

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS: CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS AND FAMILY POLICY
IN CANADA AND GERMANY, 2005 – 2015

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ABSTRACT

Rahim Mohamed: *Strange Bedfellows: Conservative Governments and Family Policy in Canada and Germany, 2005 – 2015*
(Under the Direction of John D. Stephens)

This dissertation contributes to the literature on recent and ongoing family policy reforms in affluent countries by comparing the respective family policy agendas of right party-led governments in Canada and Germany between 2005 and 2015. My comparative assessment of reforms enacted by the governments of Stephen Harper and Angela Merkel, respectively, indicates that an increased cross-national salience of the financial and logistical challenges faced by modern (i.e.: dual-earner and single-parent) families presents right-of-center parties with an incentive to utilize family policy proposals instrumentally to broaden their electoral appeal. This gives vital context to large-n statistical research that indicates a weakening of partisanship as an explanatory variable for recent family policy developments.

The study also finds that differences in the specific policies implemented by each government can ultimately be traced back to the domestic discursive context. Germany presented the more favorable environment for comprehensive, women's employment supporting reforms due to a widespread perception of the low domestic birth rate as a threat to intergenerational 'sustainability'. The cause was also helped by the presence of credible policy spokeswoman Ursula von der Leyen, who championed a progressive package of reforms while, at the same time, embodying a traditional image of maternity that appealed to conservatives. By contrast, the Canadian political environment favored a continuation of direct cash payments to families, as

exemplified by the Harper government's signature Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB). Harper later launched two children's activity tax credits crafted to appeal to families in critical suburban 'swing ridings'. Although both opposition parties proposed a national daycare strategy as an alternative to Harper's agenda, the idea has only limited popular appeal due to the questionable record of the country's only standalone provincial daycare program, based in Québec, and a silencing of feminist perspectives in the national policy dialogue. Lastly, I find that an ancillary discourse linking family policy to the cultural integration of migrants was visible in Germany but not in Canada. This finding is substantiated in Chapter 5 via a statistical topic analysis of over 450 relevant newspaper articles. I also draw from 25 personal interviews in my discussion of Canada

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To my family

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfD	Alternativ für Deutschland
BNA	British North America Act
bpw	births per woman
BQ	Bloc Québécois
CAD	Canadian Dollars
CAP	Canada Assistance Plan
CATC	Child Activity Tax Credit
CCB	Child Tax Benefit
CCED	Child Care Expense Deduction
CCTB	Canada Child Tax Benefit
CCF	Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
CFTC	Child Fitness Tax Credit
CHA	Comparative Historical Analysis
CPE	Centres de la Petite Enfrance
CSU	Christian Social Union
CTB	Child Tax Benefit
DM	Deutsche Mark
DTM	Document Term Matrix
FDP	Free Democratic Party
G8	Group of Eight
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

GNP	Gross National Product
JCPC	Judicial Committee of the Privy Council
LDA	Latent Dirichlet Allocation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MI-MNCH	Muskoka Initiative on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
MP	Member of Parliament
NAC	National Action Committee on the Status of Women in Canada
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	National Children's Agenda
NCB	National Child Benefit
NCC	National Citizen's Coalition
NDP	New Democratic Party
NSRs	New Social Risks
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
PC	Progressive Conservative
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PQ	Parti Québécois
RCSW	Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada
REAL	Realistic Equal Active for Life Women of Canada
SPD	Social Democratic Party
UCCB	Universal Child Care Benefit

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The late twentieth century was a time of great pessimism for the future of the welfare state. The turbulent 1970s—which saw commodities shocks, economic stagnation, and persistent inflation—motivated right-of-center governments in the United States and Britain to pursue vast liberalizing agendas, creating a template for like-minded reformers elsewhere. Such reforms hollowed out existing social safety nets and, through a “starve the beast” logic, reduced the number of revenue generating tools available to policymakers. A corresponding shift occurred in the ideational realm, where the interventionist macroeconomic philosophy of Keynesianism gave way to monetarism and other neo-classical dogma. These developments led to a broad academic consensus that the conventional welfare state had reached its apex and that the new challenge for progressives would be to simply preserve existing social programs (Stephens, 2015, p. 274). One leading scholar characterized the prevailing social policy environment as one of “permanent austerity” (Pierson, 1998).

But the rumors of the welfare state’s demise were in fact greatly exaggerated as broad demographic and cultural shifts have created a demand for new forms of social insurance. In fact, post-industrial governments are now beginning to spend substantially on policies designed to mitigate problems created by the process of welfare state maturation itself. Several of these “new social risks” stem from the steady decline of the high-wage male breadwinner manufacturing economy and concomitant rise of a dual earner services model of employment

(Taylor Gooby 2004; Bonoli 2005). The post-industrial shift to less well-compensated service employment and the coeval rise of feminist sentiments have led more women to pursue work outside of the home, often on a full-time basis. This has subsequently placed pressure on the state to provide extended support for aspects of child rearing that have historically been carried out by stay-at-home mothers.

Accordingly, the past three decades have seen a broad, cross-national uptick—particularly among the affluent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries—in spending in the domain of family policy, defined broadly here as *state intervention intended to lower the financial and time burden of raising children, especially for women*. Examples include publicly-subsidized daycare, parental leave entitlements, and family cash allowances. In fact, Ferragina & Seeleib-Kaiser (2015) identify, since the mid-1990s, an empirical trend of family policy expansion in all rich OECD countries—with the exception of the United States.¹ “The [OECD-wide] changes in family policy have been remarkable and are *grosso modo* in line with some of the demands feminist scholars made many decades ago,” write Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser. “This development is even more remarkable if we take into account the parallel retrenchment that is taking place in other social policy domains” (p. 18, italics in the original).

Pivotaly, Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser uncover a declining partisan effect over the 2000s (p. 20), signifying broad-based political support for the new family policy programs. Their large-n statistical findings are echoed in a number of recent qualitative studies, which argue that the

¹ Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser measure growth in family allowances, parental leave durations, day care, and other cash benefits between 1980 and 2008 (p. 11).

de-alignment of traditional party cleavages has led both right and left parties to court 'floating' female voters, often using family policy concessions as an inducement (Wiliarty 2010; Morgan 2013). These findings are also consistent with the hypothesis that stagnating birth rates have forced traditionally conservative regimes to begrudgingly implement policies designed to enable women to reconcile child rearing with labor force participation (Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen 2011; Oliver and Mätzke 2014). Nevertheless, much remains to be explained about the nature of the ongoing "silent revolution" of family policy expansion (Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser 2015), especially in cases where new policies defy long-established welfare regime trajectories (see Esping Andersen 1990).

I shed new light on this phenomenon here through a comparative analysis of family policy expansion in two unlikely cases, Canada and Germany. What makes this a worthwhile comparison is that, in both countries, substantial, path-shifting, and unforeseen family policy reforms have recently been pursued at the direction of right party led governments. These are the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)-led government of Angela Merkel in Germany (2005 – present) and Canada's recently unseated Conservative government, led by Stephen Harper (2006 – 2015).² The German and Canadian reforms unfolded over a similar timeframe, roughly 2005 through 2015, which facilitates a paired comparative assessment of the cases.

