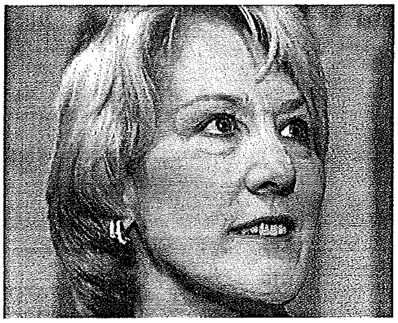

WOMEN AND POLITICS AROUND THE WORLD

A COMPARATIVE HISTORY AND SURVEY

VOLUME ONE

JOYCE GELB AND
MARIAN LIEF PALLEY

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Political Pathways to Child Care Policy: The Role of Gender in State-Building

Kristin A. Goss • *Shauna L. Shames*

INTRODUCTION

Women alone have the capacity to bear children, and in most cultures, they also bear most of the responsibility for caring for those children. Women who wish to work outside the home, then, face a common challenge: what to do with the children? That question is not only a private dilemma, but also a public issue that affects women's self-determination, children's welfare, family and community functioning, and the economic performance of nations. Around the world, the child care question has stoked political controversy and challenged policy makers for decades.

Nations have approached the child care challenge in ways that are as diverse and unique as the societies themselves. Some nations have developed generous, comprehensive public systems; others have left individual families to find private accommodations. Some nations have invested heavily in preschool programs that combine educational and child-minding functions; others have also invested in infant and toddler care. In cobbling together their child care "systems," nations have tended to follow one of several distinct political pathways, or patterns of development, which are explored here.

There has been relatively little rigorous scholarly work on child care policy and even less comparative analysis of the political development and policy contours of these regimens. Notable exceptions include books by Michel (1999), Michel and Mahon (2002), and Cochran (1993), as well as articles by Mahon (1997), Bertone (2003), and Kremer (2006). The paucity of comparative work may be due in part to the great variety of

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Facing page: Portrait of a mother and her child. (Supri Suharjoto/Shutterstock) these policies and the complexity of their origins. As Sonya Michel (2006, 145) notes, child care "can be justified in the name of gender equality, child development, welfare reform, labor market needs, or demographic crisis," thereby "making it difficult to track and especially to compare child care policies over time and across cases."

This essay has three aims. First, based on reviews of case studies of 29 countries (Cochran 1993), four distinct pathways are identified and described: socialist, social democratic, development, and market. The pathways are distinguished by different catalysts for action, configurations of political actors, ideational goals, political opportunities, and economic and cultural constraints. Thus, there is more than one way to achieve child care policy.

Second, the distinct systems for delivering child care are categorized. The "systems" that countries have created vary by the relative involvement of government, market, nongovernmental, and private (e.g., family) actors in the nation's child care service. Virtually all countries have some involvement by all four sets of actors, but their relative involvement varies both by functional responsibility (e.g., regulation of services, financing of care, training of caregivers, and administration of day care centers) and by level of effort across countries. Bearing in mind that each country's child care system reflects a unique national culture and political history, nonetheless three broad types of child care systems coexist globally: public systems, in which public funds and providers dominate; private systems, in which nongovernmental community and family care dominates; and hybrid systems, in which government, nongovernmental, and private arrangements coexist in significant degrees.

Finally, the role of women is discussed, as individuals and as organized interests, in the development of child care systems around the globe. The literature on child care policy is rich with descriptions of different regimens; however, it gives short shrift to the roles different political actors have played in advocating, implementing, and defending child care services. The particularly underappreciated role of women and women's organizations is also highlighted. This discussion is necessarily incomplete; the aim is simply to illustrate the range of ways in which women's interests have been expressed in the evolution of child care systems.

POLICY PATHWAYS

By the second half of the 20th century—with urbanization, the decline of extended family arrangements, and the movement of women into the paid labor force—most societies were being forced to grapple with the child care question either at the local or the national level. For some of these societies, child care was not a new issue—indeed, in some countries, voluntary associations had laid the groundwork a century or more earlier (Kamerman 2006). But the second half of the 20th century witnessed a global boom in the development of collective approaches to child care regulation and provision.

