WORKING MOTHERS AND THE CHILD CARE DILEMMA

A History of British Columbia's Social Policy

Lisa Pasolli

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Introduction

"The place for the mother of her family is at home," declared an editorial in the 10 April 1920 issue of the *Victoria Daily Times*.[1] For the most part, it seemed, British Columbians agreed. The p evious day, in front of full galleries and "graced with feminine loveliness," the provincial secretary had introduced the *Mothers' Pensions Act*, a piece of legislation widely celebrated for its potential to allow mothers to devote their energies to the "maintenance of [their] home[s], and the proper care and education of [their] children."[2] With a pension cheque arriving monthly, an indigent mother, in theory at least, would be free from the pressure of earning a wage and would no longer have to send out her children to be cared for by others. Her children, the *Victoria Daily Times* editor insisted, should not be "given to the State to populate its charitable institutions."[3]

Almost twenty-five years later, in the midst of the Second World War, another editorial waded into the debate about mothers' responsibilities to their homes and their children. The artime need for women workers was seemingly at odds with the sanctity of the family home – that bastion of democratic freedom over which the mother presided. "The country's future depends far more on the quality of children turned out from the country's home," this author insisted, "than it does on the quality of factory output."[4] However, many mothers found satisfaction in the personal and finan ial rewards of wage earning, and by the late 1960s it was clear that mothers had taken their place as a permanent part of the labour force. Newspaper

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commentary in these years warned of women who were "trying to bring their incomes up to $8,000 a year" so that they could buy "two cars and a big stereo set."[5] Another forty-five years later, during the May 2013 provincial election, working mothers were again in the spotlight when BC advocates proposed a universal, $10-a-day child care system. A massive demographic shift suggested the need for such a program – approximately three-quarters of mothers with young children worked outside the home – yet public commentators were still given to framing working motherhood as somehow unnatural, and they criticized mothers who "farm[ed] out [their] children to be raised by virtual strangers."[6]

Yet what about those mothers who "*need[*ed*]* to work" to support their families?[7] Despite the powerful prescriptions against "abandoning" their children, British Columbian mothers always worked, and not all of them were subject to the same brand of condemnation. When the residents of Victoria debated the possibility of establishing a day nursery in 1922, one sympathetic woman pleaded for the need to provide child care to poor mothers who "work hard and are too proud to let their poverty be known."[8] When provincial day care subsidies were introduced in the 1960s, commentators were willing to concede that some working mothers were deserving of help, particularly those "in the poorer districts," mothers "who may temporarily or permanently be unable to help themselves."[9] Amidst a spate of welfare reforms at the turn of the new millennium, observers insisted that the province's limited public resources should be reserved for deserving mothers who "eschew the poverty cycle, hold their heads high, work hard and raise their children with a bred-in-the-bone work ethic."[10]

These moments represent only a small sampling of controversy about BC women who combined motherhood with paid work. By the same token, public commentary in newspapers offers only a limited glimpse into more widespread views. But these authors, with the span of almost a century between them, gave voice to enduring public perceptions of working mothers. With remarkable consistency throughout the twentieth century, women who were both mothers and labour force participants were characterized in one of two ways: either selfish or pitiable. Selfish mothers were those who worked outside the home despite having the financial security of a male breadwinner. They were thought to be putting their own interests ahead of their children's and putting material desires ahead of their children's well-being. Alternatively, the wage earning of impoverished, indigent, and otherwise pitiable mothers was considered necessary for a number of reasons. Though being away from her children for long stretches of time was not

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ideal, the thinking went, at the very least a poor mother could work to keep her family free from charity, to provide a model of work ethic to her children, and to fill the demand for "women's work" such as housekeeping. No matter the decade or historical context, BC mothers were always subject to scrutiny around whether they worked too much or not enough. Th se perceptions were informed by gendered, classed, and racialized norms about the family and the workplace. A woman's "sacred" role was to stay home to care for her children unless she was working class, working poor, non-white, or an immigrant, in which case her wage earning was proof that she was imbued with a work ethic and personal responsibility, a guard against the shiftlessness to which the lower classes were considered prone.[11]

A mother's relationship to paid work was never more closely examined than when someone asked: who was caring for her kids? Th s question was especially controversial when it was framed in terms of government responsibility. Was it up to the state to subsidize the care of her children? Did working mothers deserve public support and protection? Th se questions were debated fie cely throughout twentieth-century British Columbia. The nature of these debates, the parents, policy-makers, politicians, advocates, welfare officials, and child care providers who took part in them, and the child care programs that were offered – or not offered – to working mothers are the subjects of this book. *Working Mothers and the Child Care Dilemma* begins with the controversial founding of the Vancouver City Crèche in the 1910s, an institution that still bore the name of the infant-focused centres of nineteenth-century France but, like other day nurseries around North America, had evolved signifi antly to include the care of older, preschool-aged children and to provide employment services for their mothers.[12] It moves through the prominent debates about the care of working mothers' children – variously called day nurseries, day care, and, most broadly, child care – that took place in the context of municipal, provincial, and national politics in the twentieth century. It closes with the stalled attempts at universal child care programs in the opening years of the twenty-first entury.

Th s study reveals how child care policy and politics in British Columbia have been shaped by a deeply rooted societal uneasiness about working motherhood. With a remarkable degree of consistency over one hundred years, an ambivalence about working mothers was embedded into the rocky landscape of BC child care and refl cted in the letters, editorials, and commentary mentioned earlier. The ontours of these policies and programs, and, just as importantly, the absence of them, hinged on prevailing expectations about whether mothers should work, what kinds of work they should

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do, and what role the state should play in shaping and regulating their relationships to their families and the labour force.

