating the activities of the Ministry of Children and Youth; Municipal Affairs and Housing; Health and Long-term Care; Community and Social Services; Health Promotion; Training, Colleges and Universities; Citizenship and Immigration; Aboriginal Affairs; Francophone Affairs; and initiatives on Poverty Reduction, Literacy and Numeracy. Full-day learning would be provided by a combination of teachers and certified early childhood educators (ECEs) (Pascal 2009).

In response to the Pascal report, in February 2010, the Ontario Liberal government introduced Bill 242, *the Full-Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act*. It would amend the Education Act to:

> Give school boards the responsibility and authority to implement full-day early learning for four- and five-year-olds, staffed by teachers and early childhood educators; Give school boards the responsibility and authority to implement an extended day program – before- and after-school - for four- and five-year-olds, led by early childhood educators; Permit boards to offer before- and after-school programs for older children (ages six to 12); Permit boards to offer programs throughout the year for children aged four to 12, including non-instructional days such as professional development days, school breaks and summer holidays; Give boards the authority and responsibility to set, charge and collect fees for the before- and after-school programs; Recognize the new role of early childhood educators in elementary schools; and Require collaboration among teachers and early childhood educators to provide high-quality and effective play-based education to support enhanced learning and cognitive, emotional and social development for children (Ontario 2010a).

The bill was passed on April 27, 2010, with amendments to stabilize funding for non-profit child care centres, to permit transitional partnerships between school boards and community agencies to deliver before/after school and summer care, and to clarify the roles of teachers and ECEs in the system (Ontario 2010b). Responsibility for child care policy was shifted from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to the Ministry of Education to better integrate services. In fall 2010, the first phase of full (school) day learning for four and five year olds will be implemented, beginning with 35, 000 students in about 600 schools. Schools were chosen in consultation with school boards, municipalities, and local networks, based on available space, community need, existing child care programs, student achievement and implementation readiness. Full roll-out is planned to happen over six years (Ontario 2010b; OCBCC 2009).

Advantages of the School-Based Model: Universal Citizenship and Social Entitlement

Some child care advocates have long viewed the school system as the best vehicle to advance child care services (Mahon 2004), and the Pascal model unfolding in Ontario has generated much praise from educators, child care organizations, health care providers, municipalities, labour, non-profit agencies, and business. This is because the model has several advantages. In the Canadian context, where child care has been mired in a market or charity-based regime, it brings child care into a quality, publicly-funded system that is already focused on children and is based on universal entitlement with minimal parent fees (Friendly and Prentice 2009; Moss and Bennett 2006).[4] Neuman shows that in general, where child care is located under education, wages and training are higher and services are free to parents, whereas under social welfare and health ministries, wages and training are lower, and fees for parents are higher (Neuman 2008). She argues that the school-based model may bring more political and policy status to early childhood education and care as it comes with influence from powerful teachers' unions, helps to define child care as a public good, and underscores that services are a right for all children (Neuman 2008).

---

[4] Mahon (2004), however, points out that it is possible to have a universal entitlement to early learning and care under another Ministry, as this largely happened in Sweden before the shift to education, and is the case in Quebec. She also notes that placement under education does not guarantee universality, as can be seen in England and Scotland.

One of the main arguments in favour of this model is that it will break the traditional divide between early care and learning and better integrate them into a more seamless system (Neuman 2008; Moss and Bennett 2006; Friendly and Prentice 2009). The care/learning split has been accompanied by contradictory funding mechanisms and regulations and disparate staff training, compensation and curriculum (Neuman 2009), but in those jurisdictions where child care has been moved to education ministries, policy silos are breaking down (Friendly and Prentice 2009; Moss and Bennett 2006).

From a feminist political economy perspective, the gendered implications of the school-based option are that parents, especially mothers, have access to affordable services that support their labour market participation, education, and/or parenting responsibilities, and that the largely female child care workforce has good wages and working conditions in unionized workplaces (CUPE 2009). Pascal (2009) also maintains that his proposal will help to address the feminization and racialization of poverty,[5] and that "early learning opportunities provide 'welcome centres' for all young children and families, helping to reduce the isolation and exclusion too often experienced by disadvantaged communities" (10). As will be seen below with the community-based model, given the historical relationship between the voluntary sector and marginalized communities in Canada, universal access through public school delivery may be more inclusive of immigrant, multicultural and Aboriginal communities.[6]

The other major consideration has been voiced primarily by CUPE. It has demonstrated that the growth of big box commercial chains is detrimental to quality and accountability for public money (CUPE 2009; Friendly and Prentice 2009). In public forums across the country last year, the case was made by CUPE that services delivered by either schools or municipalities (as opposed to non-profit organizations) would be most likely to resist the further corporatization of child care and to stand up against international trade agreements ("Building a Better Future" 2009). The Pascal plan does advance CUPE's proposal to a certain extent, placing limitations on future for-profit growth. While existing licensed commercial providers would continue to operate, expansion would occur only in the public and/or non-profit system (Pascal 2009). It must be stressed that Pascal's is not a fully public solution – it allows for either public or non-profit delivery of pre-primary, before and after school, and summer child care. And Bill 242 does not explicitly rule out for-profit providers (Ontario 2010c).

