CARING FOR CHILDREN

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND PUBLIC POLICY IN CANADA

Edited by Rachel Langford,
Susan Prentice, and
Patrizia Albanese

UBCPress · Vancouver · Toronto

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Caring for children (Vancouver, B.C.)
Caring for children : social movements and public policy in Canada / edited by Rachel Langford, Susan Prentice, and Patrizia Albanese.

Includes bibliographical references and index.
Issued in print and electronic formats.
ISBN 978-0-7748-3428-5 (hardcover). – ISBN 978-0-7748-3430-8 (PDF). – ISBN 978-0-7748-3431-5 (EPUB). – ISBN 978-0-7748-3432-2 (Kindle)

1. Child care – Canada. 2. Social movements – Canada. 3. Canada – Social policy. I. Langford, Rachel, editor II. Prentice, Susan, editor III. Albanese, Patrizia, editor IV. Title.

HQ778.7.C3C3624 2017 362.70971 C2017-900046-2
C2017-900047-0

Canada

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada (through the Canada Book Fund), the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Set in Segoe and Warnock by Apex CoVantage, LLC
Copy editor: Deborah Kerr
Indexer: Sergey Lobachev
Cover designer: Will Brown

UBC Press
The University of British Columbia
2029 West Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2
www.ubcpress.ca

Contents

Tables and Figures

Tables

Figures

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding parts of the research and the publication of this book. Thanks go to the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson University and the Department of Sociology and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Manitoba for their ongoing support of our research and scholarly endeavours. The contributions of research assistants Brooke Richardson, Lyndsay Macdonald, Brianne Messina-Goertzen, and Bernadette Summers in documenting the important work of Canadian childcare advocates from 2001 to 2010 are greatly appreciated. We warmly acknowledge the Canadian early childhood education and care community for their sustaining vision of what caring for children and their families could – and should – be.

This page intentionally left blank

CARING FOR CHILDREN

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

Movements and Policies – The Troubles of Caring for Children

SUSAN PRENTICE, PATRIZIA ALBANESE, AND RACHEL LANGFORD

History, politics, power, and social relations over-determine the association that women – and particularly feminists – have with children. Whereas feminists may love individual children, they also point out that, under patriarchy, women and children merge into the single object "womenandchildren" (Enloe 1991). Children, like women, have a complicated place in contemporary Western culture. They are socially depicted as deeply precious yet are consigned primarily to the private care of their parents. Although many cultures know that it takes a village to raise a child, colonial Canada has preferred to see children as a family responsibility. Like the Jesuits who asserted that children who remained under their influence to the age of seven would be theirs forever, Canadian officials and religious leaders sought to "kill the Indian in the child" through residential schools. Under both criminal and civil law, all women and children fell under the protection – or the violence – of the "head of the family," a legacy that continues to shape Canadian households. When families are deemed to be performing normatively, the state generally leaves them alone. Middle-class and affluent families are thus usually accorded significant, and often troubling, privacy. In contrast, children and parents in working-class, Aboriginal, immigrant, and other minority families are too often scrutinized, over-policed, and made the object of unwanted public intervention.

In light of this heavy history, women have a particular relationship to children. In comparison to men, they are believed to be naturally better with

children, more suited to their care and upbringing. This is often explained by reference to biology, to women's supposedly innate nature and nurturing maternal instinct. As Jane Jenson (1989) argues, what is seen simply as women's natural talents means that the expertise, knowledge, and experience that many women bring to caring for children are under-appreciated and misunderstood. In short, caring for children is not seen as skilled work. Moreover, it is rarely socially valued, and when paid, it is almost invariably paid poorly.