Susan Prentice, one of Canada's leading child care scholars, points out that the "meaning of childcare services has long been contested."[13] This study untangles the intertwined threads of "meaning" that waxed and waned throughout twentieth-century BC child care politics. In the chapters that follow, the focus is on how the state has interpreted the meaning of child care: what programs were offered and on what basis. Just as importantly, this study considers the gendered, classed, and racialized cultural assumptions about the family, labour market, and welfare that were reflected in and reinforced by policy and programs. In one sense, a simple story emerges. Federal, provincial, and municipal governments, not to mention a significant proportion of the BC and Canadian public, primarily understood the care of young children to be a private responsibility, and, more specifically, a mother's responsibility, whether it meant within the family or the market. The state thus consistently distanced itself from the provision of universal child care.

However, British Columbia's child care history is not just the story of a policy vacuum. There is another important story about child care – another thread of meaning – that emerges by looking more closely at the making of these policies and programs, including municipal initiatives, provincial subsidy programs, and various kinds of government support for community-based child care. These programs were informed by the same cultural expectations that explain the absence of universal care – above all, that working mothers were not considered "normal." A working mother was the signal of family breakdown, including poverty, single motherhood, an incapacitated male breadwinner, or the like, circumstances to which working-class, low-income, non-white, and immigrant families were considered more vulnerable. Child care services were targeted at these "needy" families, which did not conform to middle-class ideals because they were considered to be in need of rehabilitation through paid work. As services such as the Vancouver City Crèche and provincial day care subsidies revealed, state-sponsored child care was considered a compromise. It was a response to family crises that also fulfilled important welfare goals, which included promoting self-sufficiency among families that had otherwise "failed"; protecting the work ethic and guarding against chronic dependency in poor and working-class families; and helping to meet the demand for low-paid workers in traditionally feminine jobs.

Throughout the twentieth century, this residual welfare orientation dominated day care debates and configured child care policy and practice.

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But British Columbians concerned about the well-being and social inclusion of mothers, children, and families, as well as about the general prosperity of society and the economy, offered a range of other rationales for government-sponsored child care, articulating alternate threads of meaning in this complex twentieth-century web. Child psychologists and early childhood educators argued that preschool programs offered the foundation of moral education necessary for democratic citizenship, a view that gained traction in the 1940s and 1950s. In a similar vein, advocates worked to position child care for working mothers as part of early learning and education programs that fostered healthy development for all children, an angle that has been especially resonant within advocacy efforts since the 1980s. More recently, as Prentice points out, a "business case" has been made, one that links child care to women's full employment and the long-term investment in an educated workforce.[14] Th se threads have had varying degrees of prominence throughout the century, but hints of all of these intertwined meanings have been present to some extent in virtually all historical moments.

Of particular importance to this study is the equality- and rights-based meaning assigned to universal child care. Especially during the feminist-inspired campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s, but present since at least the 1910s and continuing into the new millennium, advocates have argued that child care should be more than a residual service for poor mothers. Every woman, they have insisted, regardless of her social location or economic status, should have the choice and the right to be a wage earner as well as a caregiver, and an affordable, accessible, high-quality, comprehensive, and even universal child care program is necessary to secure this right. Th y have argued, in other words, that publicly funded child care is a crucial component of women's social rights as citizens and that it belongs on the spectrum of social services that secured economic independence, well-being, and equality for women.

In this respect, then, *Working Mothers and the Child Care Dilemma* is not just a story about the competing meanings woven through child care politics, but also a study of the contested nature of social citizenship in British Columbia. Child care debates have been part and parcel of the bigger questions about the construction of social citizenship's boundaries: who was entitled to the support and protection of the state? What kinds of services should the state offer and on what basis? The an wers to these questions were never entirely fixed. The ights, responsibilities, privileges, and obligations that operated at the boundaries of social citizenship could and

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did shift, especially during moments of societal upheaval. It is no surprise that the provision of social services, child care included, came under intense scrutiny during the two world wars, the Great Depression, and major social movements such as second-wave feminism.

A long history of negotiations about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, Judith Shklar argues, has resulted in a social and political system in which we are considered "citizens only if we 'earn.'"[15] A vast body of scholarship has shown, furthermore, that the citizenship rights associated with earning have been largely reserved for male breadwinners.[16] However, this history of British Columbia's child care politics reveals a complex tangle of expectations about the gendered, classed, and, to some extent, racialized dimensions of wage earning that have operated at the boundaries of social citizenship. It also reveals enduring debates about the relative value of wage earning and caregiving as the "passports" to social rights.[17] The universal child care advocates that have come to be a key part of the policy landscape have long insisted that women have a right to the social benefi s that facilitated their equitable wage earning. Others, such as the maternal feminist supporters of the 1920 *Mothers' Pensions Act* and the "Wages for Housework" campaigners of the 1970s, sought to divorce citizenship from its association to earning a wage and, instead, insisted that social rights should derive from caregiving and motherhood.[18] Th se debates were part of the "contested meanings" of child care: whether motherhood was at the root of women's oppression or the source of their status as citizens and whether the state should facilitate full-time caregiving or equality in the paid workplace. Like the fi ht for meaningful child care policies, these debates have a long historical trajectory and they continue today.