Disadvantages of the School-Based Model: Hierarchy and Paternalism

Despite considerable advantages, there are concerns about the school-based model, including: meeting the needs of working parents; 'schoolification;' and the displacement of community-based providers. Even though the Pascal report was generally received warmly by child care advocates, one of the main areas of contention has to do with the way it blends care and learning throughout the day and year. The universal portion of Ontario's early learning system will run only for the school-day/year. The rest of the time (before and after school and during the summer months), services will be fee-based (with subsidies available for some families) (Pascal 2009). Although fees will be regulated, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) (2009) wonders how a 'reasonable fee' will be defined, and because school boards will set the fees (Ontario 2010a), variations across the province are likely. Therefore, some children will have access to early care and learning opportunities that others will not. This also affirms a longstanding criticism of the education approach – that services are not designed to fit with parental working schedules (Neuman 2008; Chudnovsky 2010). To highlight this issue, as BC proceeds with its plan to extend early learning, advocates in the province are consciously referring to "full *school-day* K" (Chudnovsky 2010).

The extent to which this new system will actually be an integrated one is also an ongoing question. Pascal insists that "[a]dvocates have long recognized that 'good child care educates' and 'good education cares.' It's time to erase the divide" (2009: 16). In spite of that, his proposal actually reinforces the divide by separating the school day from the extended day and summer months, and continuing to treat 'child care' as income-tested and 'learning' as universal. Delivery is further split in that child care, under the ambit of Best Start and Family centres, "could be provided by local or regional governments, school boards, postsecondary institutions, or non-profit agencies," while early learning is the sole domain of the school district (Pascal 2009: 14), and school boards are increasingly trying to use

---

[5] It is interesting, however, that Pascal is much more explicit about the gender equality when he discusses his recommendations on parental leave than he is with early learning.
[6] Although as will also be elaborated later on, this is certainly a debatable point.

regulatory loopholes to extricate themselves from participation in the extended program.[7] The hierarchy between care and learning is visible simply in the language used, where teachers are described as 'educators,' while ECE's provide 'support,' and the choice was made to call the entire system 'Early Learning'.

Moss and Bennett (2006), two of the strongest advocates for moving to the education system are careful to warn against "'schoolification', the school imposing its demands and practices on other services, making them school-like" (2), and Neuman (2008) identifies such processes at work in Belgium, France, and the UK. Community-based child care providers in Canada are anxious about the downward extension of the education paradigm and the loss of ECE values and practices, such as a pedagogical commitment to play-based learning, and a partnership between caregivers and parents (Chudnovsky 2010). Here, the second-wave feminist critique of hierarchical and paternalistic social services, as outlined by Fraser, has resonance. It marks the relationship between learning and care, as well as between schools and child care providers and schools and parents.

Community-based providers are worried about their place in Ontario's new early learning system. As positions open up in the extended day/year services, staff retention in the non-profit sector will be a challenge, and whilst the Ontario government came through at the eleventh hour with additional child care funding, advocates are clear that this will not be enough to ease the transition and to address systemic under-funding (OCBCC 2009, 2010). In other jurisdictions, there has been difficulty merging public and community-based operators into one system. Centre directors in New Jersey's developing preschool Program, indicated that there seemed to be a hierarchy of public and community providers. Whitebbook et al. (2008) show that managing these relationships is not easy, and there has been tension between the community-based and the school district about the valuing of knowledge, with some wanting a more collaborative approach to governance. One of their interviews revealed that "[i]t's always [as if] the district knows everything, and the providers know nothing, but because the district has the money, providers don't want to complain or say anything" (Whitebook et al. 2008: 38).

This speaks to some of the fundamental differences in understandings of engagement, participation, and democracy. Elaborated below, community-based child care has a long tradition of directly involving parents in their services. CUPE's campaign did not sufficiently value this aspect. In his report, Pascal does allude to a system in which "[a]ll families will be welcome to participate" (2009: 20), but he is not very specific about how this would be achieved. At a recent talk, Pascal (2010) spoke of the need to engage parents, especially fathers, but when expounding on the role of communities, it was local municipal authorities that figured most prominently. From the perspective of participatory democracy, this might be a good start, but does not go nearly far enough. In the face of Ontario's Early Learning Plan, the OCBCC asked: " Will there be a Parent Engagement strategy? How will parents be welcomed into the classroom?" (OCBCC 2009). It is at this level of 'everyday democracy' (Moss 2007) that Fraser is working when she speaks of the desire for "liberation from traditional authority" (2009: 110), and is why some in the child care movement are more inclined to the community-based model.

Non-profit Child Care: The Community-Based Model

The community-based model is difficult to define. For some, it acts as a default for anything that is not public. New Jersey, for instance, which has rapidly expanded its preschool system through a mixed delivery model of public and 'community-based' providers, includes both non-profit and for-profit providers in the latter category (Mead 2009). However, due to the significant differences between non-profit and for-profit providers,[8] I have not adopted this definition. Following its usage by child care advocates in Canada, I am using 'community-based,' to refer only to non-profits, where collective ownership and control are central principles.