Feminists have had a long and complicated relationship with children's issues. Carole Pateman (1988) coined the term "Wollstonecraft's Dilemma" to explain two problematic routes to citizenship and to women's liberation more broadly. Drawing on the eighteenth-century writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1970), Pateman pointed to the seesaw of impossible choices confronting women who seek equality. On one side, we might insist that the ideal of citizenship be extended to a nominally non-sexed worker-citizen. But in doing so, we ignore the important differences in capacities between men and women, chief among them women's ability to bear children. On the other side, we might insist that the unpaid domestic work of women is actually a productive economic and social contribution. But valorizing such work in this way could too easily mean that women continue to fulfill a patriarchal duty and that a gendered division of public and private work would persist in relegating them to being the perpetual second sex. These impossible choices pose deep problems for feminist analysis and activism.

No wonder then that feminism has a challenging view of women's relationship to children. Second-wave feminism teased apart the "natural" coupling of women and children, distinguishing between motherhood as a powerful individual experience and an oppressive social institution (Rich 1976). As social movement activists and researchers turned to the state and public policy, seeking remedies for women's – and children's – second-class status, they complicated social assumptions about women's "compulsory altruism" (Land and Rose 1985) even further. Feminism explained that women's direct obligations to children by virtue of birth, kinship, and personal relationships were accompanied by a further connection as a result of their paid and unpaid work as caregivers (to children and also to the elderly, the disabled, and the sick). When caregiving services are absent or inadequate, it is most often women (through their roles as wives, daughters, and family members) who adjust their labour force participation, dropping hours, changing jobs, and often leaving the workforce entirely. Two-thirds

of Canada's unpaid work is done by women: back in 1971, when the first analysis of their unpaid labour was conducted, it was worth a staggering 41 percent of the country's GDP (Canadian Federation of University Women 2011; PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women 2003).

Activists studying international care chains point out that women in the global South often leave their own children with female kin to look after the children of affluent working women in richer countries. Their work helps to solve the care crisis of affluent women (a theme taken up in Chapters 7 and 8 of this volume). Outside the privileged classes, poor, immigrant, and marginalized families see their domestic practices criticized and stigmatized, while the practical resources that they need are withheld or proffered only through humiliating means testing and ongoing scrutiny. First Nations families continue to live with the long legacy of the cultural genocide that was residential schooling and the added agony of the Sixties Scoop, which saw their children forcibly apprehended by social workers and adopted out to white homes (a topic foregrounded in Chapter 3 of this volume). Aboriginal people are regularly denied their most basic human rights. In January 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that the federal government discriminated against tens of thousands of First Nations children by systematically underfunding welfare services by as much as 34 percent, compared to spending on non-Aboriginal children. The tribunal ordered Ottawa to cease its "discriminatory practices." Its decision was one of many pieces of evidence about the adverse effects of public policies on Indigenous communities. The Canadian Human Rights Commission recently told the United Nations Human Rights Committee that the situation of Aboriginal peoples is one of the country's most urgent civil rights issues (Canadian Press 2015).

When women are employed in fields associated with children – as early childhood educators, as social workers, in care homes, and elsewhere – their paycheques are small, and their work, often demanding, generally conducted in bad conditions, and typically offering few benefits, is considered low status (Statistics Canada 2011). A significant wage gap remains between Canadian women and men: for every dollar that a man makes, a woman makes 73.5 cents, a ratio that puts Canada in twenty-sixth place of thirty-two highly industrialized countries, according to the OECD (Grant 2016). Women who perform unpaid childcare and homecare are poor, and those who do such work for wages are badly paid. This structured sexism is erased and made invisible by those who speak cheerily of women's voluntary "choice" to enter (and remain in) low-paying occupations. One consequence

of this is that the pay, working conditions, and social status of gendered caregiving remain stubbornly low.

Caring for children, and caring about children, thus cannot escape being central to both feminist theorizing and social movement practice. Far from hating children – the dismissive charge that so many patriarchal defenders have hurled at feminists – the women's movement in its many diverse strands has truly sought to make children's needs central to public policy and to a more egalitarian welfare state.