² Between 2005 and 2009, Merkel's CDU shared power with the rival Social Democrats (SDP) in a Grand Coalition government. However, as has been well-documented elsewhere (Mätzke and Ostner 2010b; Leitner 2010; Fleckenstein 2011), the CDU ultimately overtook the SDP in advocating family policy reform and made the programme the centerpiece of a major rebranding effort. Mätzke and Ostner (2010b, p. 472) write, "The formula of partisan politics fails to grasp the very recent major ('post-industrial') family policy change in Germany, proudly advertised by a Christian Democrat family minister[.]"

1.1. Project Outline and Contribution

This study utilizes a multi-method approach—consisting of qualitative causal process-tracing, elite interview findings, and automated text analysis—to uncover the antecedents and motivations behind right government led family policy reform processes in Canada and Germany. It also seeks to explain the unique trajectory of each process: broadly, the Canadian reforms have followed a familial, transfer-based Christian Democratic path while the German ones embody a Nordic-style universalism (Esping Anderson 1990). To be precise, Harper’s ‘refamilialization’ (see Findlay 2015) of family policy consisted of a flat-rate monthly child benefit,³ the introduction of spousal income tax splitting,⁴ and numerous boutique child tax credits. By contrast, the Merkel government more fully endorsed the dual earner model of employment by universalizing access to daycare (for children between the ages of one and three), tying maternity leave benefits to income, and introducing new, dual carer supporting provisions for paternal leave.⁵

³ Canada’s Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) was initially a payment of \$100 per month per child available to all parents with children under the age of six. It was increased to \$160 per month—with an additional \$60 payment for each child between the age of six and seventeen—shortly before the 2015 federal election.

⁴ Income splitting is a policy that allows the higher earning spouse in a household to transfer a certain amount of his or her income to the lower earning spouse for tax purposes. It differs from joint taxation as both partners are technically still taxed as individuals.

⁵ The CDU-led coalition’s *Elterngeld* (“parental allowance”) replaced the pre-existing flat rate parental leave payments with more generous income-based ones (repaying 67% of pre-leave earnings up to a maximum of 1,800 euros per month). The plan covered twelve months for the primary caregiver (usually the mother) as well as two additional months for the secondary one (usually the father).

To be clear, the historically Bismarckian⁶ CDU and the broadly neoliberal Conservative Party of Canada⁷ are not ideologically identical, nor would one expect them to approach family policy the same manner. This is nevertheless a worthwhile comparison as, over the past decade, both parties have implemented path-breaking family policy reforms in a manner that broke with national precedents. In fact, it could be argued that the implementation of a Nordic-style family policy package may have been more likely in Canada, where universalistic social programs like single-payer health care have a stronger historical basis (Maioni 1997; Mahon 2008).

I find that, in both cases, the family policy initiatives were part of a larger political rebranding process necessitated by periods of electoral failure. Time outside government in the 1990s and early 2000s motivated both the Conservatives and the Christian Democrats to retool policy pitches to persuadable voters (see Hillygus and Shields 2008). In the case of Canada, party strategists used sophisticated microtargeting techniques imported from the United States to isolate and engage the ‘soft conservative’ families that populate the country’s burgeoning suburban and exurban communities. Further, the policy innovation of ‘boutique’ family tax credits allowed the Conservatives to craft targeted policy appeals to increasingly narrow segments of the population (Delacourt 2016).

⁶ Like other Christian democratic parties in Continental Europe the CDU has, since the 1990s, begun to shed its Bismarckian dogma and embrace various growth-promoting structural reforms (see Hinrichs 2010).

⁷ The Conservative Party of Canada was formed in 2003 through the merger of the center-right Progressive Conservatives and the more socially conservative Canadian Alliance. Although Harper led the latter prior to becoming the leader of the unified Conservative Party, he subsequently sought to focus on economic issues and keep more polarizing social matters off the political agenda.

The efforts of Germany's CDU were more expressly designed to appeal to modernized female voters who had been alienated over time by the party's stubborn social conservatism (Clemens 2009; Seeleib-Kaiser 2010; Fleckenstein 2011; Morgan 2013). The Merkel Government emphasized the extent to which the new policies would allow women to reconcile work and family life, with the added bonus of boosting Germany's long-stagnating domestic birth rate. The visibility of women in the party's upper echelon gave credibility to this sales pitch (see: Wiliarty 2010; von Wahl 2011; Mohamed 2013).

While these specific mobilizational strategies differed—owing primarily to the different incentives imbedded in each country's respective electoral system—both stories reflect the de-alignment of traditional partisan cleavages and the increasing importance of issue competition (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Green-Pedersen 2007; Morgan 2013; Hobolt and de Vries 2015; Schwander 2018) in mature democracies. As such, both cases are important examples of how modern parties (and especially right parties) can utilize new family policies instrumentally to build viable electoral coalitions.

While an important finding in itself, this leaves the ancillary puzzle of why family policy reforms followed different trajectories in each country. Answering this question necessitates a thorough examination of the timbre of each domestic policy discourse. Accordingly, I use a novel automated text analysis technique, topic modelling, in chapter five to parse out dominant frames in each country's print media coverage of family policy over the past decade (2005 – 2015). I focus in particular on the contrast between the respective debates surrounding two similar monthly benefit programs for parents with pre-primary school aged children: The Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) and *Betreuungsgeld* (care allowance), respectively. I choose

to emphasize these policies because doing so allows me to both simplify the data collection process (thereby minimizing the potential for error in my analysis) and succinctly illustrate the differing normative contexts in each country. To be precise, I believe that the tonal differences in the press coverage of Canada's (popular) child benefit and Germany's (polarizing) child allowance get at the heart of why family policy reforms ultimately followed different trajectories in each country.

On the German side, two narratives in particular stand out. One is the construal of the *Betreuungsgeld* as a retrograde 'stove bonus' that ignored both evolving gender roles and a clear public demand for more employment-friendly family policies. Gender remained at the forefront of the discourse due, in part, to the visibility of Merkel and other prominent female politicians in the public sphere. A second persistent storyline presented the child allowance as a potential barrier to both the labor market participation of migrant women and the intercultural education of their toddler-aged children. Stories that embraced this narrative often emphasized the supposed 'self-segregation' of migrants from Turkey and other Muslim majority countries.

I find that such associations were rarely made in the Canadian print media. In general, journalists characterized the child benefit and related aspects of the Conservative government's family tax relief agenda as 'free money' that the Harper Government shrewdly targeted at strategically important blocs of voters. There was some commentary on how Harper's approach disadvantaged dual earner and single-parent families but, for the most part, scant attention was paid to the implications of Harper's family policy agenda for the role of women in society. Moreover, despite Canada's birth rate hovering well below replacement level, there was virtually no discussion of the link between family policy generosity and fertility. Finally, in stark

contrast to the German coverage, there was no perceptible discourse tying the issue to the socio-cultural integration of immigrants and their children. This despite Canada sustaining the sixth largest per capita immigrant population in the OECD (“Foreign Born Population” 2016) and arguably its most ethno-culturally diverse populace (Fearon 2003).⁸

The empirical results of my content analysis support my overarching argument that two factors were instrumental in shaping the discourse in Germany, and therein creating a public opinion environment that was more favorable to the employment-supporting family policy reforms (and more hostile to the continuation of a conservative trajectory). The first was the visibility of women—such as Chancellor Merkel and Family Ministers Ursula von der Leyen (2005 – 2009) and Kristina Schröder (2009 – 2013)—in the CDU leadership structure. News stories were often framed around the life experiences of these women, who themselves had experienced the trade-offs between work and family aspirations. This sparked a broader discourse about how to make such trade-offs less severe. Secondly, the efforts to tie the issue to the (non-)integration of migrant communities reflected an increasingly open ambivalence towards multiculturalism in the German zeitgeist. The salience of these themes tilted German public opinion even further against the *Betreuungsgeld*. By contrast, with such frames non-existent in Canada, there was less of a groundswell for universal daycare⁹ and other maternal employment-supporting family policies. This allowed the Harper Government to proceed with

⁸ Canada ranks first among industrialized countries in Fearon’s (2003) index of ethnic diversity. The index measures diversity using a composite measure of the number of distinct ethnic groups comprising more than one percent of the population and linguistic heterogeneity.

