

HOW TO BE CONTENTIOUS AND COOPERATIVE AT THE SAME TIME IN CHILD CARE POLICY DEVELOPMENT: LEARNING FROM THE CHILD CARE ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION OF CANADA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FROM 2003 TO 2005

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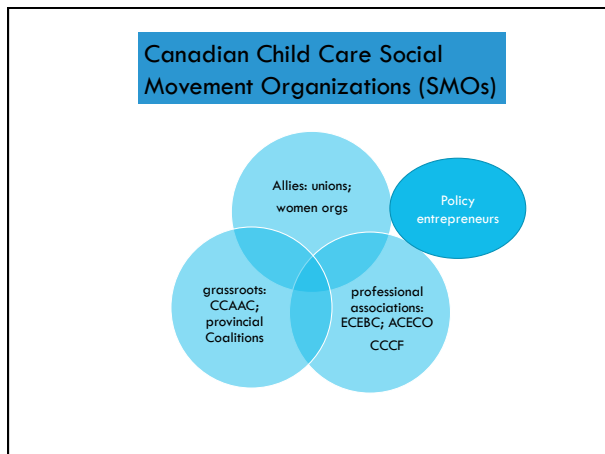
WE WISH TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE SUPPORT OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL FOR THIS RESEARCH PROJECT.

INTRODUCTION: MOBILIZING KNOWLEDGE-ECEC POLICY AND POLITICS

This presentation reports on findings from a larger study that has investigated the effects of sector professionalization on child care advocacy and policy development at the national level and in three provinces-Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario.

- MacDonald, L., Richardson, B. & Langford, R. (in press) ECEs as childcare advocates: Examining the scope of childcare advocacy carried out by ECEs from the perspective of childcare movement actors in Ontario and Manitoba. *Canadian Children*.
- Richardson, B. & Langford, R. (2014). A shifting collective identity: A critical discourse analysis of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada's public messaging in 2005 and 2008. *Critical Discourse Studies*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2014.922068>.
- Langford, R., Prentice, S., Albanese, P., Summers, B., Messina-Goertzen, B. & Richardson, B. (2013). Professionalization as an advocacy strategy: a content analysis of Canadian child care social movement organizations' 2008 discursive resources. *Early Years: An International Research Journal*. DOI: 10.1080/09575146.2013.789489

Under development for publication:
Article: Where is gender in Canadian child care advocacy?
Edited anthology: Caring for Children: Social Movements and Public Policy in Canada



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can CCAAC's relationship with the federal government between 2003-2005 be characterized? Contentious? Cooperative? Professionalized?

Did this relationship contribute to pan-Canadian ECEC policy development?

What lessons are helpful for future child care SMO-government relationships? What recommendations do informants make?

These questions are important to us as academic activists within the Canadian child care movement.

LITERATURE

SMO relationships with government can be characterized as conflictual and/or cooperative (Tilly, 2004; Giugni & Passy, 1998).

Cooperation may signal the professionalization of a grassroots organization in that advocacy language and demands become more conciliatory, and less militant, confrontational and urgent in content and tone (Snow & Soule, 2010).

Repertoires of contention and cooperation may be gendered strategic responses to government which structures oppression and opportunity along lines of gender (Ferree & Mueller, 2004; Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004; Staggenborg, 2008).

External macro-historical conditions and internal movement processes influence and expand tactical repertoires of conflict and/or cooperation (Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004).

METHOD: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Informant	Role	Number
CCAAC insiders	Board chairs, ED, contract employees, Council of Advocates members	9
Allies	From other SMOs, researchers	5
Government policy-makers	Involved in development of bi-lateral agreements	4

Interview questions included history with movement, experiences inside/outside the movement; perspectives on approaches to advocacy, effects of professionalization on advocacy, views on movement successes
Thank you to all informants for their generous and insightful contributions.