"Care" concerns have preoccupied feminist theorists and activists, who have linked care to production and social reproduction, as well as to moral theory and the ethics of care. Women are both pushed and pulled into simultaneously caring for, and caring about, those who need care – children chief among them. Care is highly politicized – the giving and receiving of care is socially stratified, unevenly distributed, gendered, classed, and racialized. Supports needed by children, elders, people with disabilities, and others are absent or underdeveloped in the public sector and expensive in the private market; when they must be provided through family, kin, and affective networks in the domestic sphere, they too often constrain women's freedom. Given that services are inadequate, Canada has a care crisis (see Chapter 1 in this volume). It is women who overwhelmingly provide care, in both the formal (paid labour force) and informal sector (households). In the formal sector, they confront poor pay and working conditions, and systemic devaluation and misrecognition of their work. This care deficit doubly disadvantages them (Halfon and Langford 2015). Yet care is fundamental and central to the relationships and activities that maintain people on a daily basis, and between generations, and is essential to the economy even though it is not really measurable in economic terms (see Chapter 2 in this volume). Caring relationships and caring labour are at the heart of the care crisis and the care deficit. Critics of the way in which Canada organizes care for young children have described it as the "super-exploitation" of predominately female care providers (Adkin and Abu-Laban 2008, 54).

Canadian feminists have made a special contribution to studies of care and social reproduction. Innovative work in the 1970s and 1980s by social movement activists and academics left a rich legacy. No longer is housework seen as a "labour of love" (Luxton 1980) but as a crucial (if rarely acknowledged) element in the long process that enables the capitalist economy to function and profits to be made. Families are deeply implicated in the growing equality gap that leads to the widening chasm between the hyper-rich and the rest of us. When seen through new eyes, feeding,

clothing, restoring, repairing, and recharging the labourer and managing the upbringing of children no longer looks so natural.

During the 1990s, Canada started to officially document women's unpaid work in the home. Canada pioneered the survey and statistical methods that began to concretely account for the value of women's home-based and unpaid caregiving. From 1996 until 2010, when its long-form census was cancelled, Canada asked questions about unpaid work and caregiving, making it a world leader in "counting women's work" (Waring 1988).

The history of second-wave feminism usually focuses on the United States, but the Canadian experience differs in important ways (Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail 1988; Maroney and Luxton 1987; Rebick 2005). For complex reasons, the Canadian feminist movement that burgeoned in the 1970s adopted a more complex analysis than the liberalism that was so prevalent in the United States. In addition, Canada's political architecture and culture led to the development of a coalition strategy (Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail 1988) of feminist activism. Socialist-feminist theory and practice flourished across Canada, with especially deep roots in Quebec, where it found an early political home in sovereigntist governments that saw the "social project" of nation building as including gender equality and poverty reduction. It is no surprise that in 1997 Quebec began building North America's finest childcare system, in a policy architecture that owes much to social-democratic ideals of universal access and high quality. According to a recent study, parents in Montreal, Gatineau, and Laval pay about $152/month per child, compared to almost $1,700/month in Toronto (Macdonald and Friendly 2014). In Quebec, parents pay the lowest childcare fees in Canada and have the best access to services; furthermore, early childhood educators earn the highest wages (Friendly et al. 2013). Provincial spending on Quebec's childcare program exceeds $2 billion annually, with the program's economic returns (particularly women's increased labour force participation and concomitant taxes) more than covering the cost (Fortin, Godbout, and St-Cerny 2012).

Canadian feminist political economy, in its activist and scholarly veins, has made social reproduction a key issue. Social reproduction is the long, linked chain of work, attention, and time that, at its most basic level, maintains and reproduces people and their labour power day-by-day and over generations. As Kate Bezanson and Meg Luxton (2006, 3) explain, it involves "the provision of food, clothing, shelter, basic safety and healthcare, along with the development and transition of knowledge, social values and cultural practices and the construction of individual and collective identities."