Ultimately, though, these multi-dimensional challenges were no match for the entrenched social citizenship paradigm that privileged the wage earning of male breadwinners and thus fed into the enduring image of a working mother as a "problem." In this long history of BC child care politics, we see a story about the uneasy relationship between working mothers and the state. As the safeguards against their families' permanent dependency and impoverishment, mothers who were marginalized by their class and race were offered child care so they could enter the low-paid labour force. But the work that these "problem" mothers did was not a positive source of social rights. Th y were always second-class workers, forestalling any possibility of universal child care as a social citizenship right. Working mothers were caught between the pressure, and their desires, to be stay-at-home mothers, to prove their worthiness for public support, to provide for

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their families, and to work for reasons of personal fulfillme t. None of these options offered the possibility for child care as a component of fully realized social citizenship.

Caring, Earning, and Social Citizenship

Writing about the history of child care is a daunting prospect. In her remarkable history of American child care policy, *Children's Interests / Mothers' Rights*, Sonya Michel "partakes of several historiographies: those of women, families, children, labor, early childhood education, social welfare, and the welfare state."[19] Th s study draws on a similarly wide range of historical work. The moments of child care controversy examined in the chapters that follow – the operation of the Vancouver City Crèche; the implementation of the *Mothers' Pensions Act* in the interwar years; Second World War day nurseries; the introduction of provincial day care subsidies; the battles over day care during the second-wave women's movement; and the ins and outs of BC child care amidst welfare reforms and national initiatives since the 1970s – draw understanding from studies of the family, the construction of childhood, and women in the labour force, and even from historical investigations into fatherhood that have emphasized the importance of the "male breadwinner image" as a key element of "masculine self-definition and of public ideals about family and fatherhood."[20]

An understanding of these moments is enhanced, furthermore, by a consideration of the historical evolution of nursery school and preschool education, kindergartens, and early childhood education. The n ture of these services had important class-based implications for working mothers' access to child care, a subject that is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. At the centre of this analysis, though, is a study of child care policy and politics within the parameters of ideas about work, motherhood, and the state. (Of course, motherhood, caregiving, and homemaking are also work, but, throughout this study, "work" is used as a shorthand for paid work or labour force participation.) It is a study of societal assumptions about women's roles within their families and the labour market, how these assumptions have been embedded in and reinforced by social policies, and the challenges that have been launched and the alternatives that have been voiced. Th se particular historical episodes have been chosen because they mark the introduction of new legislation or policy directions or, in the case of Chapter 5, the emergence of a new social force in the form of "second-wave" feminism. As such, these were noteworthy moments for the degree of attention paid to the tensions embedded in the making of child

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care policy and, more broadly, for how societal ideas about work and motherhood shaped the contours of social citizenship.

British political theorist T.H. Marshall first articulated the notion of social citizenship in the 1940s. He defined it as "the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security," along with "the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society."[21] In other words, Marshall suggested that if a citizen's earning capacity was interrupted or prevented, the state had a responsibility to step in to restore well-being and independence. Marshall certainly did not envision child care as part of social citizenship – nor did the social planners who were building the welfare state that Marshall was describing in the 1940s and 1950s.[22] As scholars of gender and welfare have pointed out, Marshall's analysis cast this "civilized being" as an independent, white, male family head. He did not consider the "sorts of resources a *female* worker might need to achieve equality."[23] However, feminist (and, in the United States, anti-racist) critiques of Marshall have not completely undermined the usefulness of the concept of social citizenship. Instead, the shortcomings of Marshall's analysis have inspired scholars and activists to imagine a framework of social rights and benefits that takes into account the unequal relations of gender. A full and inclusive version of social citizenship, they argue, must include social programs to ensure that women's roles as mothers and caregivers do not hinder their equality in the labour force. Universal child care is one such social program, along with reforms to the tax system, to welfare regulations, to legal practices, and to discriminatory structures in employment, politics, and education. Indeed, as Alexandra Dobrowolsky and Jane Jenson argue, universal child care is the "cornerstone for women's full social citizenship, economic autonomy, and well-being."[24]

What this literature also makes clear is that citizenship is not an all-or-nothing proposition nor is it confined to the strict rights and obligations of citizens and national state institutions. Instead, social citizenship is more usefully considered a fluid and conditional "marker of boundaries," to borrow a phrase from Lara Campbell, that helps us to understand the uneven development of welfare policy as well as the multiple contexts of individuals' sense of belonging.[25] Inclusion within the boundaries entitled a citizen to the protection and supports of the state, but neither inclusion nor exclusion were static categories. Social citizenship's boundaries were flexible and permeable; they were often opened only temporarily; and they were subject to expansion and contraction based on particular economic, political, and social contexts. One's inclusion within social citizenship's boundaries was

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contingent on class, race, gender, and other factors of difference. The ights of social citizenship were often granted on only a limit ed or partial basis, which may have included the assumption that social benefi s were granted as a privilege rather than as a right. The meaning of inclusion could also vary according to different scales of citizenship – for some, citizenship could be more relevant at the level of a local "little state" or community rather than the nation-state.[26]

Scholars of Canadian social welfare history have produced rich explorations of the dynamic and provisional nature of social citizenship in the twentieth century. Th s book relies on their historical insights as well as those of American and international scholars of social welfare and policy. Of particular importance is the signifi ant (and growing) body of literature that reveals how state welfare programs have served to "constitute and reinforce" unequal relations of gender in different historical contexts.[27] It is now well understood, thanks to these gender-conscious analyses of the welfare state, that policies and programs have worked to prop up the independent, male-breadwinner family in which women were dependent wives and mothers. Based on the dominance of this white, middle-class model, women's social entitlements were subordinated to men's both in the home and in the workplace.