FINDINGS: CCAAC INSIDERS

- ❖ Informants generally describe CCAAC's relationship with gov't as positive, exciting and interesting, a "high time".
- ❖ CCAAC worked with executive assistants of Members of Parliament (MPs) and policy analysts to make sure MPs had sufficient information regarding ECEC policy.
- ❖ CCAAC had some influence over language used in ECEC policy development.
- ❖ CCAAC and government shared a common language on the "need to invest in new systems such as a national child care system".
- ❖ CCAAC had project funding to produce reports (evidence) useful to government.
- ❖ Advocates did push back on some issues such as gov't reluctance to focus specifically on child care; not-for profit versus for-profit

MIXED FINDINGS: ALLIES

- ❖ CCAAC viewed as a legitimate representative of the movement at the national level-advocates viewed as tenacious.
- ❖ CCAAC's use of "human capital" arguments for childcare was the "wrong thing for the right reason". (too cooperative)
- ❖ Advocates who are part of the child care movement (but not the professional ECE movement) see their role as always contentious and to find weaknesses in any policy proposed by government. (too contentious)
- ❖ 2003-2005 viewed as a historic period in which the Minister responsible for the bi-lateral agreements championed early learning.

GOVERNMENT LEADERS

- ❖ Relationship with CCAAC described in terms of individuals rather than organizations
- ❖ Described relationships with CCAAC advocates as collegial and respectful and informal—although government had to manage “lingering skepticisms” advocates had towards the government
- ❖ A common focus was “child care and making it work”. Advocates had the necessary knowledge to build policy.
- ❖ There was admiration at the remarkable level of dedication advocates possessed—part of “their being”
- ❖ CCAAC did push on some matters.
- ❖ Were surprised at how ideological child care became in the 2005 election
- ❖ While CCAAC played a role in policy development, “policy entrepreneurs” significantly influenced some government leaders to take action.

FINDINGS: LESSONS FOR FUTURE ADVOCACY

- Informants maintain that while “at this impasse”, the older advocates need to mentor younger activists and to step aside to let them try new advocacy approaches.
- CCAAC should continue to
 - 1) Provide analyses of public policy and policy solutions.
 - 2) Engage in public education or public policy literacy.
 - 3) Work across any divisions within the child care movement and across provinces to build relationships and to mobilize old and new allies

ALLIES’-OBSERVATIONS ON FUTURE ADVOCACY

- Movement needs a new generation of advocates (same core group of people) who need to be able to define goals
- SMO collaboration is essential

GOVERNMENT LEADERS’ RECOMMENDATIONS

- “Keep the faith through thick and thin” and “trust people in the future”.
- “Child care did and did not win in 2006 but it did win in 2004”. It can win again.
- Forge relationships with the opposition government—consider them a gov’t in waiting.
- Draw on the language and rationale for a national child care system most congruent with the worldview of the government (most often economic)—be strategic
- Focus on putting in place the “big fight” and then focus on “the little fights”.

DISCUSSION

Prior to 2006 informants describe a "conflictual cooperation" (Giugni & Passy 1998) relationship with the Liberal government. Cooperation was an advantage and contributed to policy development.

Some tactics contentious (report cards); there were differences but open dialogue about them.

Generally government informants did not distinguish between childcare SMOs (they are working together).

Informants identified favourable conditions that fostered CCAAC/state cooperation—the social investment perspective, the Liberal gov't was willing to work with civil society actors, there were government champions

Although CCAAC is a grassroots SMO the findings suggest the organization is more oriented to cooperation than contention-rooted in the culture of early childhood in which relationships and community matter.

DISCUSSION

Some commentators (Mahon, 2009) ask if CCAAC should have been more contentious and have pushed the government harder earlier to embed child care policy in legislation. All government informants maintained that the "10 bi-lateral agreements in 10 months" would not have been possible with a focus on legislation.

Jenson (2009) suggests that while the social investment perspective served to move child care policy forward it is the "culprit that set motion the social mechanism of writing women out" of the child care story.

However, all government leaders recognized that child care is a women's issue, an issue of families struggling to find child care. Nevertheless, they maintained that economic arguments (investment in the early years) are more politically strategic.

DISCUSSION

Interview data (CCAAC insiders) shows little visioning of a future in which child care SMOs would work cooperatively with government on ECEC policies.

Internal movement work to be done: building SMO collaborations-identifying common objectives , mentoring new advocates

CONCLUSION

We hope that documenting the perspectives of advocates, allies and government leaders on a historic period in child care advocacy can inform future work and policy development at the national level.