One of the most comprehensive descriptions of a community-based model can be found in Brennan's history of the Australian child care movement (1998). She argues that Australia's unique governance approach was influenced by women and feminists. In Australia, prior to the growth of privatization in the 1990s, the "majority of child care services [were] provided by non-profit organisations managed by community groups (usually comprised of parents and child care workers)" (Brennan 1998 5). This can be traced back to the 1890s, when voluntary organizations emerged to improve the care

---

[7] Confidential phone interview 2, May 17, 2010.
[8] See, for instance, Mahon (2004), Prentice (2005), Crampton et al. (2005).

and education of children, and was taken up by the women's movement in the 1960s. Brennan defines community-based as non-profit services that are run by parent committees (1998).

In the community-based model, the Australian national government played an important funding and standard-setting function. The Labor government saw this as essential to planning and equality of access across the country (Brennan 1998). Alongside this commonwealth presence, Australia developed an extensive system of community control. One of the key elements was that public funding was linked to requirements for community management. This was spelled out in the 1972 Child Care Act, which provided that "the only services to receive federal funding would be those initiated by local groups" (Brennan 1998 68). National governments would allocate funds to local governments on the condition that they "demonstrated that they had consulted with their residents. Local governments were expected to 'initiate community planning, make the final decisions as to which groups [would] be funded, disburse funds and co-ordinate the programmes in each area" (1998 88). This was the 'submissions process' (Brennan 1998). In addition, in the 1980s,

> [p]lanning committees were established in each state and territory to give advice on funding priorities and to represent the interests of each level of government as well as a range of community groups … The composition of these committees varied but in addition to representatives from commonwealth, state and local governments, they generally included members of community organizations, ethnic groups and women's advisory units (Brennan 1998 175).

In Canada, the community-based model also has resonance with child care advocates. In 2004, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC), a pan-Canadian organization that promotes quality, inclusive, accessible, publicly-funded, non-profit child care, released their child care strategy. The document laid out some early principles for community-based child care, calling for "community planning to determine the types of child care services and their location" and for services that "are responsive to the diversity of Canada's communities, promote social inclusion and provide for community and parental input" (CCAAC 2004: 26-27).

Elements of community governance already exist (or did exist) in child care in Canada. In some child care centres, parents participate as board members, volunteers, and/or fundraisers and parents make up the majority of child care boards in Quebec (Mahon 2004; Prentice 2006). In certain Canadian jurisdictions, notably in Quebec and Vancouver, there are well-developed governance processes that form the foundation for Mahon's (2006) vision of a democratic child care system. Beyond the basics of treating children as citizens, providing just wages and public, non-profit delivery of services, Mahon (2006) holds up the "neighbourhood 'hub' system" as a model. In addition to acting as networks of co-located, integrated services for children and parents (2006; Anderson 2005), the hub, in combination with the municipality, serves as the locale for democratic control and accountability to elected boards and parents.

The hub system has been unfolding in the city of Vancouver since at least the early 1990s.[8] In their *Blueprint for Community Architecture for Early Childhood Learning and Care*, the YWCA Canada and Vancouver sought to build on the existing practice where "the majority of Vancouver's programs for children and their families are already provided by locally-based non-profit organizations and about half of Vancouver's licensed group child care programs are currently located in school board, park board or city facilities" and there are several local Early Childhood Development and child care tables (Anderson 2005: 10). The Blueprint envisioned a system in which:

> Hubs are operated by non-profit community organizations, with Boards of Directors that are accountable to their constituents – members, families and other neighbourhood stakeholders. With resources in place for service infrastructure, hubs can also be accountable to help plan, coordinate and deliver a continuum of child development services. They can also develop a process for community input and feedback regarding programs and services (Anderson 2005: 6).

Expanding more concretely on the lessons from the Vancouver experiments, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) has recently developed a comprehensive plan for a community-based, non-profit child care system.[9] Elaborating what community owned and controlled child care would look like, the CCCABC calls on communities to "imagine an accountable governing body in your

community with the mandate, power and resources to develop and deliver child care" (CCCABC 2007: 1). These bodies, either appointed or elected, would be democratically controlled by communities by:

- Being **participatory**, with child, family, caregiver, and community involvement
- Reflecting a high level of **community ownership**
- Being delivered through **non-profit or public** organizations
- Allowing for political **autonomy**
- Being of a size/scale that allows a **direct relationship** between users and caregivers
- Having the **infrastructure** to support community involvement
- Allowing service delivery to be **decentralized**, and
- Building on community **strengths and capacities** (CCCABC 2007: 4, emphasis theirs).

The CCCABC goes on to explain that:

> Operating within a strong provincial public policy that guarantees access and quality, over time **Community Child Care Boards** would evolve into governing bodies with:
> • **A mandate** to plan, develop and deliver child care services that meet the needs of their community
> • **Capital budgets** to create sufficient non-profit and/or publicly-owned spaces to meet community needs
> • **Operating budgets** to deliver affordable, quality child care, and
> • **Decision-making processes** that hold them accountable to their communities (2007 8, emphasis theirs).