Such findin s are at the centre of major works such as Nancy Christie's *Engendering the State* and Alvin Finkel's *Social Policy and Practice in Canada: A History*, which reveal how programs such as workmen's compensation, unemployment insurance, pay legislation, and family allowances privileged the entitlements of male wage earners while reproducing women's dependence in the home and family.[28] Their s udies join a host of others in challenging previous gender-blind analyses of such social programs.[29] Unequal gender relations explain the broad acceptance of mothers' allowances in the first half of the twentieth century because they were premised (at least in theory) on the preservation and protection of women's roles as mothers.[30] Other studies point to the ways that the state "regulated" gender roles, including the ideals around femininity, domesticity, and dependency as well as those around masculinity and wage earning.[31] Still others highlight women's difficulty in claiming health benefi s, pensions, and other social benefi s that depended on "regular" (that is, male) labour force participation.[32]

The history of child care is not well represented in this body of literature. In part, this is because child care policies and programs themselves were limited. The m st notable aspect of Canadian child care history, perhaps, is

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the absence of a universal program comparable to those established in Sweden, France, and elsewhere, and it is admittedly difficult to study a policy void. For the most part, child care in British Columbia and Canada was left to private and charitable social agencies, and when public services did exist, they operated at the margins of welfare policy, where they did not attract as much attention from historians interested in major welfare state programs such as medicare, old age pensions, unemployment insurance, mothers' allowances, and family allowances.[33] Furthermore, the history of working mothers' child care arrangements has often been "subsumed" in the literature of child welfare and child saving, as Michel suggests, especially in the pre–Second World War decades.[34] To a significant extent, this observation is true of the Canadian scholarship. Historians have examined crèches, day nurseries, and orphanages, including the Vancouver City Crèche, with respect to their implications for children but rarely for mothers.[35] Child welfare histories, moreover, are often silent on day care services.[36]

Studies of the patchwork of child care policies constructed in the post–Second World War period are more common, reflecting the higher profile of working mothers and their child care arrangements on the public and political agenda during those years. Alvin Finkel has provided a brief but useful overview of pan-Canadian child care politics since the Second World War, and Rianne Mahon has traced the influence (or lack of it) of "state feminists" in the federal bureaucracy in the making of child care policy through the provisions of the *Canada Assistance Plan* (*CAP*).[37] Mahon, Prentice, Suzanne Morton, and Tom Langford have offered more focused provincial and local studies in Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Alberta, and Prentice's edited collection *Changing Child Care* reveals "select pieces of a large puzzle" of day care advocacy and policy in the post-war years.[38]

Québec, of course, was and is home to a child care story remarkably distinct from the rest of Canada, culminating in the 1997 introduction of the $5-a-day, later $7-a-day, universal day care program as part of a three-pronged family policy that included a targeted family allowance and generous parental leave. Scholars have explored the political motivations and social and economic objectives behind Québec's policy, including analyses of the Parti Québécois' concern with "fostering social solidarity," promoting full employment, fighting poverty, and improving children's "school-readiness."[39]

Much of the most current child care scholarship has been the domain of political scientists, political economists, sociologists, and legal scholars. Indeed, Prentice, Mahon, and Langford's work emerges from these

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disciplines, and one of the most detailed analyses of national approaches to child care to date is political economist Annis May Timpson's *Driven Apart: Women's Employment Equality and Child Care in Canadian Public Policy*.[40] Th se studies help paint a more complete picture of child care policy, politics, and the shifting fortunes of advocacy movements in postwar Canada. Th y also enhance our understanding of the contemporary challenges of building gender equity into the state. Moreover, these social science-oriented studies have helped to insert child care policies into the debates about welfare regimes, a compelling comparative framework that begins with Gøsta Esping-Andersen's three typologies of welfare states: conservative-corporative; social democratic; and liberal. Canada, along with the United States, Australia, and Great Britain, clearly falls into the liberal regime, meaning that social benefi s have been (and continue to be) residually offered as "means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers, or modest social-insurance plans."[41]

Social scientists have been interested in whether and how child care policies are characteristic of this liberal regime, especially amidst the modern decline of the male breadwinner family and the resulting "crisis of care." In the contemporary Canadian context, Mahon has shown that child care has largely been left to the market, and the limited public support that is offered takes the form of tax deductions or credits and a "safety net" approach for low-income families. In other words, the Canadian liberal regime has responded to the caregiving crisis in largely "path-dependent" ways – ways, furthermore, that are rooted in and reproduce gender and class inequalities.[42] However, welfare regimes are not static. The liberal path, and the child care policies embedded within it, have developed out of particular historical forces and "universe[s] of political discourse."[43]

As the first h story of child care policies and politics in British Columbia, *Working Mothers and the Child Care Dilemma* provides the kind of nuanced historical analysis required to take account of the factors that have shaped and reshaped the liberal path, particularly with respect to "the influen e of the male breadwinner ideologies as a cornerstone of the liberal welfare state."[44] It also reveals the "twists and turns" along this path, as the politics of maternalism, feminism, early childhood investment, the New Right, and other social and political forces have offered policy choices that swerve towards social or "inclusive liberalism."[45] Th s study, then, sheds light on the historical dimensions of the Canadian welfare regime, and it provides the kind of focused analysis required for provincial comparisons.[46] British Columbia, as the "west beyond the west," was distinct among the Canadian

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provinces in many respects, particularly in its strongly polarized political culture.[47] The need for more provincial comparisons within the Canadian federal system, as Mahon points out, is suggested by Québec's deviation from the liberal path.