Efforts to generalize about the development of child care policy have been frustrated both by the diversity of national histories, politics, and cultures and by the paucity of data. Synthesizing the 29 case studies in his edited volume, Moncrieff Cochran (1993) argues that child care policy is driven by at least 10 socioeconomic factors (e.g., urbanization,

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labor shortage, immigration), which are then mediated by 1 or more of 9 factors (e.g., cultural values, gross national product), producing child care programs that vary along 14 dimensions. In turn, each country arrived at its child care regimen through a "combination of combinations" of causal and mediating variables (Cochran 1993). Clearly, child care policy making, like all processes involving complex societies and human decision makers, is not amenable to parsimonious theories (Esping-Andersen 1990; Cochran 1993). Making theorizing even more challenging, good histories of child care policy making (or non–policy making) are scarce, and even where cross-national data are available (as in the Cochran volume), the political processes driving child care policy remain underexplored.

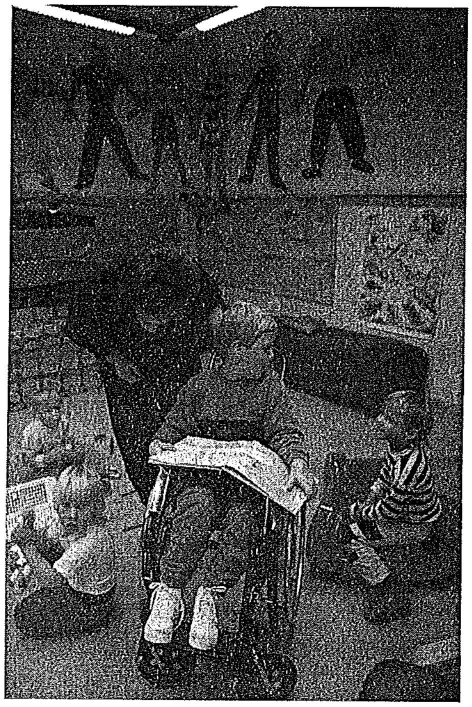
Nonetheless, from the case data available, there are clear patterns of political development, or pathways, by which diverse societies have arrived at their child care systems. These pathways are summarized here.

Pathway 1: Socialism

In countries such as Vietnam, Sandinista-era Nicaragua, and Soviet-era Hungary and Poland, the socialist regime created child care policy to fulfill three complementary goals: constitutional guarantees of social equality, including gender equality; full employment; and the inculcation of collectivist values and party loyalties in youths (Neményi 1993; Korczak 1993; Trong, Chi, and Phù 1993; Torres 1993). Socialist states often included constitutional provisions emphasizing the importance of the child to the future of the state and declaring the state's responsibility for implementing programs to ensure the physical and psychological development of youth. In Vietnam, for example, the 1946 constitution enshrined entitlements for children and declared it a duty of the state, society, and family to care for children. A 1970 circular declared child care centers (crèches and nursery schools) to be an important function of the state (Trong, Chi, and Phu 1993). A 1961 UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) survey found that the only countries with strictly public child care systems were communist states (Kamerman 2006). In the socialist model, child care became a tool of state building, as opposed to a method of redressing individual demand for services.

Pathway 2: Social Democracy

In many industrialized democracies, particularly in northern Europe, child care was designed to fulfill a vision of national economic growth fueled by female participation in the labor force. As with the socialist pathway, gender equality and child development were important ideological drivers, but the democratic pathway lacked the duty-to-state component of the socialist model. In the social democratic pathway, left parties, women's movements, and child care workers (particularly in Denmark) were the key drivers of child care policy (Bergman 2004; Bertone 2003; Borchorst 2002; Michel 1999; Mahon 1997). In some cases (e.g., Norway) child care was developed to serve the interests of the welfare state generally, for it could not be sustained without large-scale female participation in the labor force (Bø 1993).