⁹ There’s some evidence that popular enthusiasm for universal daycare in fact waned as concerns surrounding the cost and quality of Québec’s long-running daycare program came to light (see: Baker et al 2015; Yglesias 2015)

an electorally advantageous strategy of doling out highly visible family benefits to pivotal ‘swing voters’, ultimately coaxing the other parties to follow its lead.

In sum, this project reaffirms pre-existing scholarship that emphasizes the significance of substantive women’s representation (particularly at the cabinet level) as a catalyst for the adoption of women-friendly family policies (Atchison and Down 2009; Mavisakalyan 2012; Morgan 2013) but also uncovers a heretofore underexplored relationship between the politics of migration and family policy.¹⁰ It is evident from my analysis that one of the most perceptible discourses in favor of the Nordic model (and, just as importantly, against the creation of a new direct payment to parents) in Germany involved the assimilation of migrant communities. Yet this frame was completely absent in Canada, where citizens are more broadly supportive of the notion of multiculturalism.

1.2. A Note on Case Selection and Comparability

Canada and Germany are a suitable pairing for this project because the two countries exhibit a number of parallels that are relevant to the topic at hand. Centrally, both were governed by strong conservative leaders through the time period in focus (2005-2015). Stephen Harper and Angela Merkel followed broadly similar political trajectories since each came to power in the mid-2000s. Through incremental gains forged via three electoral victories apiece, Harper and Merkel were each able to parlay precarious governing minorities into formidable ruling blocs. Harper’s final administration was a comfortable majority government,

¹⁰ Notwithstanding a sizeable literature on welfare chauvinism in present-day Europe. See Van Der Waal et al. (2013) for a review of this literature.

commanding 54% of all seats in Canada's Parliament. Similarly, Merkel's CDU-CSU alliance fell just short of an outright legislative majority in Germany's latest federal election (2013), netting slightly over 49% of total Bundestag seats (see Figure 1.1).¹¹

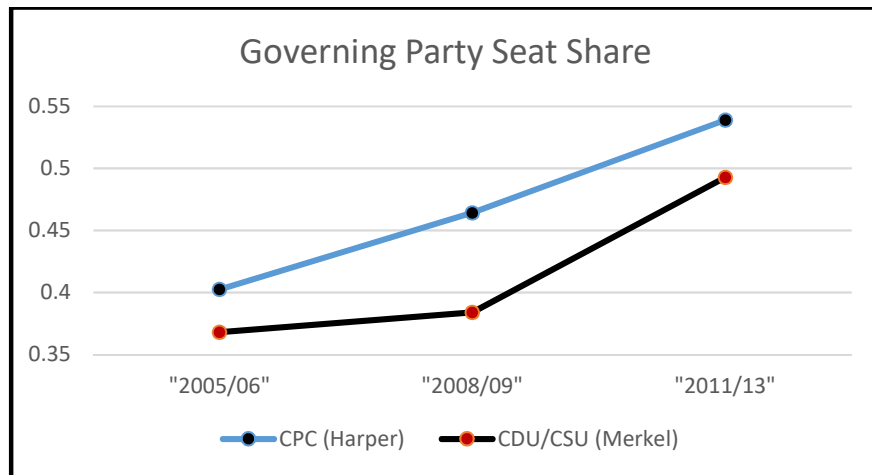


Figure 1.1 – Governing party seat share in Canada and Germany (2005-2013)

Theoretically, one would not expect large-scale family policy reforms to rank high on a right-party's governing agenda—especially when such reforms reflect a departure from past approaches. Issues like child care and family tax subsidies have the potential to divide the socially conservative and neoliberal wings of modern right parties and, as such, would be an area for leadership to avoid. Moreover, the strongest advocates of family policy expansion have historically been feminists and organized labor groups (Huber and Stephens 2001), two constituencies that would be unlikely to support a conservative political party under most circumstances. At face value, conservative governments would have little strategic incentive to prioritize and prime new social spending for families. It is therefore puzzling that Harper and Merkel governments would each devote considerable financial and political resources to both

¹¹ Though not a nominal majority, the CDU-CSU's 2013 margin of victory gave Merkel a strong popular mandate to govern, especially considering Germany's proportional system of voting.

expanding the scope of family policy and emphasizing their respective accomplishments in the area.

The cases also share a number of core institutional similarities. Canada and Germany are both bicameral¹² and highly-decentralized federal entities. The latter is especially significant as subnational governments in both countries retain significant jurisdiction over social policy, creating a potential veto point for the relevant reforms. Moreover, although Germany uses a proportional system of voting and Canada a majoritarian one, both countries have produced robust multiparty systems at the federal level. There are four electorally relevant political parties in Canada and five in Germany (see Figure 1.2 for an illustration). Both countries are also home to influential and well-respected constitutional courts (Vanberg 2004; Songer 2008).¹³ Given the financial commitment associated with family policy expansion, it is also worth noting that Canada and Germany have been the two top-performing G-7 economies since the global financial crisis of 2007/08.¹⁴ This means that, unlike many of their neighbors, neither has faced overwhelming pressure to enact austerity measures, leaving the door open to at least modest increases in social spending.

¹² Germany is more strongly bicameral than Canada, but this does not greatly complicate my research designs as family policy reforms have gone further in Germany, where they would theoretically be more difficult to implement.

¹³ One court case of relevance to this study is The German Constitutional Court's unanimous decision in June 2015 to strike down the *Betreuungsgeld*, a controversial monthly subsidy to stay-at-home parents. The court ruled that Germany's federal government lacked the spending authority to distribute the subsidy (Gesley 2015).

¹⁴ Canada and Germany have been the only two G-7 countries to retain a Triple-A credit rating throughout the post-crisis period (Monaghan 2014).