Child care coalitions in New Brunswick, Ontario, and Manitoba have also emphasized community ownership, planning and control.[9]

Advantages of the Community-Based Model: Democracy, Popular Control and Empowerment

The advantages of the community-based model are perhaps less tangible than in the school-based model, invoking democratic values of popular control and user empowerment. The principles underlying Australia's community-based system stemmed from a context similar to that discussed by Fraser in the US. Brennan explains that in the late 1960s,

> [f]eminists formed community child care lobby groups … and called for the public provision of a range of child care services which would be run by parents and which families could use at their own discretion … Feminists expressed demands for new types of services which would be government-funded but managed and controlled by parents (1998 8).

The Women's Liberation 'Community Controlled Child Care' action group formed, and the

> philosophy of the group was firmly grounded in a variant of feminism which placed a high value on self-help activities and opposed the 'professionalization' of child care … According to this ideal, women could develop child care services where they controlled what happened and were involved in choosing staff and planning the program. The skills and resources of residents of the local neighbourhoods should be drawn upon wherever possible before recourse was taken to outside experts. It was a model in which, to use and expression of the times, professionals were 'on tap, not on top' (Brennan 1998 66-67).

Women in the trade union movement also called for state-funded, parent-controlled services (Brennan 1998 67). In fact, this community-based approach can be traced back further. In 1944 the Australian Women's Charter called for the commonwealth government to "subsidise the establishment of a network of child centres to be developed and administered by a combination of State and local governments and elected citizens' bodies" (1998 50). Community-based child care is about putting a philosophical stance

---

[9] NBCCC (2007), OCBCC (2008b), CCCM (2001).

into practice. This philosophy values local knowledge and experience, and positions parents, child care workers and advocates as active players in the policy field (CCCABC 2007).

For Judy Rebick, this is also the best strategy for resisting neoliberalism. Tracing democratic movements and experiments around the world, she focuses on questions of political *process*, arguing that "change will come from the process of building power from the bottom up" (2009: 11). Like Fraser, she draws from the tradition of women's movements in the 1960s and 1970s, that emphasized the democratization of services through user control. She argues that participatory democracy is the only way to sustain alternatives to neoliberalism. One of the examples she explores is the delivery of social services through community organizations "called *missions* in Venezuela. They are a decentralized, democratic model for the delivery of social, health, and other community services, and they are highly successful" (48).

Rebick (2009) also holds that participatory processes (like participatory budgets or community organizing) have served to engage traditionally marginalized groups – women, young people, indigenous people. There is also some evidence that non-profit organizations are more effective in meeting the needs of multicultural communities. In their study of primary care services in New Zealand, Crampton et al. maintain that

> [n]onprofits can respond to the needs of minority community interests—for example, minority ethnic groups—because their governance boards are more able to closely represent minority groups than are their for-profit business counterparts, whose governance boards are likely to reflect the interests of the proprietary owners or shareholders … The capacity of nonprofits to independently represent the interests of minorities assumes great importance in New Zealand, where the indigenous population, Maori, has striven to establish primary care services tailored to meet its needs and has used the nonprofit form as a vehicle for increasing self-determination" (Crampton et al. 2005: 468).

They submit that non-profits meet the needs of diverse communities that are unmet by government and for-profits, and that this is often integral to their mission (Crampton et al. 2005). Then again, some have problematized the idea of 'community' on the very basis of social inclusion.

Disadvantages of the Community-Based Model: Reprivatization and Neoliberal Retrenchment

Feminist and anti-racist literature on social capital and the social economy[10] can provide important insights into 'community.' Feminists have shown that social capital and economy are gendered concepts that make invisible women's responsibilities for social reproduction in the family and the community (Bezanson and Carter 2006).   The participation of families and the voluntary sector is pivotal to community-based child care. On the one hand, this represents a democratizing prospect that is about empowering communities. On the other hand, it advances reprivatization and neoliberal retrenchment by offloading state responsibilities onto 'community' and reinforcing social hierarchies (Bezanson and Carter 2006; Arneil 2006).

For instance, Rebick (2009) highlights some very interesting cases where participatory processes are being put into place that can inform thinking on governance. However, there are also reasons for caution in some of her examples. In discussing Porto Alegre, Brazil, she notes that child care was identified by the community as a priority: "The PT, being socialists, believed in state-run child care, but they couldn't afford it. Community groups stepped forward and offered to house the child-care centres for a fraction of the price it would cost in the public sector … This compromise began to build trust" (40). It is problematic when the primary motivation for community involvement is cost-saving,

---

[10] Robert Putnam's oft-cited definition of social capital is the "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam 1995: 67). A closely related concept, the social economy is one of many labels used to identify activities that are, to varying degrees, distinct (although not entirely separate) from the state and the market (Hall and Banting 2000). Alternative names in English and French include the third sector, non-profit sector, voluntary sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), philanthropic sector, charitable sector, cooperative sector, solidarity-based economy, community or community-based sector and community economy (Tremblay et al. 2002).

rather than democracy, and that cost-saving often comes at the expense of staff wages and adds to women's unpaid work. When voluntary labour is a coping strategy, it is not empowering, it is "coercive" Prentice (2006), "compulsory," "oppressive and non-reciprocal" (Bezanson and Carter 2006).

In Australia, as seen earlier, 'community management' was integral to the system, and it revolved around a 'submission model of funding,' where communities initiated all projects (Brennan 1998). Brennan (1998) summarizes the contradictory nature of the submissions approach:

> Its purpose was to minimise government involvement in day-to-day administrative tasks and to allow local groups to manage their own services. Community management meant that a vast amount of work (from overseeing the construction of centres through to advertising the service, hiring staff, administering the commonwealth grant and liasing with state agencies) was performed by unpaid volunteers (127).