A child care worker cares for a child at King Christian IX Kindergarten, an after-school childcare center subsidized by the government. (Stephanie Maze/Corbis)

Pathway 3: Development

In many developing countries, child care comes about as a by-product of other efforts to improve the economic, social, and physical well-being of children, their communities, and their nations. Child care facilitates the reduction of poverty, disease, delinquency, and illiteracy and provides employment for local women (Kipkorir 1993; Tolbert et al. 1993; Palattao-Corpus 1993; Fierro de Ascanio, Firas de Oreants, and Recagno-Puente 1993). In the development model, international aid organizations (notably UNICEF [United Nations Children's Fund]), philanthropies, and elite women (including presidents' wives) have supplied financial resources and leadership to spur the development of child care centers. Countries taking the development pathway include many Latin American nations (such as Mexico and Venezuela), India, Kenya, and the Philippines. In the development pathway, child care is central to a child-centered theory of social and economic improvement.

Pathway 4: Market Demand

In this pathway, common in liberal democracies, economic shocks or demographic shifts push women into the labor force, creating a demand for child care services that are met primarily by professionally staffed for-profit and nonprofit suppliers, by women's voluntary associations, or by community cooperatives. In this model, the state is likely to play a secondary role, perhaps issuing standards and regulations to ensure quality of service provision, providing tax incentives to subsidize the costs of care borne by families,

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or providing grants and contracts to nonprofit providers. Driven by an upheaval in traditional gender roles, the market pathway is characterized by cultural conflict over whether the state should facilitate nonmaternal day care arrangements at all. The market model applies to Anglo democracies (e.g, the United States, Great Britain, Canada) and to societies with relatively traditional gender hierarchies (such as Japan).

Although the pathways are distinct, they illustrate the myriad ways in which gender and politics intersect to produce child care policy. In the socialist and social democratic pathways, an ideology of gender equality, coupled with the imperative of full employment (i.e., female and male), defines the politics of child care. In the development pathway, child care policy is gendered in that women provide both the political leadership and the labor to realize these care systems. In the market model and social democratic pathways, child care systems have developed in response to collective action by women, as well as individual action by feminist bureaucrats who have prioritized child care policy. Although gender considerations are central, as shown in the case studies to follow, it would be a mistake to think of child care policy as everywhere and always about meeting the needs of working women. Rather, in many cases, child care was a policy tool for fulfilling larger political projects, notably economic development, the reproduction of collectivist ideologies, and state building more generally.

POLICY REGIMENS

The political pathways describe the policy inputs, that is, the ideological, economic, and political factors that catalyzed the development of child care services. But nations vary widely by output as well. And, as Cochran (1993) correctly notes, there is no clear correlation between the factors driving child care policy making (the pathway) and the policy regimen that results. Even if the level of demand for child care is similar across different nations, their cultural, economic, political, and social contexts shape the form that the supply will take.

The array of responses to child care demand is as varied as nations themselves. Nearly every nation that has defined child care as a "public problem," at least for some segments of the population, has developed a system that apportions responsibility across economic sectors. Government is nearly always involved, as is the voluntary sector and the for-profit sector. However, the nature and degree of these different actors' involvement varies widely. This essay lays out a framework categorizing child care "systems" into one of three categories: public, private, and hybrid. The categories are summarized in Table 1.

This public-private-hybrid scheme provides some sense of the priority that policy makers have given to child care in various nations. Presumably, all else being equal, nations that have created publicly funded and/or administered systems have ranked child care as a more pressing concern than countries that have mostly entirely private systems.