Besides offering historical fodder for the debates about welfare regime frameworks, this study also contributes to historiographical discussions about working mothers and welfare. The qu stion of "who is a citizen in a welfare state," as Ruth Lister explains, is fundamentally linked to "which activities should attract social citizenship rights": wage work, domestic caregiving, or some combination of both.[48] Social scientists who analyze the social organization of care and the "woman-friendliness" of welfare regimes are taking up this debate in a contemporary context. With a common starting point – that women's inequality has its roots in the unrecognized value of feminized care work – scholars and activists nevertheless disagree about the appropriate role for the state in promoting gender equality. For some, true equality requires compensation for caregiving and mothering. Lister, though, warns that the "problem is how to provide this recognition without locking women further into a caring role which serves to exclude them from . . . power and influen e."[49] For others, then, the solution is women's full and equal participation in the labour market, facilitated by programs such as maternity leave, fl x-time, and universal child care. Others advance policy solutions that break down the barrier between the gendered public and private divide to ensure the "universalization of care."[50] Paul Kershaw advocates, for instance, for a policy approach based on "integrat[ing] care as a constitutive responsibility and right of social citizenship that binds men as much as women."[51]

Taking stock of these contemporary debates helps to identify patterns in the historical development of social citizenship. Historians' interpretations of mothers' pensions and allowances are particularly revealing when it comes to the value assigned to earning and caregiving. In her study of American mothers' pensions, for example, Barbara Nelson identifi s two "channels" of welfare: one for motherhood and one for wage work. For Nelson, maternally based programs were not invested with the same level of entitlement as those for male breadwinners – mothers' pensions were discretionary and considered a privilege rather than a right – but they at least represented public validation of caregiving work.[52] Th s interpretation is closely linked to Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon's "genealogy of dependency." Rooted in gendered family norms and expectations about the family wage system, Fraser and Gordon argue, there still existed the possibility in the early twentieth

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century that women's (and children's) ties to the household were considered "good dependency."[53] Programs such as mothers' pensions, therefore, were not shrouded in the stigma that would come to characterize welfare dependency later in the century. Canadian historians have also identified a strong current of care-based welfare entitlement around mothers' pensions and mothers' allowances in the interwar years. British Columbia was a particularly interesting case, as Margaret Little has argued, because mothers' pensions in this province were understood as rights-based and embedded in a cultural acceptance of the value of mothers' "service to the state."[54]

So what does this mean for the history of child care? For one thing, the value placed on maternally based social rights certainly helps to explain the absence of virtually any public discussion about child care for a prolonged period between the First and Second World Wars. In those years, as Chapters 1 and 2 show, mothers' pensions were the preferred method of social welfare delivery to mothers, and the tentative public forays into public child care such as the Vancouver City Crèche lost favour. In other words, instead of programs that assisted mothers in balancing work and motherhood, governments prioritized stay-at-home caregiving. The reinforcement of domesticity for women was also enshrined in welfare policies in the decades immediately following the Second World War, another period of significant public opposition to public child care. In those years, Alvin Finkel observes, policy-makers "favoured social security measures that would make it possible for most households to function without mothers having to seek paid employment."[55] Even during the Second World War, when women's paid labour was extolled as their patriotic duty, welfare officials in British Columbia were reluctant to expand the gender-typed boundaries of social citizenship in ways that included child care for working mothers. These wartime attitudes, and their implications for working mothers and their child care options, are explored in Chapter 3.

Yet as Tammy Findlay notes, "it is not only the lack of construction of child care that has gender consequences. The pattern and type of construction matter as well."[56] In this sense, the history of child care in British Columbia forces us to reconsider the ways in which the tenuous boundaries of social citizenship were regulated, shifted, and policed, especially when working mothers came up against the state. There is no doubt that, historically, the social rights of male worker-citizens – and the accompanying expectations about their work ethic – were at the core of social welfare policy.[57] Many of the workers who came into contact with the state, however, were also mothers. When we take a closer look at the child care services offered to

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these women, it becomes clear that notions of work were central to their social inclusion as well. In other words, mothers were not necessarily slotted into the channel of welfare designed around maternalism and domesticity. Rather, welfare officials were actually more interested in their labour force participation, their economic behaviour, and their work ethic. Th s interest was apparent, as Chapter 1 shows, in the administration of the Vancouver City Crèche, while Chapter 4 explores how these work-based expectations were also inherent in the provincial day care subsidies in the 1960s. Working mothers were enmeshed in the expectations of worker citizenship and the "fundamental" goals of welfare policy that, in a sense, overrode their gender: preserving the work ethic in their needy families, striving for economic independence that did not require long-term welfare dependency, and filling he gaps in the labour market.[58]

In this sense, this study follows on the work of social welfare scholars such as Eileen Boris, who cautions that we should not overlook the importance of the "working" in "working motherhood."[59] Dependency within the maternal and domestic sphere was not necessarily considered "good" for all mothers, especially mothers marginalized by class and race. In both the United States and Canada, policy-makers expected that "poor women, often the racial or ethnic 'other'" should participate in wage labour for reasons of "uplift," to sustain some measure of family independence, and to maintain the work ethic. Th s expectation was especially apparent during the 1960s, when racialized and poor mothers were targeted for workforce "activation" as part of their receipt of social assistance.[60]

In Chapter 6, we see how class and race hierarchies played into BC debates about reforms to social assistance for working mothers in the 1970s and 1980s. However, these expectations were present throughout the century in Canada, in a variety of ways in which women encountered the state. Little points out that Asian and indigenous women were excluded from mothers' pensions legislation in British Columbia and that, in Ontario, economic behaviour was crucial to poor mothers' receipt of mothers' pensions and social assistance.[61] Joan Sangster has shown how state policies channelled Aboriginal women into domestic service placements.[62] Even for Anglo-Saxon widows, James Struthers has revealed, deservedness was a vulnerable category. Ontario's superintendent of labour advocated excluding widows with one child from pensions legislation in that province because they could earn a living as housekeepers.[63] *Working Mothers and the Child Care Dilemma* shows how child care policies were folded consistently into this type of welfare delivery throughout the twentieth century.