In feminist political economy terms, the social economy and social capital absolutely serve as 'shock absorbers' or 'buffers' for inadequate state action on child care.

Brennan notes that the gendered nature of community was not considered in the Labor government's community management approach and that the submissions process acted to intensify community inequalities. Providers had to be approved, legal organizations, which favoured historical voluntary organizations with professional skills that were best able to compete for funding. The most advantaged neighbourhoods benefited, resulting in regional disparities across states (Brennan 1998). This affirms other research that inequalities in neighbourhood social capital translate into unequal access to services (Mahon and Jenson 2006).

Other social inequalities can result from the community-based model. Australia's history of philanthropy in early care and learning is similar to Canada's. Brennan (1998) refers to the early kindergarten movement's "child-saving mission," where kindergarten was part of the early 19th century social reform and philanthropic movement targeted at the poor and working class to impart middle class values and morals. Aboriginal peoples also have a similar suspicion of child welfare in both countries due to a history of intervention and apprehension (Brennan 1998). This racial and cultural legacy continues to shape communities today.

In her interrogation of social capital, Arneil argues that romanticizations of America's civic past (à la Putnam) overlook the ways in which social capital has been used to meet harmful ends. Historically, women, the poor and cultural minorities (immigrants, Aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities, sexual minorities) have been either excluded from organizations and social networks, or treated as "charitable projects" by 'progressive' social reformers and welfare advocates, often led by Protestantism, the eugenics movement and the first wave women's movement (Arneil 2006 20). She demonstrates that attempts at building social capital during the Progressive Era in the US through social welfare and education (settlement houses, kindergartens and residential schools) were intended to strengthen "'civic virtue', to 'morally uplift' and to build 'civilization' … What appeared to be well-intentioned social capital building premised on the idea of creating civil communities with educated citizens instead caused profound cultural damage and pain," most deeply for Aboriginal communities (Arneil 2006 30). The social economy and social capital can be powerful venues for knowledge production and the reproduction of unequal social relations, so there may be a conflict between local democracy and social inclusion.

Community-based child-care poses a challenge for feminist political economy, because it exposes the tension between two central feminist concerns: the democratization of the welfare state and the reprivatization of social reproduction. For Fraser, by embracing the voluntary sector with too little attention to this contradiction, "second-wave feminism has unwittingly provided a key ingredient of the new spirit of neoliberalism" (Fraser 2009: 110). But she is optimistic about the future, seeking a "post-neoliberal anti-étatism" that bolsters public services through participatory democracy (2009 116). Is this possible? And if so, what might it look like in the case of child care?

The Best of Both Worlds? A Participatory Public Child Care System

In child care, a "post-neoliberal anti-étatism" would need to combine the universal entitlement of the school-based model with the popular control of the community-based model. This isn't easy. But it isn't impossible either. The two approaches are not necessarily at odds. Feminism itself has been about forging common ground across liberalism and socialism, individualism and collectivism, institutional and grass-roots, decentralization and centralization and procedural and substantive democracy. This has been a major strength of the Canadian women's movement, and the unique contribution of feminist political economy in Canada (Luxton 2006). This orientation can guide a re-envisioning of child care governance that balances central authority with popular power.

There are already-existing examples that move in this direction. Jenson et al. explain that what distinguishes the role of the voluntary sector in child care in social democratic regimes from conservative and liberal ones, is that community control is built into publicly provided services (2003).[11] This is what the CCCABC demands when they state that "[c]ommunity-based governance does not let senior levels of government off the hook!" (2007 10). A participatory public child care system must situate the democratic processes of community-based services within a pan-Canadian child care program that is properly funded, carefully planned and regulated, non-profit, coordinated, universal, high quality, affordable, accessible, inclusive, and accountable, and where child care workers are well-paid (Anderson 2005; CCCABC 2007; Jenson et al. 2003). This requires a social policy framework that strengthens social networks, makes social reproduction a public responsibility (Bezanson and Carter 2006), and works across scales of governance. The federal government's role would be funding and the setting of standards, enshrined in legislation, and the provinces (preferably under one Ministry) would take on planning, regulation, monitoring and coordination and would make partnerships for public delivery with either school districts or municipalities (CCAAC 2004; CCCABC 2007; Mahon 2004). The principal mandate of these local authorities delivering child care services would be to actively engage with child care workers, parents and community groups.

This does not mean that public participation is a purely local task. Citizens have a right to engage at multiple scales. Mahon (2004) suggests an independent national Early Child Learning and Care Council, modeled on Romanow's health care recommendation, that would perform data collection and analysis, provide advice, and foster public engagement (Mahon 2004). Similarly, the CCAAC calls for a federal department to "develop and implement mechanisms to receive input from the child care sector and stakeholders" (2004: 17). The federal government can also promote local participation. Even though the submissions mechanism was problematic, one of the strengths of the Australian system was that the national government took a leadership role in requiring community involvement. In Ontario, Pascal (2009) sees potential in the Best Start community networks made up of municipalities, school boards, parents, and community agencies, if they didn't operate on a voluntary basis. If federal legislation is to guarantee the fundamental principles of universality, quality, and inclusion, surely the role of communities should be explicitly laid out as well.