However, such a generalization begs several caveats. First, all else is not equal. In particular, wealthier nations have more public funds to spend on social programs than do underdeveloped nations; thus, policy output is not necessarily a reflection of policy priorities in the abstract. Second, the categorization scheme captures only the relative mix of responsibility across public and private actors; it does not directly capture

TABLE 1. Three Policy Systems for Child Care Services

System	Financing	Delivery
Private	Family, out-of-pocket	Nanny, informal family arrangement, voluntary association, for-profit centers
Hybrid	Out-of-pocket, balanced by tax credits, direct public expenditure	Nanny, informal family arrangement, voluntary association, for-profit sector, minimal government-run centers
Public	Tax credits, direct public expenditure	Government-run centers dominate, minimal private or voluntary sector arrangements

Source: International Labor Organization (2007).

the generosity of the programs. One could imagine a publicly funded and administered system that cannot accommodate all families who need services; likewise, one could imagine a system of low-cost, volunteer-run day care cooperatives that have space for all who apply. Although the case studies allow systems to be characterized along the public-private spectrum, the data on these systems' comprehensiveness, in particular their ability to meet demand, are largely unavailable except in advanced welfare states.

Finally, the public-private-hybrid scheme cannot fully capture the policy goals inherent in child care systems. As Kamerman (2006) notes, in advanced Western democracies, an important cleavage exists between regimens created to provide care to children of poor working mothers; those created to educate and socialize children; and those created to meet the needs of middle-class women entering the labor force.

CHILD CARE POLICY: THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Over the past two decades, there has been a flowering of research on comparative development of welfare states (Esping-Andersen 1990; O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999; Pierson 1995; Huber and Stephens 2001). Within that tradition, feminist scholars have explored the gendered dimensions of welfare states (Mahon 2002; O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999; Mettler 1998; Haney 1998; Sainsbury 1996, 1994; Koven and Michel 1993). As caregivers and workers, to say nothing of potentially vulnerable wives and mothers, women represent the core constituency for a host of social programs, from housing and cash assistance for families to maternity leave and child care, maternal and child health services, elder care, old-age pensions, and survivor benefits.

Because women benefit in so many ways from public provision, women's movements, unions, and voluntary organizations, as well as female policy makers themselves, have been important advocates for welfare state expansion and have played important roles in program implementation (Skocpol 1992; O'Connor, Shaver, and Orloff 2003; Huber and Stephens 2000; Misra 1998). However, as Bergman (2004, 218) argues, "[m]ainstream welfare state research tends to underplay the significance of women's own actions and organizing when it comes to the making of welfare policies." Bertone (2003, 230) argues that such a "women's agency perspective" is a vital counterweight to the "passive view of women" as service recipients. Herein are described the various roles women, as individuals and organizations, have played in the development of child care policy.

Most of the world's countries witnessed important changes in women's roles in the second half of the 20th century. These changes included the movement of women into the nonagricultural labor force and declining fertility rates. (See Table 2 for data on a representative sample of nations cited in this chapter.) In addition, the latter decades of the 20th century witnessed large-scale organizing for women's social, economic, and political rights and an influx of females into key legislative and bureaucratic positions. These broad-scale changes in the social and political landscape for women drew energy from international developments as well, most notably the United Nations' decision to declare 1975 the International Women's Year, to sponsor a corresponding global gathering of women in Mexico City, and to challenge all nations to improve the economic, social, and legal status of women. The Mexico City conference produced a declaration holding governments responsible for creating "the necessary facilities so that women may be integrated into society while their children receive adequate care" (Declaration of Mexico 1975).

Acting as individuals or collectively, women played myriad roles in creating, developing, implementing, and defending child care arrangements. The most important role they played was as workers whose role in the labor force created demand for child care provision. Cochran (1993) notes that of 10 European nations studied in his volume, 7 developed child care at least in part to allow women to offset labor shortages. However, working women's demand for child care was stimulated by different forces in different countries.

TABLE 2. Women's Total Fertility* and Labor Force Participation Rates†

	Total Fertility Rates		**Labor Force Participation Rates**	
Country	**1970s**	**2000**	**1970**	**2000**
Australia	2.9 (1970)	1.7 (2000)	37.1% (1971)	54.9% (2000)
Denmark	2.0 (1970)	1.7 (2001)	43.9% (1970)	74.1% (2001)
India	4.9 (1981)	3.3 (1997)	18.7% (1971)	37.7% (2001)
Mexico	6.2 (1974)	2.7 (1996)	17.9% (1970)	38.0% (2001)
Sweden	1.9 (1970)	1.6 (2001)	42.3% (1970)	73.1% (2000)‡
United States	2.5 (1970)	2.1 (2000)	40.5% (1970)	55.3% (2000)‡

*Source: United Nations Population Division: "World Fertility Patterns: 2004 Report" (UN 2005).