This ongoing work of "preservation and propagation" (Luxton 2006, 25) is closely linked to family life and to women's paid and unpaid work. Care is socially necessary labour. Seen in this way, whether paid or unpaid, done in the family or elsewhere, it is really part of the broader economic system and is crucial to its functioning. As Meg Luxton (2006, 32) pointedly asks, "Given that the production of people through childbirth, child rearing, and general caregiving is essential for human survival, why is such work systematically women's responsibility and so often ignored, undervalued, and considered to be distinct from the production of subsistence and wealth?"

This anthology takes the question of women's care of children as its central problematic. We are particularly attentive to how social reproduction is stratified – shaped by gender, class, aboriginality, and immigration status. We focus on the social movements that fight for responsive public policy and good services: policies and services that provide quality care for children and families, and good jobs for the (mainly) women who provide the care. We tackle questions of dependence and interdependence, shining a light on the inadequacies of current arrangements and foregrounding the hope that motivates movements fighting for social change.

Thinking Big: Neoliberalism, Globalization, and Contemporary Capitalism

The ways in which children are cared for, and the context in which this care becomes more or less needed, are a complex macro-level puzzle. Neoliberalism, the dominant international economic and political philosophy of our times, intensely privatizes care questions. Neoliberalism in action is often described as a downloading of services previously provided by the state onto individuals and families, thereby increasing women's unpaid labour. Globally, this political moment intensifies market relations, turning citizens into either consumers or clients, where consumers are favoured and clients receive inferior treatment. In the political imaginary of global neoliberalism, families are all independent and self-sufficient. They fit neatly into what Dorothy Smith (1993) memorably calls the ideological code of the SNAF model – the Standard North American Family – composed of a married mother and father and their children, living in a nuclear household.

As we demonstrate throughout this book, this ideology increasingly fails to meet contemporary reality, even as it never fully captured that of the past. As more and more households deal with precarious labour, struggle with austerity, and experience stalled or falling real wages, public policies predicated on

giving tax breaks and credits rather than services consign increasing numbers of Canadians to poverty and stress, forcing more unpaid work onto women. This shift from services to tax-based redistribution actively benefits affluent families. The Conservative government's move to encourage income splitting of pensions, its choice to double the tax free savings account limits, and its decision to implement the universal child care benefit (UCCB), instead of building a childcare system, reflect this preference (Battle, Torjman, and Mendelson 2006; Broadbent Institute 2015). Rich families can import labour from the global South through the Live-In Caregiver Program, hiring poorer women (often mothers themselves who have left their children with kin) to look after their children so that the professional mother can continue to work. These global care chains solve the challenge of social reproduction for some women and families, while consigning others to exploitation and oppression (Bakan and Stasiulis 1997).

The conventional definition of neoliberalism as the "downloading of formerly public services" fails spectacularly in many respects when it comes to caring for children. The case of childcare provides the clearest problem with this way of seeing the politics of neoliberalism. Childcare services are severely underdeveloped in Canada, with a space for only about one in five children who might need or want one (Friendly et al. 2013). The market provides over 90 percent of Canada's childcare spaces, whether by not-for-profit associations or commercial businesses: a scant one-tenth is directly publicly owned and operated (Friendly and Prentice 2009). The small supply of childcare is not in the process of being privatized and downloaded – it was never a well-developed public program in the first place. The fact that childcare is essentially absent from the Canadian welfare state is a telling indictment of the gender bias of public policy (Bacchi 1999). In an era of neoliberalism, however, it is that much harder for campaigns to establish public childcare and other children's care services to gain political traction. On other care issues, neoliberalism has resulted in state cuts to social spending, and these exacerbate inequalities as women must shoulder greater responsibilities.

Employability and labour market activation are the hallmarks of a neoliberalism, which wants to see everyone in the labour market. Provisions for those who cannot work, or who prefer not to work, are meagre. For example, lone mothers of young children are now deemed employable, despite the striking shortage of licensed childcare spaces. All of the chapters in this collection share a critique of neoliberalism, and several take it as a key object of inquiry.