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To borrow a phrase from Joy Parr, though, the "gender of breadwinners" remained crucially important.[64] Some women were obligated to work in order to receive social benefi s – but the unequal relations of gender, class, and race followed breadwinning mothers into the work force and served also to reinforce inequality between women based on class, race, ethnicity, and marital status.[65] No matter the reason or the rationale behind their labour force participation, mothers could not escape their subordinate status as second-class workers. Work-based social citizenship rights were never offered to women on the same terms as men. Poor, working-class, and racialized mothers were considered a labour reserve that could help alleviate the demand for domestics, as was the case in Vancouver during the 1910s.[66] Obligated to work to prove their deservedness for mothers' pensions in the interwar years and welfare-linked day care subsidies from the 1960s on, mothers were nonetheless denied equal pay, protection, or any of the rights that were assumed inherent to the work of male breadwinners. One of those rights that was always beyond their reach was universal child care. The limited and contingent public child care support offered to those mothers was ideally just a temporary measure – one preferable to direct income supplements, which just encouraged welfare dependency – on the road to the restoration of "normal" family life.

A complete understanding of the construction of social citizenship, Lara Campbell argues, has to take into account the ways in which people expressed their "needs, as well as duties and responsibilities."[67] Th oughout this book, then, also runs a story of how parents, advocates, concerned citizens, and, at times, sympathetic politicians and government officials pushed back against the restrictive notions of social citizenship and against a welfare system that characterized women either as dependent mothers or as second-class workers.[68] Their e orts ran throughout the century, albeit with widely varying degrees of visibility and influen e. Advocates from within the second-wave women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s were especially instrumental in shaping public discourses about child care. Their strategies and messages are explored in Chapter 5. A central plank of their child care campaigns hinged on women's right to equality in the workplace, an argument that was also articulated, however faintly, long before second-wave feminism emerged and one that has since continued to be an important part of child care politics.

However, as this BC story reveals, there was not always an entirely united front on child care from within the women's movement, especially when feminist activism intersected with welfare rights lobbyists, as it did

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in the 1970s and 1980s. Some of the advocates featured in Chapters 5 and 6, for example, argued that mothers' "employability" with respect to welfare reforms was too narrowly defin d and that full-time caregivers had just as much right to social benefi s as paid workers. In exploring the battles at the intersection of women's liberation, the New Left, and welfare rights activism, Chapters 5 and 6 provide important historical analysis of an understudied part of child care history. Th se historical battles help to explain why "feminists," as Prentice says, "are still struggling with the vexing meaning and politics of motherhood."[69] The onfli ts that unfolded in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s represent a prelude to contemporary theoretical discussions about a universal child care policy's potential to ameliorate women's subordination in the workplace as well as in the family.[70]

Advocates have played an important role in creating an imagined ideal about a child care system that is part of a full and inclusive social citizenship for women. But their successes were limited throughout the twentieth century in British Columbia. The oundaries of social citizenship, both in the sense of rights and obligations, remained conditioned by gendered and classed assumptions about work and welfare. Mothers' partial and conditional inclusion within the boundaries of social citizenship was and is keyed to their wage work, yet their wage work was – and often still is – understood as a problem. Th s tension helps to explain the absence of universal child care as well as the fact that the provision of child care is treated as a marginal welfare issue. *Working Mothers and the Child Care Dilemma* reveals that those attitudes have a long history in British Columbia.

Caring for and Educating Young Children: A Brief History

Th s study is the first o tell the history of child care in British Columbia as a story about the politics of working motherhood. The s ory could not be told, though, without drawing on the insights from the rich body of literature that examines child care as part of the range of services that includes kindergartens, nursery schools, and preschools. As this historiography shows, the provision of early childhood services in British Columbia and Canada was infused with tension between ideas about "care" and "education" and class-based assumptions about the kinds of services to which mothers, families, and children were entitled.

The often divergent courses of childhood care and education were set in the mid-nineteenth century. In this Victorian era of social reform, some reformers began to suggest that the "educational enrichment" of young children was necessary as long as it only supplemented and did not replace

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maternal care – and only for the children of middle- and upper-class families, who required a foundation of training and socialization for long-term success. Friedrich Froebel's notions of a play-based, part-time kindergarten education were "perfectly suited to meet this need," according to Larry Prochner.[71] The first anadian kindergartens were established in east coast cities at the tail end of the nineteenth century. Within a few years, several had been established in British Columbia. Most of them, like St. Margaret's Kindergarten School in Victoria, catered to the children of privileged families who wanted their children to spend a bit of time each week being prepared for academic success. Many of these operated out of the homes of well-to-do families or in church basements.[72] Nursery schools and, later in the twentieth century, playschools and preschools were similar to kindergartens in that they largely had a middle-class orientation.

