Partisan Child Care Politics in Australia and the United Kingdom (and Canada)

Child Care Research, Evidence and Policy:
Mobilizing Knowledge Research Conference

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RESEARCH QUESTION AND CONTEXT

- Why do political parties in different countries promote or oppose different child care policies?

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  Social policy as redistributive ideological struggle between Left and Right
- **Social investment hypothesis**
  Post-partisan environment where particular social policies are “win-win” issues

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  Left parties willing to embrace market-based service delivery and Right parties willing to support increased investment in services
- **Canada**
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- **What causes these differences?**
  Timing of early initiatives, policy design and framing

BACKGROUND AND ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

- Shared political, institutional, and demographic features of Australia, the UK and Canada

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- Role of Labour parties and class voting in Australia and the UK
- Canadian political parties more overlapping and less ideologically distinct

CASE STUDY: AUSTRALIA

- **1972:** Coalition government passes Child Care Act (CCA), cost sharing arrangement to fund non-profit centers

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- **Early 1970s**: Expansion under Labour government
- **Late 1980s**: Labour expands funding to for-profit services

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- **1997:** Labour introduces the National Child Care Strategy

CANADA

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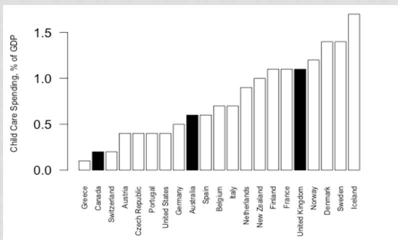
- **Early 1970s:** Welfare services option added to CAP
- **1988:** Conservatives propose Canada Child Care Act
- **2005:** Bilateral agreements passed and later cancelled

COMPARATIVE OUTCOMES

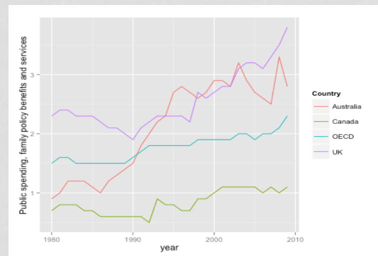
Public Child Care Spending in OECD Countries, 2009



Source: OECD Family Database, 2013

COMPARATIVE OUTCOMES

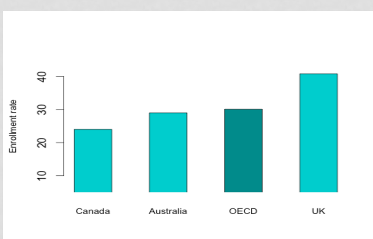
Public spending on family benefits and services (% of GDP)



Source: OECD Social Expenditure Statistics, 2013.

COMPARATIVE OUTCOMES

Enrollment Rate of Children under Three in Formal Child Care, 2008



Source: OECD Family Database, 2013.

COMPARATIVE OUTCOMES

	Australia	England	Canada
For-profit	63%	72%	29%
Non-profit	34%	17%	70.6%
Public	3%	12%	

Source: Brennan et al., 2012; Friendly et al., 2013

Numbers for Australia and England are from 2010/11, Canada from 2012

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- Future of political struggles over child care
- Trade-offs in levels of investment and mechanisms of service delivery