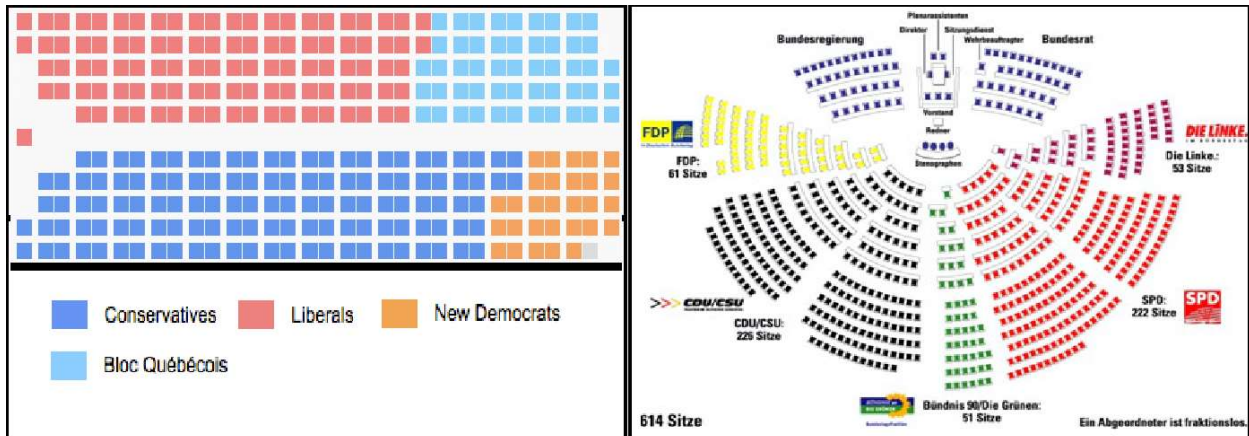


Figure 1.2 - Legislative Seat Share in Canada (2006) and Germany (2005) (Wikimedia Commons)

Further, Canada and Germany each fall below cross-national benchmarks in the relevant domain of fertility, as Figure 1.3 illustrates. Canada lags all other liberal welfare states with a total fertility rate that has hovered around 1.6 births per woman (bpw) since 2000.¹⁵ Moreover, Germany's demographic plight has been well documented as it recently supplanted Japan as home to the world's lowest domestic birth rate (BBC 2015). As noted by Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen (2011), dwindling birth rates may push ideologically conservative governments into pursuing social policies that make it more practical for women to reconcile work with reproduction. While there is more evidence of this being the case in Germany than in Canada, it is nevertheless theoretically important to note that low domestic birth rates could be construed as a social problem in either country.

¹⁵ Birth rates for the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand.

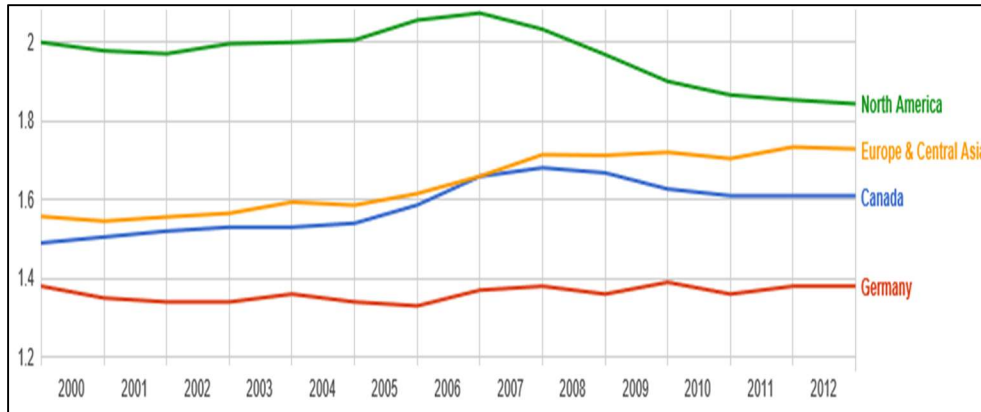


Figure 1.3 – Fertility rate (bpw) by region, 2000-13 (World Bank)

This stated, one notable asymmetry is the fact that Germany has historically lagged Canada in the category of female labor force participation—although it has caught up considerably over the 2000s (see Figure 1.4). This could affect the distribution of family policies in one of two ways: A preponderance of women in the workforce could motivate the Canadian government to pursue accommodating family policies or, conversely, German policymakers may be inclined to implement such policies in order to coax more women into working outside of home. The data indicate the latter as Germany’s female labor participation rate has increased by nearly 10% since 2000. This suggests that the recent family policy reforms have enabled more German women to pursue paid employment. However, one area where this trend is reversed is in the political realm, where Germany comes much closer to gender parity. Presently, 37% of German federal legislators and 26% of Canadian ones are female (World Bank 2015).¹⁶ Accordingly, I argue here that some of the variation between the two cases can be

¹⁶ Two of Germany’s four largest parties, the SPD and Greens, have established formal quotas for the representation of women on electoral list (40% and 50%, respectively). The CDU has established a non-binding ‘quorum’, advising that at least one-third of electoral list candidates be female (Davidson-Schmich 2006, p. 214).

explained by higher levels of participation and visibility of German women in both party organizations and electoral office.

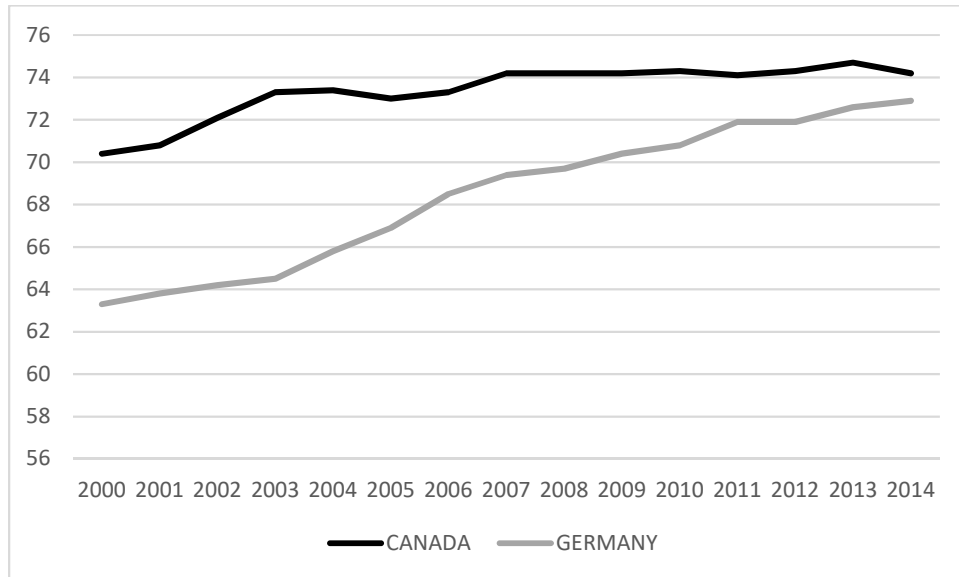


Figure 1.4 – Female labor force participation (%) in Canada and Germany, 2000-2014 (OECD.stat)

Lastly, and perhaps most pivotally, the respective narratives of family policy reform in Germany and Canada display a temporal symmetry, which makes them amenable to this type of research design. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the policy options of universal daycare and direct family cash transfers were each on the table in both countries. Yet it was daycare that ultimately won out in Germany and cash transfers that prevailed in Canada. In other words, the Merkel and Harper governments went in opposite directions. This symmetry provides me with a unique opportunity to go back to critical junctures in each country and trace out sources of variation. This, I contend, is the core strength of my chosen research design and its application to this topic.

In sum, Germany and Canada demonstrate a robust set of similarities that are relevant to the topic at hand. Critically, both were home to incumbent conservative governments that, over the observed timeframe, uncharacteristically pushed to expand family policy. This makes my cases a suitable pairing for a comparative study of why, when, and how right governments may pursue social policy expansion.

1.3. Plan of the Dissertation

The rest of the dissertation proceeds as follows. In chapter two I provide a review of the extant literature and more formally elucidate my puzzle and its theoretical significance.

Chapters three and four, respectively, track the historical evolution of family policy in each country. My account of Canada in chapter three is heavily informed by a set of twenty-five elite interviews I conducted between 2016 and 2018. My pool of interviewees comprises a broad set of experts, based across the country, in the fields of policy, consulting, advocacy, and research.