A very different kind of social provision was established for the children of labouring classes who were denied their mother's care during the work day. Th se "childcare centres for the needy" also began to appear in the late nineteenth century, variously called crèches, day nurseries, and day cares. In a similar vein, this era saw the establishment of "foster day care," wherein children were placed in the homes of caregiving mothers (similar to services that would today be called day homes).[73] In establishing these custodial centres, charity-minded reform women, church groups, and philanthropic organizations targeted worrisome gaps in social welfare for children. Many mothers, especially those without family support networks, were forced to rely on orphanages, Children's Aid Society homes, and other long-term boarding institutions when they could not arrange reliable and affordable care for their children while they worked.[74] Crèches and day nurseries offered a more attractive option than these long-term solutions, and they also provided care for children younger than four or five y ars of age who were often excluded from boarding homes.

By the later nineteenth century, some reformers had adopted the kindergarten model as a "vehicle of mission work and social reform" and established centres in ethnic and working-class neighbourhoods (such as the international kindergarten in New Westminster, which was specifi ally for Japanese and Chinese children).[75] For many immigrant and working mothers, these free kindergartens served important child care functions. However, if a mother had infant- or toddler-aged children or if she worked long or irregular hours, kindergartens did not suffice. A crèche or a day nursery was more suited to her needs. By 1910, most of Canada's big cities were home to at least one such institution: Montreal, Toronto (the Victoria Crèche, East

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End Day Nursery, and West End Day Nursery), Hamilton (operated by the Women's Christian Temperance Union), the Jost Mission in Halifax, the Edmonton Crèche, and, of course, the Vancouver City Crèche.

Many, if not most, of these crèches and day nurseries included an employment bureau for mothers alongside their child care services. Poor mothers, together with their morally vulnerable children, were the targets of social reform efforts meant to turn them into hard-working, morally upright, self-sustaining citizens. The mission statement of the Victoria Crèche in Toronto reveals the interconnected goals of day nurseries:

> To provide a home during the day for children whose mothers have to go out to work; to assist in securing day work for the mothers needing it; to encourage habits of thrift among the parents and children, and to enable Christian and charitably disposed women to come in touch with the home life of the mothers and children and take such action as may from time to time seem best to brighten their homes.[76]

These earliest crèches and day nurseries established a pattern that persisted throughout the twentieth century – that working mothers and their children were viewed as the objects of charity and that through the provision of child care working mothers' relationships to the labour market could be regulated and policed.

After this spate of day nursery development in the first decade of the twentieth century, however, changing trends in child welfare initiated something of a "stagnant" period in child care. As legislation dealing with mothers' pensions was introduced across the country, the importance of mother care held sway, and institutional care was increasingly viewed with distaste.[77] In the meantime, however, the (admittedly still limited) world of education services for young children underwent something of a transformation between the two world wars. Most historians point to 1925 as a turning point. In that year, the St. George's Institute for Child Study – later the University of Toronto's Institute of Child Study – was established under the direction of Dr. William Blatz, a psychologist who would have a "profound influence" on early childhood education in Canada.[78] Blatz created the model of a preschool centre that combined child study with parent education, one that was emulated across the country. Most centres were accessible only to parents who had the resources and time to be involved alongside their children. In other words, Blatz did not advocate for centres that met the needs of working parents. Furthermore, many of his ideas

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began to permeate the operation of mid-century day nurseries in ways that made them less convenient for working parents. Their hours we e shortened, for example, so as to lessen the strain on children, and some institutions raised their minimum age to two or three years.[79]

Although care and education developed largely along separate tracks for several decades, the Second World War marked something of a convergence. The *Dominion-Provincial Wartime Day Nursery Agreement* (*WDNA*), though adopted unevenly across the country, had a signifi ant influen e on public attitudes towards child care.[80] "For the first time" Prochner argues, "group child care was promoted as a normal support for families."[81] Mothers were encouraged to "share the care" of their children with professionally trained day nursery staff, overseen in Ontario by Dorothy Millichamp, a graduate of the Institute of Child Study.[82] In provinces that did not sign on to the *WDNA*, including British Columbia, private child care enterprises faced less resistance during the war. In Vancouver, for example, three "playschools" were founded to care for the children of mothers who were not necessarily working in war industries, but who were filling he jobs left vacant by enlisted men.[83] The artime context helped to move these child care centres away from their welfare orientation.

The wartime "normalizing" of day nurseries took root most fi mly in Ontario, where mothers fought to maintain day care services even after the *WDNA* was cancelled.[84] However, British Columbia's experience was more typical. In the 1950s, the practices of care and education returned to pre-war patterns as "normal" gender norms were reinforced, including the emphasis on maternal caregiving. Day care services for working mothers were even further relegated to residual status during the immediate post-war years – a fi teen-year period that Loren Lind and Prentice have called the "doldrum years" in terms of public attention to child care for working mothers.[85] In the same period, though, the moral training of future democratic citizens became important, and middle-class-oriented playschools, kindergartens, and nursery schools proliferated. Blatz and the Institute of Child Study continued to have an important influen e and continually sought to distance themselves from the charity-type needs of working mothers. Indeed, the Institute of Child Study "made continuous efforts to assure the public that it was not relieving mothers of their duty, but was providing training so they could better carry out their roles."[86]

Support for Blatz-inspired preschools was part of broader impulses towards educational reform in the 1950s and 1960s – wha t historians have called the "watershed years" in terms of education policy.[87] In British

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Columbia, much of this reform impulse emerged around the University of British Columbia's Child Study Centre, which, like its counterparts around the country, was part of a growing post-war concern with the science of child development and best practices in preschool education. The enefi s of educating four and five year olds gained favourable attention in 1960 when the BC Royal Commission on Education called for the province-wide establishment of public kindergartens – something that had been an issue since the war when Vancouver and Victoria school boards had turned to kindergartens rather than throw their support behind the *WDNA*.[88] Eventually, in 1973, provision was made for kindergartens in all BC public schools (although they were not required to establish them).[89]

