

Policy legacies and child care politics in Australia and Canada ^[1]

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Abstract

This study explores the puzzle of why Australia and Canada have followed significantly different paths in national-level child care policy despite their otherwise similar welfare state structures. Australia has developed a relatively generous system of public subsidies to support the provision of care for young children, while at the same time relying increasingly on the market to deliver child care. In contrast, Canada has extremely low levels of public spending and service provision, resulting in a less expansive system of regulated child care. I trace these divergent outcomes to the impact of post-WWII child care policy legacies in these countries and the way that these legacies interact with the changing politics of the welfare state to produce variation. In Canada, child care policy was first established within a social assistance framework as a service intended to combat poverty, while in Australia, child care was introduced as an economic policy to facilitate women's workforce participation. The differences in the intended goals of these policies affected the subsequent patterns of child care politics and policy development in these two countries, leading to the divergent outcomes observed today.

Region: International ^[3]

Tags: policy ^[4]

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