†Source: LABORSTA, a database operated by the ILO Bureau of Statistics (International Labour Organisation, ILO 2007). "Labor Force Participation" is the proportion of women aged 15 years and older who are employed in the labor force.

‡The database does not give total labor force participation rates for all women aged 15 years and older in these two cases for the year 2000. Instead, this figure is an average across labor force participation rates for women in these countries, across all age categories given in the database (starting with age 16).

In socialist and social democratic states, child care was a by-product of larger political projects, notably industrial policy requiring full female employment, ideological commitments to gender equality, and an ethic of child development. Denmark and Sweden, with two of the most generous public child care systems in the world, illustrate these forces. From the 1960s, both countries witnessed a revolutionary change in women's labor force participation. The extension of universal care came in response to labor market demands, as both nations decided to fuel their industrial expansion by harnessing indigenous female labor.

In liberal political cultures, where the state plays a smaller role in industrial policy, child care demand tended to "bubble up" from women themselves as they sought paid work that did not accommodate their simultaneous care of their children. The degree of women's influence depended in large part on the extent to which they were organized into coalitions with other child care stakeholders or were formally integrated in state or quasi-state entities (such as political parties). As Sonya Michel (2002, 333) has insightfully observed, although feminists have viewed child care as indispensable to full social citizenship, "they have not always been its most effective advocates." This is so for at least two reasons: "first, feminism itself has always been a volatile issue, one that often engenders strong backlash, and second, child care, unlike other items on the feminist agenda—say, antidiscrimination policies—involves not only women, but children too." Michel (2002) argues that women's organizations have been most effective where they have forged coalitions with early childhood educators, who can make the credible case that child care is good for children. Where such coalitions have been absent, child care policy has been a harder political sell. Five nations illustrate the myriad roles of women, alone or in coalition, as advocates for child care: Australia, Denmark, Sweden, the United States, and Mexico.

Australia is a liberal, Anglo democracy with a more generous and comprehensive public child care system than its peer countries have. In her history of child care in Australia, Deborah Brennan (1994) argues that women's organizations were relevant not so much in spurring enactment of a national law but in shaping its development and protecting benefits.

In the 1960s, Australia faced a labor shortage, and employers pressed for child care to free women to assume those roles (Brennan 1994, 63). In 1970, influential reports on child care and working women were published. Two years later the Child Care Act was introduced under a conservative government, and feminists organized the Women's Electoral Lobby. Providing momentum to these developments, the Labour Party won the 1972 national elections, with a commitment to holding the women's vote (Brennan 2002). Prime Minister Gough Whitlam appointed Elizabeth Reid as adviser on women's issues, and "together with Labour Party activists and women from a range of community organizations, Reid worked tirelessly to ensure that the national child care program was brought more in line with democratic and feminist ideals" (Brennan 2002, 99). Among other policies, the women's organizations pushed for government funding of small, community-based day care centers that actively involved parents (Brennan 2002, 99). When cutbacks loomed under subsequent conservative governments, the alliance of feminist organizations and female bureaucrats ("femocrats") that had shaped the early policy regimen successfully defended its structural integrity. By the mid-1990s, "two-thirds of the demand for work-related child care had been met and the Labor government [was] committed to completely meeting the need for work-related child care by 2001" (Brennan 1994, 5).

In Denmark, the foundations of the child care system—the most generous in the world—were laid in the late 19th century, when kindergartens for upper-class families formed in response to the teachings of German pedagogue Friedrich Fröbel. In 1919, under the Social Democrats, Parliament unanimously passed public subsidies for people's kindergartens, essentially child care facilities for families of middling means (Borchorst 2002). Two female constituencies shaped the evolution of child care throughout the 20th century: professional pedagogues, who staffed the kindergartens, and, to a lesser extent feminist organizations, which saw the need for part-time care for children of working women.