Furthermore, community associations ought to have core, public funding and training in civic engagement to make true partnership realistic (Bezanson and Carter 2006) and to break from the past federal practice of "supporting more conservative advocacy organisations while marginalizing the more vocal critics" (Jenson et al., 2003: 152). Organizations in the voluntary sector are not simply (or primarily) service providers. Their most valuable contribution is through advocacy, knowledge production, representation and accountability. The YWCA Canada and Vancouver blue print for child care built support for community governance into its costing model (Anderson 2005), and the CCAAC includes funding for voluntary child care organizations as a key part of developing the system (CCAAC 2004). In addition to being the primary providers of parental and paid child care, women are largely doing the organizing and advocating for child care (Friendly 2006). Federal funding for advocacy is a basic right of citizenship and is vital for advancing gender equality.

Advocacy organizations and local communities must be involved at all stages of policy: agenda-setting, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (CCAAC 2004; Pascal 2009). Pascal stresses that communities expect this consultation to be authentic and are fully aware when it is not:

---

[11] However, what I am proposing would go much further in engaging citizens than what currently exists in the Nordic countries.

According to the Canadian Council on Learning Report on literacy skills among Aboriginal people, meaningful parent engagement must also include an active role in governance bodies. I studied the Aboriginal advisory bodies that some school boards have to inform a better and more respectful environment for Aboriginal children in the schools. Reviews are mixed. One roundtable participant said: 'The advisory council stuff is just window dressing. The board would be better off and we would too if they created two permanent places on the board for Aboriginal leaders.' On the other hand, an Aboriginal education leader remarked: 'We are making excellent progress with our Board … They are committed with resources for curriculum, teacher training, and other gestures of genuine respect' (Pascal 2009 31).

Of course, community control has to engage the whole community through inclusion and the representation of diversity (Arneil 2006; Pascal 2009), which will not happen without effort. Pascal (2010) recommends anti-oppression training throughout the early learning system.

Public officials would also benefit from education in citizen engagement processes and could learn from other jurisdictions where participation is more integral to child care services. It was seen earlier that the Australian model made extensive use of multi-sectoral planning committees (Brennan 1998), and that child care in Quebec is governed by local committees (Mahon 2004). Reggio Emilia, Italy also has highly developed structures for democratic, community control. Most were started by progressive municipal governments, and some by the Catholic community (Spaggiari 1998). The services emerged from an historical context that valued democracy in educational curriculum and in governance (Martin 1997). According to Martin,

Reggio services have been built on the basis of continually developing relationships between the local state and citizens, between management and employees, between professionals and other workers, between the staff, children and parents, and, more recently, between the public, private and voluntary sectors … The services are excellent because the participatory processes through which they have been developed over three decades find expression too in every moment of their delivery (Martin 1997 2).

In this model, they have attempted to strike a balance between parent empowerment and overload. As Martin indicates,

these children and their parents are not 'consumers' of a service, much less its 'customers'. They have much more power over the deployment of state resources than either of those terms imply. They are participants in the daily recreation of the services they use, but their voluntary efforts complement those of paid staff rather than substituting for them as so many 'user involvement' projects do. The state here is indeed a facilitator, but not in the sense of abandoning its own responsibilities, but rather of acquitting them more effectively (1997 6).

The specific infrastructure for local participation includes school Advisory Councils[12] and "school-city" committees that bring community members together. The role of the Advisory Committee has evolved over time from a largely administrative focus (on enrolment, fees, and new centres), to facilitator of participation. The Advisory Council is elected every two years for each centre. Since there are 32 schools in the town of Reggio Emilia, there are 32 Advisory Councils. In addition, two or three members from each council sit on the Municipal Board of Infant-Toddler and Preprimary Education with the Administrative Director of Early Education, pedagogical experts, the elected city official responsible for education, and the mayor. In a school with 75 students, the Council would have about 19 parents, 13 educators, and 7 townspeople, and the education staff includes teachers, cooks and aides, which Spaggiari says, allows for the "integration of different wisdoms" (Spaggiari 1998 103-104). There are a

---

[12] Participation in Advisory Council elections is high. 75% of parents vote in them, and a high proportion of the community participate as members of the Council. Spaggiari provides that "in 1993-1996, out of 2, 550 families using our municipal early childhood services, 554 parents were elected. That means that one in five families participated in the running of the infant-toddler centres and preprimary schools" (198 103).

range of other ways to participate at the classroom level, in small group meetings, parent-teacher conferences, theme-based meetings, contact with experts, labs, holidays and celebrations and other activities (Spaggiari 1998 105-6).