These include: strategists, policy advisors, former civil servants, non-profit executives, and a former federal cabinet minister. In chapter five I present my statistical topic model of print media coverage of family policy in each country, showing that frames involving gender and multiculturalism were significantly more prominent in the German debate.

CHAPTER 2: THE PUZZLE

Since the late twentieth century, some of the most substantial additions to the welfare state edifice have come in the form of new family policies. Yet the recent episodes of family policy expansion that have occurred across rich OECD countries have taken shape in a manner that cannot be fully accounted for by conventional theories of the welfare state. The partisanship-oriented theories that have elucidated other epochs of social policy expansion (Pierson 1995, 1996; Huber and Stephens 2001) provide only limited insight into how these new reforms have unfolded (see Mätzke and Ostner 2010a, 2010b). Gender-based explanations emanating from the feminist literature offer a similarly incomplete view (Lambert 2008; Atchison and Down 2009; Atchison 2010). The inability of existing approaches to fully grapple with this “silent revolution” of family policy expansion (see Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser 2015) necessitates a focused examination of how this process has taken root in unlikely environments.

In this chapter, I illustrate the shortcomings of the existing mainstream and feminist social policy literatures in terms of explaining recent and ongoing family policy reform patterns. Accordingly, I introduce two newer literatures—namely, issue entrepreneurship and the migration/welfare state nexus—which provide for a greater amount of insight into this puzzle. I then more formally explicate the theoretical puzzle presented by the reforms observed in each

of my country cases, present my research hypotheses, and outline the basic logic of my comparative analytical strategy.

2.1. The Extant Literature

The recent innovations in family policy are typically viewed as one aspect of the ongoing adaptation of mature welfare states to the emergence of new social risks (NSRs). (Taylor-Gooby 2004; Bonoli 2005). In contrast to the “old” social risks that the first generation of welfare state institutions were built to address (i.e.: aging, sickness, and disability), NSRs are largely a product of state maturation itself. To be precise, NSRs stem from concurrent demographic, macroeconomic, and cultural transformations ongoing in most affluent countries. These include population aging, the phasing out of the male-breadwinner manufacturing economy in favor of a lower wage services-oriented jobs environment, and the breakdown of the traditional gendered division of labor.¹⁷ The last of these is arguably the primary catalyst for the recent changes to family policy. With women taking a more active role in all aspects of the formal economy—out of both choice and necessity—and subsequently devoting less time to household activities, post-industrial governments have come under increasing pressure to devise policies that make it easier for parents (mothers in particular) to balance paid work with their child rearing obligations. This is an especially strong policy imperative in countries that have seen declining birth rates and increasing financial strains on social supports for older citizens over the past several decades (See: Henninger et al. 2008; Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen 2011).

¹⁷ Between male industrial labor and female household labor.

The recent family policy reforms are also related to the advent of the social investment policy paradigm (itself a response to the increasing salience of NSRs). Proponents of the social investment approach advocate strategic investments in human capital aimed at generating better long-run economic outcomes. Many of them argue that investments in various family policies do just this as they simultaneously allow women to become fuller participants in the economy and may provide young children with healthier emotional and intellectual environments (for instance, through high quality, center-based daycare or subsidies to make extra-curricular activities more affordable),¹⁸ leading to better career opportunities later in life (Jenson and Saint-Martin 2003; Esping-Andersen 2009). Although it is important to note that not all of the recent family policy reforms are consistent with social investment objectives (Schwander 2018),¹⁹ the ideational shift (among both policymakers and experts) to the paradigm has undoubtedly promoted a more child and youth centered social policy discourse that favors family policy interventions over other forms of social spending (see: Jenson 2008, 2009).

The project's focus on family policy—a domain that, to feminists and other critical observers, is intrinsically linked to the liberation of mothers and other female caregivers from the “private sphere” of domestic exploitation—also necessitates proper engagement with the

¹⁸ There is some evidence of the opposite being the case in the Canadian context. Baker et al. (2015) find that the introduction of universal child care in the province of Québec generated a “sizeable negative shock in non-cognitive skills” among young residents. Versus their contemporaries in other provinces, Québécois children who came of age following the introduction of the program in 1997 were found to have poorer health outcomes, lower life satisfaction, and a higher propensity for criminal activity later in life. The study, which was published just prior to Canada's 2015 election, attracted significant media attention during the campaign (see: Gordon 2015).

¹⁹ Schwander (2018, p. 25) identifies Germany's *Betreuungsgeld* as a recent family policy reform that violates social investment principles. She states the same of measures instituted in France, during the 1980s and 1990s, to encourage low-skilled mothers to withdraw from the (oversupplied) labor force (p. 11).

long-running feminist²⁰ literature on gender and the welfare state. While I do not anticipate my findings to bear significant implications for feminist scholars, it is nevertheless necessary for me to acknowledge the origins of this agenda within the gender studies tradition. As such, I begin with a review of gendered perspectives on the welfare state and their influence on how family policy has subsequently been studied.

Gender and the welfare state

Feminist scholars have long approached the archetypal welfare state with a marked ambivalence. This unease is rooted in the observation that the bulk of mainstream welfare state theory has been built on an initially unstated assumption of the industrial male worker as its core microsocial unit of analysis. This, feminists argue, has led analysts of the welfare state—especially those working within Esping-Andersen’s (1990) “welfare regimes” paradigm—to focus too narrowly on the effects of social policies on the well-being of working class males, turning a blind-eye to their reverberating impacts on women, both within and outside of the labor force (Morgan 2001, p. 107). Relatedly, feminists have criticized the modern welfare state for generally reinforcing the traditional separation of the public and domestic spheres, essentially ceding the latter as off-limits to state intervention.²¹ This is especially problematic for feminists, who view the two realms as inherently connected by a patriarchal social structure

²⁰ Following O’Connor et al. (1999, p. 10) I use the term “feminist” here to “describe scholarship that uses gender as an analytic category and/or focuses on the situation of women.”

²¹ The obvious exception here is the Scandinavian welfare state, which has long embraced a dual earner household model characterized by generous parental leave policies and universal daycare. Some feminists have nevertheless criticized this model for making many parental benefits contingent on labor force participation, thereby disadvantaging mothers who choose to stay at home (Morgan 2001, p. 120). Scholars have also raised concerns about the high level of sex-segregation in the Scandinavian labor force (Estevez-Abe 2007).

that ascribes monetary value to male industrial labor but not female household labor (Pateman 1988).

A second generation of feminist work perceived the welfare state more charitably as an imperfect yet potentially valuable resource for feminist reformers. This view was heavily shaped by Norwegian political scientist Helga Hernes' (1987) conceptualization of the "women-friendly state", which Hernes defines as one that "would not force harder choices on women than on men, or permit unjust treatment on the basis of sex." (p. 15). Central to this definition is the imperative of social policies that empower women to balance motherhood with labor market participation and other life aspirations: "In a woman-friendly state women will continue to have children, yet there will also be other roads to self-realization open to them." (p. 15). Hernes saw her native Norway and its Scandinavian neighbours as the states that came closest to embodying this ideal, generally echoing the sentiment of "Nordic exceptionalism" espoused by some of her mainstream counterparts (Esping-Andersen 1990, 2002; Stephens 1995). Her pioneering work nevertheless launched a robust research agenda on the prospects for positive feminist engagement with the state.