With the post-war focus on early childhood education came a "new scrutiny" of older, charitable child care institutions.[90] The s otlight was put on these institutions for another reason as well. In the 1960s, several provinces, British Columbia included, made a commitment to subsidize low-income mothers' child care costs. The funds available through the *CAP* made this possible, but it also meant that day care subsidies were cast as being part of the "war on poverty."[91] Reminiscent of what occurred with the Vancouver City Crèche, subsidies were linked to mothers' labour force participation and they were not made available for children under three years of age, thanks in large part to a view espoused by child psychologists that infants suffered developmental damage if they were away from their mothers. However, thanks to subsidy programs, as well as the capital and operating grants made available by provincial governments, the number of day care centres grew signifi antly in the 1960s and 1970s. What remained fi mly imprinted in all of these new policies, though, was a stigma about the welfarist nature of child care for working mothers.

Th s stigma remained powerful throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and it endures today. Than s to this long legacy, child care is still often characterized as something that only poor mothers need (or that selfish mothers want). It is viewed within the framework of anti-poverty programs rather than in terms of social entitlements. Early childhood education, on the other hand, has been viewed in a much more positive light. Recognizing this distinction, child care advocates have sought to fuse ideas about education with practices of care. The erminology refl cts their efforts. In the 1980s, "child care" replaced "day care" as the preferred label, as advocates, parents, and staff rejected the older stigma associated with custodial "day care." More recently, attempts to integrate the two goals are refl cted in phrases such as early childhood education; early childhood learning; early childhood

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education and care; and early learning and care.[92] Linda White points out that contemporary academic research into child development, behaviour, and long-term success has partly fuelled the shifting currents of care and education. As a result, programs that focus "attention on the importance of a child's experiences in the early years on subsequent development" in ways that emphasize the "explicit" connection between learning and care – such as the federal government's 2003 *Multilateral Framework on Early Childhood Learning and Care* – are relatively politically palatable.[93] BC advocates have taken a similar path in recent years. Since 2010, the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of British Columbia and the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia have been championing a proposal for a $10-a-day public child care program that not only represents an important coalition between preschool educators and day care advocates but is based on a "public system of integrated early care and learning."[94]

In policy terms, though, Martha Friendly and Prentice maintain that the "long historical split between early childhood education and childcare continues to shape the national political debate about how to meet the needs and rights of Canadian families and children today."[95] Not all child care workers and advocates think that the infusion of education principles into child care is a good thing. Warnings have surfaced about the "schoolifi ation" of child care, which some feel recreates the class-based, two-tiered precedent established earlier in the century.[96] Some argue, furthermore, that focusing on education-based principles results in gaps in the provision of child care. Full-day kindergarten was made available to all BC children in 2010, for example, but working mothers remained without infant and toddler care, before- and after-school care, and care during the summer months. As Tammy Findlay notes, education-based programs are the "main event[s]" that attract public funding, while child care remains an "afterthought."[97]

For many advocates, a feminist framework has also become an afterthought in child care campaigns. Contemporary lobbying focuses heavily on early childhood investment and development. Rarely does gender equity and working mothers' social citizenship take centre stage.[98] Is this because the rhetoric of feminism is not politically palatable? Studies of advocacy movements in Alberta suggest that may be the case – that focusing on the interests of children leads to better policy gains than does focusing on women's rights, especially in the context of rightward government turns at both provincial and federal levels in recent years.[99] The ine ectiveness of feminist advocacy, of making child care a "women's rights" issue, speaks to the enduring uneasiness about working mothers and ambivalence about the

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ways in which the state was expected to foster their social and economic inclusion.

Tammy Findlay's observation – that child care is an "afterthought" – would come as no surprise to BC working mothers. Th oughout the twentieth century, as they struggled to find a ordable and quality child care, they would have been well aware that politicians, social planners, and a significant portion of the public pushed their child care needs to the backburner. In the meantime, those mothers and their families sought out alternatives in the range of private, family, and community-based options that emerged out of necessity. We get glimpses of mothers' varied strategies throughout this study: children were cared for by grandparents or other family members; mothers relied on neighbours and friends; and groups of women formed child care co-operatives.[100] Left to the private sphere, however, mothers' child care arrangements, like so much of women's private lives, are largely invisible in the historical record and thus left relatively unexamined.

However, working mothers' options were always shaped by the debates, policies, and programs that are at the core of this study. As they moved between their worlds of caregiving and wage earning, they navigated a tangled set of social, cultural, and political threads of meaning about child care and about their roles as mothers and workers. Some of these threads suggested the importance of early childhood educational opportunities. Others represented a feminist, rights-based understanding of a public child care system. Th se threads, though, ran up against more powerful meanings that worked to forestall the development of universal child care and explained the limited nature of child care provision that was crafted throughout the century: the dominance of discourses about the male breadwinner family and women's accompanying dependency; the belief that women's predestined role was to care for young children and that child care outside of the home was unnatural; that the overriding goal of state welfare policy was to regulate the work ethic in underprivileged families; and that child care could be used as an anti-poverty measure to prevent chronic welfare dependency in mother-headed families. All of these meanings fed into the enduring image of a working mother as a "failure" who should either be encouraged to leave the labour force or who should have her low-paid labour policed as a condition of her receipt of social assistance. Either way, negotiating expectations about work, both paid and unpaid, at the boundaries of social citizenship was complex and often contradictory for mothers. Th s negotiation is as apparent today as it was in the 1910s in Canada's first publi ly funded child care centre, the Vancouver City Crèche.

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