In the mid-20th century, Danish child care began to move toward universalism. In 1949, with broad bipartisan support, Parliament approved state subsidies for facilities accommodating children of wealthier families. This development came at the urging of professional pedagogues, who argued that all children—not just those from disadvantaged backgrounds—need social contacts, personal inspiration, and development (Kremer 2006, 273). The pedagogues professionalized in the 1950s and developed a politically powerful trade union (BUPL), thereby solidifying their political power (Kremer 2006).

Danish women's organizations have been involved in child care policy, but to a lesser extent than the female pedagogues. In 1959, the National Council of Women, an umbrella organization of women's rights groups, successfully urged Parliament to investigate the development of part-time facilities to accommodate children of working women (Borchorst 2002). In 1964, the landmark child care law was passed, providing for universal care and apportioning costs among the national government, municipalities, and parents (Borchorst 2002; Kremer 2006). Two-thirds of the costs are paid by taxes and the remainder is subsidized by parents (Langsted and Sommer 1993, 150).

Danish feminist scholars have argued that women's organizations played a smaller role in advocating for child care than might have been expected, perhaps because the policy enjoyed broad support from both Social Democrats and center-right parties and strong advocacy from pedagogues, who were unionized and professionalized by mid-century (Borchorst 2002; Bertone 2003). However, the limited role of women's organizations may also have been driven by internal conflicts between homemaker and working professional constituencies. To ameliorate this conflict, argues Chiara Bertone (2003), women's groups adopted the child-development rationale for day care, but in straying from a feminist rationale, they lost some of their authority.

In Sweden, which like Denmark has a historical legacy of "people's kindergartens," feminists were stronger and more successful advocates of modern, universal child care. In the Swedish case, feminist agitation was channeled through the dominant leftist parties (Mahon 1997) and not only shaped child care policy but also helped to defend it against retrenchment (Mahon 1997; Michel 1999). Bergman (2004) argues that, even as it was conducted through the ruling Social Democratic Party, women's organizing can be thought of as taking place at least partially outside the state.

Until the 1970s, Swedish Social Democrats and other leftist women were divided over the wisdom of public child care; some feminists believed the state should instead provide allowances so that mothers could stay home with their offspring. However, by the late 1960s, there was a growing consensus in favor of public provision, and the Swedish child care system was established thereafter, beginning with the 1968 National Commission on Child Care. The system developed in response to the rapid movement of married women and mothers into the labor force, and these women politicized the lack of publicly funded day care slots for their children (Bergman 2004). Partly in response to feminist pressures, by the early 1990s nearly half of newborn to six-year-olds were served in a day care center or family day care home (Gunnarsson 1993). As in other Nordic countries, child care in Sweden "has been identified as a universal citizenship right, as a key issue affecting women's economic independence and well-being, as well as a cornerstone of gender equality" (Bergman 2004, 220).

In the 1970s, Swedish feminists worked mainly through the women's federations of the Social Democratic and Liberal parties to agitate for and enshrine this principle of gender equity. When the Swedish labor movement sought to enlist homemakers to fuel the nation's industrial expansion, rather than rely on immigrants, the women's federation within the Social Democratic Party demanded comprehensive, state-sponsored child care (Michel 1999; Bergman 2004). Party feminists used a "choice" framework, arguing that publicly financed day care would give women the opportunity to pursue paid work if they preferred not to be full-time homemakers (Bergman 2004). Social Democratic women joined feminists from other political ideologies in a "a cross-class, cross-party alliance" that "strategically linked pronatalist concerns to married women's right to work, arguing that if they were barred from employment, women might refrain from marriage and childbearing" (Michel 1999, 285). As Michel notes, the long-ruling Social Democrats were open to such arguments, as they saw child care as a means of achieving their own goals of halting population decline and reducing class inequality (Michel 1999).