Political Imaginary: The Neoliberal Narrative of Choice

One of the most pernicious effects of the current political, economic, and social moment is the ascendance of the narrative of choice. In this ideology, we are all seen as free agent actors, and our decisions and actions are believed to be perfect reflections of our free will and free choice. This ideology animated nearly all the decisions of Canada's Conservative government, which remained in power from 2006 until October 2015, when it was unseated by Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party. In 2006, it cancelled the freshly signed childcare agreements and instead provided a $100/month benefit to children under six; in 2015, it hiked and extended the UCCB to include all children under eighteen, arguing that this enhanced parent choice. Parents could "choose" to spend their allowance on childcare, or anything else, at their preference. This metanarrative of choice reflects a political imaginary that works only for the most privileged. The rhetoric in which all of us are economic citizens, freely choosing our path, simply wishes away systemic barriers, social exclusion, oppression, colonialism, and social marginalization, and insists that we can pull ourselves up by our bootstraps.

It is impossible to square this neoliberal narrative of choice with even the most basic knowledge of Canadian social reality. For example, among Canada's 618 First Nations reserves, 88 are under official drinking-water advisories (Health Canada 2015). The United Nations heard in 2015 that Canada's biggest civil rights challenge was the marginalization of Aboriginal people. The pay gap for women who work full-time, full-year is still shocking. In 2010, women aged twenty-five to thirty-four earned 78.3 cents for every dollar received by their male counterparts, and those aged forty-five to fifty-four earned less, at 75.7 cents. Gender differences in earnings vary by occupation: in healthcare, women made just 47 cents for every dollar earned by men in 2010 (Conference Board of Canada 2015). Younger Canadians who are lucky enough to be saving for their first house must now work five years longer than their parents did (plus work an extra month each year to pay for the mortgage), leading advocates for intergenerational equity to lament the "generation squeeze" that hurts under-forties the most (Anderssen 2015; Generation Squeeze 2014). Immigrants and refugees are often denied access to healthcare, despite legal protections (Canadian Doctors for Refugee Care 2015).

The myth of unconstrained choice makes it difficult for social movements to get equity, poverty, colonialism, and anti-racism into public and political discourse. Ideas matter, and the powerful pull of the choice

narrative makes structural conditions disappear – and much harder to challenge collectively.

Public climates and political imaginaries are materially produced – they are organized phenomena. Theorists of social reproduction have always stressed that social values, cultural practices, and individual and collective identities are *constructions* that are deeply embedded in the political mode of production. Thus, contemporary common sense assumptions about the unbreachable chasm between what is public and what is private, as well as convictions about what constitutes family responsibilities and what are state responsibilities, are also organized outcomes. The political climate and the values it promotes are a key focus of this book, and all chapters probe the work of social movements that aim to create new political understandings of children's care.

Political Problems and Policy Silos

The architecture of politics and governments also matters a great deal when it comes to caring for children. The binning of issues into discrete policy silos is a regular diagnosis raised in feminist and other criticisms. At a simple level, policy silos are often explained as lack of co-ordination between and among policies and services. Sometimes this is linked to narrow specialization and a lack of engagement or dialogue across policy domains, and this is no doubt part of the puzzle – but there is more.

In a federation such as Canada, relations between all levels of government and the First Nations immediately come into play. Since Confederation, most aspects of social policy have been provincial responsibilities. In domains that matter to the national interest, the federal government can step in – with healthcare being historically the prime example. Divisions of responsibilities and unequal fiscal powers mean that provinces and territories may have official responsibility but inadequate resources. This is strikingly the case for childcare: though it is typically regulated by provincial ministries of family services and their equivalents, advocates have long stressed the need for a national strategy and national funding. It is also the case for the federal income tax system, where national decisions can have dramatic provincial implications.