Pascal's plan for Ontario incorporates some of these elements of community democracy. He hopes to "[i]mprove parent engagement strategies in all schools" and to see a "transformation of all elementary schools into community schools" (Pascal 2010 17, 52). Although Pascal gives few details about *how* to engage parents, he is clearer about the broader child care community. As the Early Learning system evolves, he recommends that

> [w]ith the assistance of the Special Advisor on Early Learning, an implementation reference group, comprising practitioners and other 'on the ground' leaders, should be formed to provide advice on major aspects of implementation, such as identifying and removing barriers, professional development strategies, consolidated funding, and an accountable process that will inform the development of the Early Years Policy Framework" (Pascal 2010 51).[13]

Moving forward, existing Best Start Networks (including school boards, municipalities, public health, child care, community partners, and parents) could lend more permanence to these governance processes[14] and are a foundation on which to construct more responsive and community-driven early learning and child care services. In this way, a participatory public child care system might be the antidote to schoolification – scaling up the ECE pedagogical approach and its democratic principles, into the school system.

Conclusion

Feminist political economy emphasizes the tension between structural constraints and agency – the importance of negotiating contradictions that are inherent in a neoliberal gender order to develop democratic alternatives. This analysis was guided by a concern with the ways in which power inequalities are institutionalized in governing structures, as well as with the agency of political actors and the potential for democratization.

In this paper, I sought to locate CUPE's recent national campaign for *public* early childhood education and care within broader feminist debates about governance. Using Nancy Fraser's theoretical framework of étatism as a starting point, I maintained that two models for the governance of child care represent opportunities and challenges for feminist thinking. The public, school-based model outlined by Charles Pascal in Ontario, defines child care as a universal entitlement, but may reinforce hierarchical and paternalistic welfare state tendencies. The non-profit, community-based model can facilitate both popular control over child care services, and neoliberal reprivatization. I argued that taking the best of each approach could build a participatory public child care system. Indeed, this is, as Fraser says, "a moment in which feminists should think big" (2009 117).

Bibliography

Textual Sources

Anderson, Lynell. (2005). "Lots to Build On, More to Do: Blueprint for Community Architecture for Early Childhood Learning and Care." YWCA Canada. Access at: http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/res/pubs/pdf/YWCA_lots_to_build.pdf

Arneil, Barbara. (2006). Diverse Communities: The Problem with Social Capital. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bezanson, K. and M. Luxton. (2006). "Introduction: Social Reproduction and Feminist Political Economy."

---

[13] There are differences of opinion in the community about the extent to which communities are currently being engaged in the implementation of Early Learning in Ontario (Confidential phone interview 1 & 2, May 17, 2010)

[14] Confidential phone interview 1, May 17, 2010; Pascal (2010).

In *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neoliberalism*. Kate Bezanson and Meg Luxton, eds. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. pp. 3-10.

Brennan, Deborah. (1998). *The Politics of Australian Child Care: Philanthropy to Feminism and Beyond*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

"Building a Better Future for Canada's Children: The Need for Public Child Care." (2009). Public Forum. Vancouver Public Library.

Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). (2009). "Why Public Early Childhood Education and Care? Access at: http://cupe.ca/updir/Why_public_early_childhood_education_and_care.pdf

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC). (2004). *From Patchwork to Framework: A Child Care Strategy for Canada*. Access at: http://www.ccaac.ca/pdf/resources/framework_cc.pdf

Chudnovsky, Rita. (2010). "Is Full Day Kindergarten a Good Idea?" Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC. Access at: http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabcdocs/integrated/files/alldayk_article_feb2010.pdf

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC). (2007). "Our Child Care Plan." Access at: http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabcdocs/pdf/cccabc_ccplan.pdf

-----. (CCCABC). (2007). *The rEvolution of Community-Controlled Child Care in BC*. Access at: http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/cccabcdocs/governance/ggcc_final_report.pdf

Child Care Coalition of Manitoba (CCCM). (2001). "Blueprint for Action: A Five Year Plan for Manitoba Child Care Policy Redesign." Access at: http://childcaremanitoba.org/images/stories/docs/cccmpublications/CCM_Blueprint.pdf

Crampton, Peter, Peter Davis, Roy Lay-Yee, Antony Raymont, Christopher B. Forrest, and Barbara Starfield. (2005). "Is Primary Care What It Claims to Be? Does Community-Governed Nonprofit Primary Care Improve Access to Services? Cross-Sectional Survey of Practice Characteristics." *International Journal of Health Services*. 35 no. 3. pp. 465–478.

Fraser, Nancy. (2009). "Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History." *New Left Review*. 56. pp. 97-117.

Friendly, Martha and Susan Prentice. (2009). *About Canada: Childcare*. Halifax: Fernwood Press.

Hall, M. and K.G. Banting. (2000). "The Nonprofit Sector in Canada: An Introduction." In *The Nonprofit Sector in Canada: Roles and Relationships*. K.G. Banting, ed. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. pp. 1-28.

Jenson, J. R. Mahon, and S. D. Phillips. (2003). "No Minor Matter: The Political Economy of Childcare in Canada." In *Changing Canada: Political Economy as Transformation*. W. Clement and L.F. Vosko, eds. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. pp. 135-160.

Luxton, Meg. "Feminist Political Economy in Canada and the Politics of Social Reproduction." In *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neoliberalism*. Kate Bezanson and Meg Luxton, eds. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006. pp. 11-44.