In the United States, by contrast, child care has been a much-discussed but little-advocated policy concern of the feminist movement since the early 1970s. The Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971, which would have provided free child care to poor families and to others on a sliding scale, passed Congress but was vetoed by President Nixon (Michel 1999, 248). With the exception of this failed proposal, child care activism has been locally rooted (Gelb and Palley 1996, xii). Michel notes that feminists, "surprisingly, played a relatively minor role in the struggle for child care," instead focusing on "formal aspects of gender equity such as access to education and employment" (Michel 1999, 278). With the beneficiaries of child care divided by class and policy interests, "the potential political power of any child care lobby was fragmented and weak" (Michel 1999, 237). The resulting child care system in the United States is a patchwork quilt of public and private provision. Elite, dual-earners tend to obtain child care in the private market, typically purchasing the services of au pairs or nannies or placing their child in an employer-sponsored or for-profit facility. Middle-income parents place their children in lower-cost facilities or enlist the help of family members and neighbors. Lower-income families enlist family members or send their children to publicly funded Head Start programs or volunteer-run community-based care.

The story in Mexico is similar. The major issues of the feminist movement—such as the legalization of abortion and rape law reform—did not include child care (Pablos 1992). This was in part because the issue was ideologically divisive for Mexican feminists and the wider public, who strongly believed child care to be a mother's private responsibility. "There is a cultural perception in Mexico that a 'good' mother does not leave her child in the care of strangers" (Tolbert et al. 1993, 357). Mexico's economic troubles and lack of feminist movement demands for child care have meant a mostly privatized and highly class-stratified system of child care provision. Middle- and upper-class women, and women employed by the government, are able to obtain child care services. The commitment of the state is to support working women in obtaining child care, not marginalized women who are outside the (official) workforce. Public-sector child care exists only in large cities (particularly Mexico City) and is only open to women employed by the government or parastatal institutions.

These brief cases show the range of women's organized involvement in demanding the expansion of child care. Although feminist scholars are right to redress the welfare state literature's neglect of women's agency, it is important not to overstate the role organized feminism has played in child care policy. Child care policy is shaped by cultural beliefs about the proper organization of families, including traditionalist notions that children belong at home with their mothers. These views divide women, including feminist women, and have exposed women's organizations to cross pressures that in some nations and at certain historical periods have inhibited their activism on the child care issue.

Thus far, this essay has examined demand-side factors in which women played a role as beneficiaries of, or advocates for, child care services. But women's organizations have also been important to ensuring their supply, often through formal contractual and financial relationships with the state. Many developing countries are experiencing a shift from traditional, agricultural economies toward industrial, urban economies. These shifts have encouraged a breakdown in traditional care arrangements, in which mothers brought their children with them to work in the fields or relied on daughters to care for their younger siblings. In these conditions, women have organized voluntary, community-based solutions to the child care dilemma. Interestingly, however, community-based collectives are not unique to developing nations; wealthier countries, such as Israel and the United Kingdom, have seen voluntary organizing to meet the demand for day care.

India is an interesting example of how female-led voluntary initiatives have supplemented government efforts. The Indian government has included child care as a national policy priority since independence in 1947. Three national laws mandated that employers provide on-site crèches where women are employed; this mandate was applied to factories in 1948, plantations in 1951, and mines in 1952 (Gill 1993). What is more, the National Planning Commission has included child care in its national plans since 1951 (Gill 1993). However, these laws and plans were mostly aspirational, hobbled by population growth, financial constraints, and employer shirking (Gill 1993). In 1975, inspired by the efforts of one female advocate to create care systems for children of female construction workers, the government created a program of Assistance to Creches for Working and Ailing Mothers (Gill 1993). This program provides grants to local child care centers.