First Nations children are the direct responsibility of the federal government. But a long colonial history of marginalizing Indigenous issues has resulted in steadily worsening social conditions (Anderson and Ball 2011). The rates at which First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children are in protection

services remain terrifyingly high. Educational outcomes for Aboriginal children are many times worse than for non-Aboriginal children. Despite convincing empirical evidence of grossly unequal outcomes, governments fund Indigenous children at shamefully lower rates than they do non-Aboriginal children. In Canada, 40 percent of all Aboriginal children live in poverty: on reserves, where Ottawa has the major role in funding income supports and community services, one in two children lives in poverty (Campaign 2000 2015). First Nations children are "dramatically over-represented" among children being removed from their families into state care, for reasons including poverty, poor housing, substance misuse, colonial harm, and inequitable child and family services (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada 2015). The daily lives of First Nations children, like those of many children in Canada, vitiate the protections supposedly due to them as citizens of a country that signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most ratified of all the United Nations human rights treaties (Native Women's Association of Canada 2005).

Beyond colonialism, lack of co-ordination, and the challenges of federalism, there are other problems in organizing for diversity. Too often, a single cookie-cutter model of service is seen as the best policy response. Such assumptions invariably rely on the imaginary ideal of the SNAF, Smith's (1993) blistering summary of the hegemonic nuclear family and its freighted baggage. The Native Women's Association of Canada (2005) highlights this reality, pointing out that the "single-window" approach persistently translates bureaucratically into some groups being excluded.

Social movements that seek to improve children's lives must identify where remedies can be found, and in this another challenge arises. Should the state be seen primarily as a *solution* (or a potential solution) to the care crisis, or is it better thought of as the *cause* of the crisis? Most social movements identify the state as their target – in fact, this is built into Charles Tilly's (1988, 10) famous definition of a social movement as "a sustained challenge to state authorities in the name of a population that has little formal power with respect to the state."

In the current conjuncture, however, turning to the state for remedy is often criticized. Conservative critiques of proposed remedies are the loudest: they are too expensive, they would push the state into people's private lives in offensive ways, they violate the cherished independence of the closed family, they introduce big government, they are too much about tax and spend. Criticisms also come from the left: that bottom-up grassroots solutions, not top-down measures, are what is truly needed and that public

services are inherently oppressive and stigmatizing. The authors in this volume debate such questions, probing the analysis and tactics of social movements as they seek to make change.

Making Change: Social Movements

Despite a small and shrinking space for critical analysis and progressive social movements – a useful outcome to those who benefit from neoliberal ideology – social movements persist. How and why they do so is not straightforward.

Social movement activists need to determine their overarching goals: Where to? What are the concrete possibilities? And, at the same time, they must beware of accepting small reforms that leave structural conditions untouched. Strategies and tactics must try to balance the challenge of reform and the limits of incremental changes with their understanding of what is possible in the here-and-now. They must attempt to create and capitalize on windows of political opportunity, and they must do so with meagre financial and human resources (Langford et al. 2016). Funding to feminist and other equity-seeking organizations has been systematically cut in recent years. One example of this is the new eligibility criteria for Canada Status of Women grants, which can no longer include equity or advocacy. National groups such as the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and others have recently lost their ongoing and project-based federal funding (see Chapter 9 in this volume). Janine Brodie (2010) describes Ottawa's approach to Canadian feminism as a campaign of "delegitimizing, dismantling and defunding, and disappearing."

The sobering history of past advocacy has left the sharp awareness that activists must be very careful of unintended, as well as intended, consequences. As we know too well, "social movements leave political by-products that lie outside their programs and sometimes even contradict them" (Tilly 1999, 268). Movements must find ways to unite disparate political visions into campaigns that are stable enough to operate effectively. They need to build solidarity and unity across significant social and political divides. The tactical dilemmas are enormous: Is it better to organize around single-issue campaigns that can directly target the political structure of the state? Or is it better to mobilize through large coalitions that take up a myriad of issues? Or would it be better to organize autonomously and try to create small-scale models of the world that we hope to build, through prefigurative politics? What role in service provision, if any, should activists concede to the

market? These are just some of the strategic questions that social movements must resolve. The contributors to this book propose a range of answers to these questions. Most often, the case studies explore the efforts of social movements to effect public policy change by the state, but this is far from the only tactic chosen by groups that care for children.