One offshoot is comparative state feminism, which focuses on the potential influence of sympathetic state institutions, especially those with a formal mandate to advance women's causes. Analysts of state feminism (Stetson and Mazur 1995; McBride and Mazur 2010), or "feminism from above", contend that women's movements can strategically use such entry points to gain access to policy arenas and subsequently attain their policy objectives (McBride and Mazur 2010, p. 5). The framework has since been used more broadly to identify circumstances where the political opportunity structure is most favorable for would-be

reformers (McBride and Mazur 2010, pp. 5-6). Scholars of state feminism have accordingly identified periods of left government as crucial windows for would-be reformers (McBride and Mazur 2010; O'Connor 2015). Leading feminist scholar Julia O'Connor (2015) in fact uses the example of Canada under the Harper government to substantiate this point, writing: "the key influence [in developing gender equality structures] is the strength of left-parties, and, more broadly, non-right parties, as illustrated by the Canadian federal level" and "[t]he role of right-wing parties in the retrenchment of women's policy machinery is most strongly evident in Australia [under John Howard] and Canada." (p. 494).

Though certainly no friend to state feminists, Harper nonetheless showed a desire to be perceived as attentive to the needs of at least a certain subset of Canadian women by making family policy a focal point of his governing agenda. Rather than sweep women's issues under the rug entirely—as feminist theory would have predicted for a neoliberal right party—Harper chose instead to stake his political fortunes on his own vision of family-friendly social policy.²² Interestingly, Harper and his surrogates frequently utilized a discourse of "choice" rooted in liberal feminism to frame the reforms (Richardson 2012; Rinehart 2008). The feminist view also clashes with the governing record of Germany's Christian Democrats who, as I will discuss in further detail below, have assertively claimed credit for a sweeping set of universalistic family policy reforms implemented during their time at the helm of government.

²² Harper showed similar instincts by spearheading a major G8 initiative on maternal and child health. The Muskoka Initiative, announced at a 2010 G8 summit in Huntsville, Ontario, entailed a \$7.3-billion [Canadian] investment in various maternal, newborn, and early childhood health programs concentrated in Africa and other parts of the developing world. Canada led the way with a \$2.85-billion contribution to the initiative between 2010 and 2015 (Global Affairs Canada 2014). The Harper government also hosted a 2014 global conference on maternal and child health issues held in Toronto.

As mentioned above, scholars have also utilized overlapping literatures on NSRs and social investment to explain recent patterns of family policy reform. The latter concept, which posits a positive association between strategic social spending (especially early investments in human capital) and long run economic development, presents an especially strong logical basis for the utilization of various family policy instruments. It also gives politicians a powerful rhetoric of ‘common sense’ with which to frame new initiatives (Morel et al. 2012, pp. 8-9; Hemerijck 2015, p. 253). Accordingly, I now turn to the rise of the social investment paradigm and its relevance to my research topic.

Social Investment and New Social Risks

Although the concept of social investment can be traced back to the Nordic political thought of the interwar years (Myrdal and Myrdal 1934), the idea has enjoyed a renaissance over the past two decades due to widespread disillusionment with both neoliberal and Keynesian approaches to social policy.²³ Social investment can be generally understood as a hybrid of the two schools, presenting a positive relationship between activation-oriented social spending and the long-run neoliberal objectives of economic growth and market efficiency.

As its name indicates, social investment’s defining feature is its future-orientation. Its proponents argue accordingly that prudent investments in human capital—especially when directed to children and youth—will result in better socio-economic outcomes down the road (Morel et al. 2012, p. 11); for instance, that investments in better public education will

²³ The term ‘social investment’ was formally coined by British sociologist Anthony Giddens, a principal architect of the ‘Third Way’ agenda pursued by Britain’s New Labour government (1997-2010).

ultimately produce a more highly-skilled and adaptable workforce. This view gives primacy to daycare and other social services for pre-primary aged children, particularly in light of recent scientific research that finds that a child's earliest years are its most critical for cognitive and emotional development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2004).²⁴ Such interventions have the additional benefit of 'activating' female workers, whose child-rearing obligations would otherwise sideline them from the labor market. In all, social investment provides a powerful economic rationale for the implementation of child and family-supporting policies.

Social investment is not without its detractors. In fact, some of the most trenchant criticisms of the paradigm come from feminist scholars, who object to its instrumentalization of gender equalization policies—centrally those that cater to working women—as a rather crude means to attain various economic ends, such as increasing the taxpayer base and boosting domestic birth rates. This gives second-billing to the more foundational social justice aspects of the feminist agenda (Morel et al. 2012, p.16). Some feminists have also argued that the child-centric character of social investment essentially reduces women to their reproductive capacities (Jenson 2009). In other words, social investment prioritizes the function of women as mothers, caregivers, and workers over their personal needs as citizens. One more purely economic objection to social investment is that, in its emphasis on activation-oriented human capital building, it helps to normalize the low wage environment surrounding unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in the neoliberal economic paradigm (McKeen 2007, p. 60).

²⁴ Since the late 1990s the OECD and other expert groups have increasingly used the term Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) to emphasize the educational component of daycare and other formal services for pre-primary aged children (see White 2011, p. 10).

Such reservations have not slowed social investment's momentum. In fact, the cross-national diffusion of the social investment paradigm—promoted heavily by the EU and OECD—(see White 2011), coupled with an increasing tendency for political parties to actively court female voters (Morgan 2013), has made family policy the site of much recent political activity. Reconciliation-oriented family policies like equitably compensated maternity leave and pre-kindergarten programs have garnered broad-based political support. Some governments have also embraced the more contentious social investment oriented position that widely-available public daycare, accessible from infancy, constitutes vital 'early childhood education' that will ultimately help young children become more cognitively and emotionally equipped for formal schooling (Heckman 2006; Morgan 2012; cf. Baker et al. 2015). Others, acting on more conservative political motives, have reluctantly pursued generous family policies in an attempt to shore-up lagging domestic birth rates (Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen 2011; Oliver and Mätzke 2014).

Accordingly, a strong pattern of family policy expansion was traced out empirically in a recent study by Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser (2015). Using a statistical mapping technique called multiple correspondence analysis the authors found that all rich OECD countries, with the exception of the United States, have made significant investments in family policy between 1980 and 2008 — precisely the time period when the welfare state was purportedly in retreat. Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser call this ongoing phenomenon a "silent revolution".

This OECD-wide wave of reforms has led a number of scholars to investigate the possibility of a cross-national convergence on family policy, driven by either the ideational diffusion of 'best practices' (Verloo 2005; Annesley 2007; Jenson 2010; White 2010),

globalization (Iversen and Cusack 2000; Olsen 2007), or common socio-economic and demographic pressures (i.e.: NSRs) (Bonoli 2005). However, efforts to test the convergence hypothesis empirically show that domestic political alignments and institutional legacies still condition country-specific responses to the external and internal pressures to create new family policies (Gauthier 2002; Schmidt and Starke 2011; Mahon et al. 2012; Kazepov and Ranci 2017). Partisan arrangements in particular can be pivotal in shaping family policy regimes. For instance, Rianne Mahon et al. (2012) find that, due to the continued influence of the agrarian, socially conservative Center Party, Finland has followed a more transfer-based, conservative family policy trajectory than the other Nordic countries (p. 425).

