“LOOK WHO’S TALKING”
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE FRAMING OF THE UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE BENEFIT AND THE CANADA CHILD BENEFIT IN CANADIAN PRINT MEDIA

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ABSTRACT
This project examines news coverage of the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) and the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), two of Canada’s federal child care initiatives, from January 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016 in six Canadian dailies. I use automated coding to analyze the two policy targets, goals, and corresponding issues are framed. While most literature on news coverage of child care in Canada has focused on election coverage, this analysis assesses if there are differences in coverage of the two policies across three timeframes: pre-election changes to the UCCB (January 15, 2015 – July 31, 2015), election coverage of the UCCB and proposed CCB (August 1, 2015 – October 31, 2015), and the shift to the CCB under the new Liberal government (November 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016), to assess if the political context exerts effects on the coverage of the child care benefits in print media. Moreover, this project examines if there are differences in coverage of the UCCB and CCB between male journalists and female journalists in framing of policy targets, goals, and issues, as well as sourcing. This analysis finds that coverage of the UCCB and CCB centers prominently on a gender-neutral, “family” model of care, focusing broadly on goals of social investment while paying little attention to issues of poverty and inequality. While differences in coverage across timelines may largely reflect co-occurring issues, I find that considerable gender gaps in journalists’ framing of policy targets, goals, and issues, as well as who they view as credible sources on the issue of child care.

THE UCCB AND CCB
• The UCCB was implemented in 2016 at a $160/month direct federal transfer for all families with children under 6.
• In July 2015, UCCB was increased to $160/month for children under 6 and the Conservatives initiated a new 50% tax benefit for children ages 6-17. The tax payments are retroactive to January 1, 2015 so parents received a one-time amount of $2550/child under 6 and $4250/child ages 6-17.
• Under the 2016 federal budget, the UCCB was replaced by the CCB, a streamlined child benefit policy combining the former UCCB, Canada Child Tax Benefit, and the National Child Benefit.
• The CCB, which comes into effect in July 2016, is a tax-free transfer that will pay up to $6400/child under 6 and $5400/child ages 6-17, phasing out over a net income of $30000.

CHILD CARE IN CANADIAN MEDIA
• Coverage of child care policies is generally public in each of the six major dailies. I use automated coding to analyze how the two policies’ coverage varies across timelines and sources. I would also like to thank Dr. Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant, for her on-going support and guidance with this project and several others.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. Policy Targets – Who is portrayed as the intended beneficiary of the UCCB/CCB? To what extent does the coverage explore policymakers’ effects on women as parents and workers?
2. Policy Goals – Are the child care policies analyzed as strategies of social investment or social justice?
3. Policy Issues – To what extent is the debate about the UCCB/CCB centered around the issue of poverty?
4. Journalist Gender – Are there differences between male and female journalists in the way that they frame the policy targets, goals, and issues?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS
Sample acquired from Canadian Newsstand using the search terms “Universal Child Care Benefit” and “Canada Child Benefit” from a major dollar: Globe and Mail, National Post, Vancouver Sun, Calgary Herald, Toronto Star, and Chronicle Herald. Articles substantively discuss the child benefits, making reference to the UCCB, CCB, or child benefits more than once, in different paragraphs of the article. Election primers and platform overviews are excluded. Automatic coding using Yobeholer and Winholt 11. Dictionaries were constructed based on concordance analyses for the each of the policy facets. The following themes emerged from the inductive analysis of each facet:

Policy Targets
• Families/Parents – Gender neutral, “family” model
• Women/Mothers – Gendered, “women-centered” model

Policy Goals
• Social Investment – Focusing on the utility of child benefits for the labour force, early childhood education, and choice in care provisions
• Social Justice – Focusing on the utility of child benefits for poverty reduction and equality

Policy Issues
• Child Care – Child benefits discussed in relation to larger issues regarding child care
• Taxation – Child benefits discussed in relation to larger issues regarding taxation
• Political Scandal – Child benefits discussed in relation to political scandals.

RESULTS

POVERTY TERMS

JOURNALIST GENDER

POLICY TARGETS

POLICY GOALS

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS
Coverage of the UCCB and CCB demonstrates the prominence of a gender-neutral, “family”-centered model premised largely on social investment interpretations of care for understanding instances of child benefits. While differences in framing across the timeline may call for a more rigorous analysis of the political context and confounding factors, this project conveys that there are significant gender-gaps in the way that journalists cover stories on the UCCB and CCB.

Building upon this research, I intend to conduct a follow-up analysis that more closely attends to how the issue of federal child care responsibilities is framed in the 2015 election (“Those Men and A (Poison) Babes: Baby, Truelove, and Mulcair on Child Care in the 2015 Federal Election”).

WORKS CITED

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