In India, national child care policy was enacted not in response to a middle-class feminist movement seeking to empower employed women, but rather in response to the difficult conditions facing children of female laborers. Yet women's organizations, as well as individual women, have proved vitally important in implementing child care policy in India. As Leslie Calman (1992) notes, the "empowerment wing" of the Indian women's movement organized child care collectives to spur economic development from below. Likewise, family day care—in which homemakers run services out of their houses—has become increasingly popular in the face of a paucity of formal arrangements (Gill 1993).

Finally, most elite women who work full-time in India purchase child care services—typically from a female nanny or "ayah"—in the informal market, where labor is cheap and plentiful (Kanchan Mathur, personal correspondence, March 9, 2007; Anirudh Krishna, personal conversation, March 5, 2007). In sum, against the backdrop of national child care laws that are far from comprehensive, Indian women have devised mostly voluntary and private systems for providing child care.

This pattern is common in other developing countries, as well. In postindependence Kenya, for example, local women responded to the national motto "Harambee," meaning "Let us pull together," by creating and staffing preschools for children of working mothers in the villages (Kipkorir 1993). In Israel, women's organizations have played an even more important role in creating and administering child care. An advanced economy with particular development needs because of high immigration, Israel has pursued child care policy as a means of integrating children of newly arrived residents, reducing poverty, and preparing children for formal education (Sagi and Koren-Karie 1993). In the Israeli system, the central government provides financial support to women's voluntary organizations to run day care centers. In the 1990s, Voluntary Working Women, a labor union organization, ran 65 percent of all day care facilities in Israel; the Women's International Zionist Organization ran 30 percent; and EMUNAH, a religious women's group, ran the remaining 5 percent (Sagi and Koren-Karie 1993).

ANALYSIS

From this overview of the politics of child care policy, several conclusions can be drawn. First, although it is common in Western feminist circles to think of child care as a "women's issue," many of the world's most comprehensive systems arose not to meet the demand of feminist professionals but rather to facilitate nongendered political projects. Many nations, including those in what used to be called the third world, established national child care plans or constitutional guarantees long before the spread of feminist movements in the 1970s and 1980s. In these regimes, child care was integral to national industrial policy, including full employment; to pedagogical aspirations for young citizens; and to socialist state building. Even in the era of global feminism, female empowerment was often secondary to other goals, such as preparing children for school, improving child health outcomes, and encouraging community economic development by employing low-skilled female caregivers.

Second, although child care policy in most nations may not have been spurred by women's organizing, female bureaucrats and feminist movement organizations have played an important role in shaping the programs as they evolved. Policies create constituencies, and the constituency for child care has only grown in the past four decades, as feminist movement organizations have become entrenched interests, nations have become more urbanized, and women have continued their march into the paid labor force. That said, women's organizations have been constrained by divisions among women themselves over whether child care should be a top priority, or even whether nonmaternal care is a good idea at all.

Third, although scholars of the welfare state have understandably focused on a certain subset of advanced industrialized countries with well-developed social-policy regimens,

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this overview of child care systems suggests the importance of a broader perspective. Although a few nations in Western Europe have developed generous public systems of care, many other nations have cobbled together arrangements whose development is equally, if not more, interesting. Government is one mechanism for collective solutions to public problems, but the market and voluntary action are two common alternatives. Many countries have met the demand for child care with community collectives, nongovernmental organizations, and for-profit service providers, often regulated, financed, or indirectly subsidized by the state. Far less is known about the political development of these private and hybrid systems than about the public systems that have featured so prominently in the welfare state literature.

Finally, although this essay has sought to pull together common threads in the existing literature on child care policy and identify distinct political pathways and policy responses, this overview is necessarily incomplete. With several notable exceptions (Brennan 1994; Michel 1999; Michel and Mahon 2002), detailed political histories of child care policy are scarce. A fair amount is known about the policy regimens in various nations, but not as much about the forces that propelled the development of those systems. No doubt the forces were varied and complex, and the systems evolved in response to a series of stimuli over a period of decades. Nonetheless, child care policy offers a window into the ways in which different political cultures solve an inevitable public problem, and as such scholars are urged to explore the ways in which various political pathways and policy outcomes interact to create the systems that have been established.

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