In sum, despite the hype surrounding social investment as an ideologically unifying paradigm, the extant literature continues to present domestic politics as a key driver of family policy outcomes. Moreover, new social risks centered theories, which posit population aging, declining fertility rates, and other demographic pressures as the main drivers of family policy reform fail to explain the timing and composition of policy changes—which, again, shifts the analytical focus to domestic political contestation. Low birth rates, for instance, may persist for decades before being constructed as a political problem by policy elites (Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen 2011).²⁵

²⁵ Despite a low domestic birth rate, Canada's high intake of immigrants has allowed it to sustain an annual population growth rate of just over one percent [2010-2014]. This places it well above the OECD average of roughly 0.6% per year (OECD 2013). Natalist rhetoric was present in the German child care debate but natalism was a delicate topic due to recollections of the country's experience with pronatalism under the Nazi Party.

2.2. New Perspectives

Issue Competition

As a cross-national policy ‘convergence’ based on common ideational and structural pressures appears unlikely, scholars have consequently devoted significant attention to the within-country partisan politics of family policy. Much of this work focuses on the electoral incentives of office-seeking parties to deliver new family policies, especially as part of a broader strategy to attract younger female supporters (Annesley 2010; Willarty 2010; von Wahl 2011; Morgan 2013). The general argument here is that a cross-national rise in female labor force participation, coupled with the deterioration of traditional class and religion-based political cleavages (see Lipset and Rokkan 1967), has motivated parties to target politically unattached female voters—namely young and highly-educated women.²⁶ They have done this through a two-pronged approach: first by recruiting more women as candidates and operatives and, secondly, by priming political issues calculated to appeal to working women. These mechanisms are, of course, interconnected as it is often the women within party organizations who identify and champion women-friendly policies (Willarty 2010; Morgan 2013). Female candidates themselves may benefit electorally from a heightened public salience of family policy as it has been shown, in the American political context, that voters often unconsciously perceive women as more competent at dealing with “feminine” issues relating to compassion and social welfare (Herrnson et al. 2003; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993).

²⁶ Older women and those who have remained outside of the labor force remain a core voting constituency for conservative and Christian-democratic parties in most mature democracies (Inglehart and Norris 2000; Abendschön and Steinmetz 2014).

While left and center parties have generally been the more enthusiastic proponents of new family policies (Hemerijck 2015, p. 253),²⁷ the literature on issue competition and family policy (see Schwander 2018 for a review) provides at least one important case study of a right party taking the lead: the reform agenda pursued in Germany by CDU-affiliated Family Minister Ursula von der Leyen. During her time at the helm of the family ministry between 2005 and 2009, von der Leyen oversaw a ‘Swedification’ of Germany’s parental leave system and a sizeable expansion of the availability of publicly-subsidized child care for children under three—becoming one of the country’s most visible political figures in the process. Though controversial within the CDU/CSU itself, the family policy agenda resonated with voters and helped the party regain its historical advantage among women in the 2009 election.²⁸

Given von der Leyen’s anomalous image as a married, conservative mother of seven who nevertheless championed the most progressive set of family policy reforms in Germany’s history, her performance as family minister has naturally been the focus of a number of recent scholarly accounts. This literature emphasizes the relevance of leadership (von Wahl 2011), the inclusion of women in internal party decision-making structures (Wiliarty 2010, 2013), and party competition (Fleckenstein 2011; Morgan 2013; Seeleib-Kaiser 2010), but also characterizes the German case as something of a ‘perfect storm’ made possible by the presence of a female (and Eastern) chancellor and an uncommonly skilled family minister (see von Wahl 2011). These studies are important, and I echo several of their findings here, but I hope to offer

²⁷ Schwander (2018, p. 9) argues that center-left parties have been quicker to embrace social investment-oriented family policy reforms due, in part, to increased electoral competition from “left-libertarian” (i.e.: Green) parties.

²⁸ Women were 0.2% less likely than men to vote for the CDU in the 2005 election and 4.8% more likely (versus men) to support the CDU at the polls in 2009 (Wiliarty 2013, p. 175).

further insight into the incipient phenomenon of ‘family policy reform from the right’ by juxtaposing the German narrative with Canada’s experience with family policy under the Harper Government (2006 – 2015).

Although nowhere near as ‘female-friendly’ as the policy package delivered by von der Leyen, the family policies put in place by the Harper government still constituted a substantial investment of both financial and political capital and, collectively, meaningfully altered the trajectory of Canada’s family policy regime. Identifying child care as a potential weak spot for the then governing Liberal Party (Interviewee no. 1, 17 June 2016), the Harper Conservatives made their proposed universal child benefit a focal point of their first successful election campaign. They were rewarded for this strategy when an errant soundbite on the benefit from a top Liberal strategist²⁹ proved to be one of the campaign’s major gaffes. Once in office, Harper continued to use family policies instrumentally to attract new voters, showing a special affinity for microtargeted ‘boutique’ family tax credits. The significance of family policy to Harper’s governing agenda was ultimately reflected in dollars as federal support for child care grew almost tenfold (Malanik 2015, p. 3) under Harper and total federal spending on child benefits reached approximately one percent of GDP (Malanik 2016, p. 6).

In sum, the Canadian case presents a timely addition to the incipient issue competition literature as it provides a scenario in which a modern conservative party used family policy in a politically advantageous manner, yet without embracing an especially feminist political

²⁹ This refers to Liberal Party communication director Scott Reid’s televised assertion that parents would blow the proposed child benefit on ‘beer and popcorn’ (see Section 3.8).

orientation. This indicates that there are a number of possible strategies and potential constituencies for parties that seek to utilize new family policies electorally.

The Migration-Social Policy Nexus

Some of the remaining gaps can be addressed by incorporating a final literature that explores how Western welfare states have responded to new pressures posed by non-Western immigration. Recent influxes of foreigners have challenged welfare states by complicating the historically language and ethnicity-based claims on shared community membership that have been used to justify redistributive social policies (Kymlicka 2015, p.4). Further, some migrant populations retain cultural values that are perceived to be inconsistent with the principles embodied in Western welfare regimes, for instance female participation in the full-time labor market. Some observers have also expressed concerns that generous social policies may produce an unintended “magnet effect”, attracting economically draining or otherwise socially undesirable benefit-seeking immigrants (Bauböck and Scholten 2016, p. 5). The specter of parasitic “free rider” migrants, although empirically dubious,³⁰ is now a common trope in European political discourses and has been a boon to right wing populist parties throughout the continent. These parties, and increasingly the mainstream right parties that compete against them for votes, have embraced the philosophy of welfare chauvinism: a distinct form of welfare

³⁰ Empirical studies show consistently that migrants to OECD countries pay more in taxes and social security benefits than they receive in social benefits (OECD 2014, pp. 2-3; Liebig and Mo 2013).

state dualism that's premised on systematically excluding immigrants from various welfare benefits and social services.

At face value, this suggests that ethno-cultural diversification steadily erodes the social solidarity necessary to sustain a redistributive welfare state. However, while the notion of a "progressive's dilemma" between multiculturalism and a functional welfare state is now ubiquitous in both academic and popular discourses, serious empirical work reveals a more complicated dynamic at play. Opinion surveys show that people consistently view immigrants as less deserving of welfare benefits than nationals (Van Oorschot 2000, 2006), but this anti-immigrant sentiment appears to be strongest in the liberal³¹ and conservative welfare states (Van Der Waal et al. 2013, pp. 12, 15), where entitlements are already most meager and selective, respectively. Moreover, there doesn't appear to be any stable empirical relationship between a given country's ethnic heterogeneity and natives' opinions on whether or not immigrants should be entitled to social benefits (Der Waal et al. 2013, p. 12). If the "progressive's dilemma" hypothesis were valid, we would expect to see the most negative attitudes towards immigrant benefit-seekers in the most ethnically diverse and generous welfare states.