Mahon, R. (2006). "A Real Alternative: The Canadian Election and Child Care Policy." *The Bullet*. 12. Access at: http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/bullet012.html

-----. (2004). "Early Child Learning and Care in Canada: Who Rules? Who Should Rule? Child Care for a Change: Shaping the 21st Century. Canadian Council on Social Development. Access at: http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2004/cc/mahon.pdf

Mahon, R. and J. Jenson. (2006). *Learning from Each Other: Early Learning and Child Care Experiences in Canadian Cities*. Social Development Canada, The City of Toronto, and Vancouver Joint Council on Child Care.

Martin, Brendan. (1997). "Growing Trust in Public Service: Why Reggio Emilia's Pre-schools are World Class." Access at: http://www.publicworld.org/docs/italykids.pdf

Mead, Sara. (2009). Education Reform Starts Early Lessons from New Jersey's PreK-3rd Reform Efforts. New America Foundation. Access at: http://www.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/Education%20Reform%20Starts%20Early_0.pdf

Moss, Peter. (2007). Bringing Politics into the Nursery: Early Childhood Education as Democratic Practice." Working Paper 43. Bernard van Leer Foundation: The Hague, The Netherlands. Access at: http://www.ecdgroup.com/docs/lib_004343335.pdf

Moss, Peter and John Bennett. (2006). *Toward a New Pedagogical Meeting Place? Bringing Early Childhood into the Education System*. Briefing paper for a Nuffield Educational Seminar. The Nuffield Foundation. Access at: http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/fileLibrary/doc/briefingpaper.draft3.august17.doc

Neuman, Michelle J. (2008). "Governance of Early Childhood Education and Care: Recent Developments in OECD Countries." In The Routledge Reader in Early Childhood Education. Elizabeth Wood, ed. New York: Routledge.

New Brunswick Child Care Coalition. (NBCCC). (2007). "Child Care in New Brunswick at the Crossroads." Brief Submitted to the Department of Family and Community Services as part of the Early Learning and Child Care Public Consultation. Access at: http://www.nbccc-csgnb.ca/downloads/BriefNBCCC_elcc.doc

-----. (2006). "About Us." Access at: http://www.nbccc-csgnb.ca/about-e.asp

Ontario. (2010a). "Backgrounder: Implementing Full-Day Learning For Four- and Five-Year-Olds." Access at: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/nr/10.02/bg0217.html

-----. (2010b). "Ontario Passes Full-Day Learning Act: McGuinty Government Also Takes Key Steps To Stabilize Child Care And Improve The Delivery Of Children's Services." Access at: http://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2010/04/ontario-passes-full-day-learning-act.html

-----. (2010c). *Bill 242: An Act to Amend the Education Act and Certain Other Acts in Relation to Early Childhood Educators, Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten, Extended Day Programs and Certain Other Matters*. 2nd Session, 39th Legislature, Ontario. Access at: http://www.ontla.on.ca/bills/bills-files/39_Parliament/Session2/b242rep.pdf

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC). (2010). "Breaking News, Additional Fee Subsidies and Capital Funding Announced." Access at: http://www.childcareontario.org/?p=3484

-----. (2009). "Implementing Early Learning - Bulletin #1." Access at: http://www.childcareontario.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Implementing-Early-Learning-1.pdf

-----. (2008a). "Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care Annual Report." Access at: http://www.childcareontario.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/ocbcc-annual-report-2008.pdf

-----. (2008b). "A Transformational Vision of Early Learning and Care in Ontario." Access at:

http://www.childcareontario.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/ocbcc-full-day-learning-submission3.pdf

Prentice, Susan. (2006). "Childcare, Co-Production and the Third Sector in Canada." *Public Management Review*. 8 no. 4. pp. 521-536.

-----. (2005). "For-Profit Child Care: Past, Present and Future." Childcare Resource and Research Unit. Access at: http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/op21/op21.pdf

Pascal, Charles E. (2010). "Ontario's Commitments." Inspiring Innovation – Investing in Human Capital: Early Care and Learning Hubs. April 28. Asia Pacific Hall, Morris J Wosk Centre for Dialogue, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, British Columbia.

-----. (2009). *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*. Report to the Premier by the Special Advisor on Early Learning. Access at: http://www.ontario.ca/ontprodconsume/groups/content/@gopsp/@initiative/documents/document/ont06_018899.pdf

Putnam, R. (1995). "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy*. 6(1). pp. 65-78.

Rebick, Judy. (2009). *Transforming Power: From the Personal to the Political*. Toronto: Penguin.

Spaggiari, Sergio. (1998). "The Community-Teacher Partnership in the Governance of the Schools." In *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach-Advanced Reflections*. Second Edition. Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini and George Forman, eds. Greenwich: Ablex Publishing. pp. 99-112.

Tremblay, L. et al. (2002). "Introduction." In *Social Economy: Health and Welfare in Four Canadian Provinces*. Y. Vaillancourt and L. Tremblay, eds. (S.A. Stilitz, Trans.) Halifax: Fernwood Publishing. pp. 19-27.

Whitebook, Marcy, Sharon Ryan, Fran Kipnis and Laura Sakai. (2008). "Partnering for Preschool: A Study of Center Directors in New Jersey's Mixed-Delivery Abbott Program." Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. Access at: http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce/pdf/partnering_preschool_report08.pdf

Interviews

Confidential Phone Interview 1. May 17, 2010.

Confidential Phone Interview 2. May 17, 2010.