Building organizational unity that permits effective political challenge is complex. The social movements studied in these chapters tend to be predominately women's associations: their leadership, membership, and staff are nearly always female. But gender alone is not a basis for organization, and class, race, colonialism, and imperialism divide feminist groups just as they cleave other social relations. Several chapters in this book assess the challenge of political realities faced by Aboriginal women, women of differing classes, and immigrant women in the struggle to build organizations of sisterhood and solidarity.

Care-based social movements confront even more challenges: What is the role of paid caregivers in advocacy? Does their presence strengthen or weaken the case that parents and allies advance for children? For example, across most provinces, early childhood educators have formed professional organizations to advance their interests: Do such groups see themselves as advocates? As feminists? Are they part of the childcare movement? Most fundamentally, these questions ask *who* is served by the childcare movement.

Children themselves must feature in these questions and these answers. Where are their voices in the campaigns that advocate on their behalf? What kind of role is appropriate for them?

Moving Forward

The chapters assembled here affirm the necessity of feminist analysis and activism as they seek to make caring for children an urgent political program. Encompassing a wide range of topics – the Live-In Caregiver Program, income tax and the politics of income splitting, regulated and unregulated childcare, the crisis for Aboriginal children, the politics of parental leave, the politics of corporate services – the authors explore the links between caring for children, social movements, and public policy in Canada. Childcare is a particular theme of the book, as several chapters tackle aspects of early childhood care and education. Through all the chapters, authors raise new questions about the politics of care and the importance of robust inquiry into social reproduction.

An important contribution of this book is the linking of social movements and public policy. Unlike the state, which sees policy making as an impervious black box, our authors agree that there is an imperfect yet interactive relationship between civil society mobilization and politics. Often this relationship is the precise focus of advocacy groups: they produce alternative diagnoses and prescriptions, and work to ensure that this analysis is heard by public knowledge intermediaries and decision-makers.

This anthology is the final product in a SSHRC-funded standard research grant titled Investigating Professionalism as a Canadian Child Care Movement Strategy in an Era of Neoliberalism. As we worked on the research project, we became increasingly concerned about the broader context of caring for children. It seemed urgently important to bring care scholars and activists together to consider Canada's care crisis.

The result is the present volume, whose highly integrated chapters display an unusual degree of thematic unity. Each chapter takes up the key questions that animate the anthology: What vital care-related issues are being addressed by social movement organizations in Canada? What are their goals? Who are their targets? How is gender implicated in early childhood policy issues? What impact does advocacy work have in this country? In light of the limited policy action at the federal level, what is brewing in activist circles? Are there optimism and possibilities for social change in the care of young children and family well-being in Canada today?

The anthology provides a comprehensive and interdisciplinary examination of the complex issues surrounding caring for children, including centre-based and home-based childcare, parental leave, informal/unregulated childcare, corporate childcare, the Live-In Caregiver Program, child tax benefits, and care challenges for Aboriginal children. It also explores how services and programs are connected and how they affect the care of Canadian children and the well-being of families. In particular, every chapter discusses how and why social movements try to influence the state, which is often the cause – and could be the remedy – of the care crisis in Canada.

Four decades ago, in *Of Woman Born,* Adrienne Rich (1976, 282) wrote, "To seek visions, to dream dreams, is essential, and it is also essential to try new ways of living, to make room for serious experimentation, to respect the effort even where it fails." During more than a decade of Conservative federal politics under Stephen Harper, feminist and other equity seekers were out of step with government priorities; under the "I'm a feminist" leadership of Justin Trudeau, the degree to which federal policies will change