As the opinion data indicate, immigration has generated more sophisticated feedback effects in the Nordic welfare states. The Nordic countries have, in particular, struggled to reconcile their universalistic, dual earner supporting welfare state institutions with the traditional male breadwinner/female caregiver norms held by various immigrant groups, most

³¹ One exception to this general pattern is Canada, where studies of public opinion have consistently "remarkably little tension between ethnic diversity and support for social programs" (Banting 2010, pp. 798-799).

visibly those who arrived from Muslim-majority countries (Langvasbråten 2008; Vuori 2009; Joppke 2014). This, paradoxically, may be pushing the Nordic welfare states in an even more universalistic direction as the imperative of ‘activating’ underemployed migrant women has been invoked in recent Scandinavian social policy debates (Langvasbråten 2008; Grødem 2016). There is, in fact, some evidence that this frame was used successfully by progressives to help roll back ‘cash for care’ schemes and other stay-at-home parent supporting initiatives introduced by the center-right governing coalitions that held power across the Nordic countries at various points in the late 1990s and 2000s (Bungum and Kvande 2013; Grødem 2016). At the same time, the gap between the enrollment of national and non-national children in daycare has narrowed significantly within the region (Andersen 2007, p. 261; Bremberg 2009, p. 679).

I’m aware of only one study that explores the precise effects of this new ambivalence over immigration on family-oriented social policies: Anne Skevik Grødem’s (2016) assessment of the effects of the international migration discourse on the trajectory of family policy reforms in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark through the 2000s. Grødem laments that “the welfare chauvinism debate has so far been remarkably silent on gender and family issues” as “[family] benefits embody certain normative tensions that other social policies do not.” (pp. 1-2). By this, she means that family policies are most often deliberately crafted to support specific ideal-typical familial arrangements. For instance, the ‘dual earner’ focused Nordic family policy model caters to families where both parents work full time and rely on state-subsidized daycare and other public services for their children. Grødem in fact focuses on the Scandinavian countries because the gender egalitarian norms entrenched in the Nordic model clash most dramatically

with the traditional notions of defined gender roles that are putatively held within various migrant communities (p. 2).

Grødem finds that, in both Norway and Sweden, expert committees on integration played an important agenda setting role in highlighting the alienating effect that various family policies had on migrants (and especially migrant women). These committees also helped facilitate a cross-partisan, evidence-based consensus on relevant reforms, which ultimately took place rapidly and with “remarkably little debate” (p. 10).³² The situation is more complicated in Denmark, where immigration is more heavily politicized. However, even here welfare chauvinists, led by the right-populist Danish People’s Party, have focused on making it more difficult for migrants to qualify for conditional cash benefits (pp. 9-10).³³ Access to more universalistic social services, such as daycare, has even been enhanced for most migrant families in Denmark (Andersen 2007, p. 262).

Grødem’s observes that homemaker-supporting ‘cash-for-care’ allowances are a more contentious issue for both nativists and integrationists. She notes that the debate over whether to provide direct cash benefits to stay-at-home parents was “already heated” before questions

³² In Sweden, where the experts found that lengthy parental leave entitlements impeded the incorporation of migrant women into the labor force, the government and opposition parties agreed to reduce the number of leave days available following the child’s fourth birthday by 80% (from 480 days to 96 days) (Grødem 2016, p. 8). In Norway, the integration committee findings led to activation-oriented reforms of single parent and disability allowances (Grødem 2016, pp. 6-7).

³³ Most visibly, Denmark’s center-right governing coalition (2001 – 2011) introduced a diminished social assistance benefit called *starthjælp* (“start assistance”) for any claimant who had not lived in Denmark for at least seven of the preceding eight years (Grødem 2016, pp. 8-9). However, Andersen (2007) finds that *starthjælp* and other benefit tightening measures did not, in themselves, reflect a change in trajectory away from welfare universalism. Taking into account social spending as a whole, he concludes “if anything, the [Danish] welfare state has become even more inclusive in recent years.” (p. 262). Moreover, all of these measures were abolished when the center-left coalition took power in 2011 (Grødem 2016, p. 10).

related to migrant integration were introduced, pitting feminists and social investment advocates against the libertarian and socially conservative proponents of parental “freedom of choice” (p. 10).³⁴ Grødem nevertheless acknowledges that the increased visibility of migrant integration as a political issue has affected the rhetorical strategies that parties use to defend their respective positions on cash-for-care allowances. For instance, the leader of Sweden’s centrist Folkpartiet cited his concerns about a ‘poverty trap’ for immigrant women as a rationale for his party’s decision to withdraw its support from the cash-for-care alliance in 2016. This defection effectively killed the program (p. 9).

Grødem’s research presents a key point of departure for this study, as I effectively test whether her findings travel outside of the Scandinavian countries. As I will explain in further detail below, I find that integration was a non-trivial consideration in Germany’s family policy debate but was largely absent in the Canadian policy discourse. This explains, in part, why Germany’s ‘cash for care’ scheme (the *Betreuungsgeld*) failed while, in Canada, a similar program (the UCCB) not only survived but was embraced by the opposition parties and largely retained by the successor government. In all, my findings reaffirm the connection that Grødem makes between migration discourses and family policy. Moreover, like Grødem, I identify (in the German case) a dynamic wherein concerns over the integration of migrants are used to support universalistic family policy reforms—a direct contradiction of the welfare chauvinism hypothesis. This phenomenon is even more striking in Germany, which lacks Scandinavia’s long tradition of gender egalitarianism.

³⁴ Populist right parties in Scandinavia have generally supported cash-for-care allowances (Grødem 2016, p. 9; Ellingsaetar 2012, p. 44).

2.3. Lacunae and Research Puzzle

As noted in the previous section, one particular shortcoming of both the feminist and social investment literatures on family policy is that they each have little to say about what specific circumstances may motivate mainstream conservative parties to take the lead on family policy expansion. While reforms have taken place across different regime types, the protagonists in these narratives are most often left and center parties. Merkel's Christian Democratic government is generally presented as an outlier case, with perhaps too much credit ascribed to the presence of women in key elective and civil service positions (Williarty 2010; von Wahl 2011; Fleckenstein 2011; Morgan 2013). For instance, one prominent scholar calls Germany's family policy paradigm shift "a women's revolution from above" (von Wahl 2011).

Although I do not contest the well-supported assertion that women's representation—in both elective office and high-ranking civil service positions—fosters the development and implementation of women-friendly policies (Stetson and Mazur 1995; Childs and Krook 2009; Atchison and Down 2009), I believe that the effect of officeholder gender has been overstated in multiple scholarly accounts of the CDU's reorientation towards family policy. Even without Chancellor Merkel and other women in high office, the CDU would have had significant electoral incentives to change its tone.

The Christian Democrats' perceived backwardness on social issues has been identified as a principal culprit for its slide at the polls in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Morgan 2013, pp. 89-90). Moreover, it was around this period of time that Germany's long stagnant fertility rate and underachieving track-record on children's issues both became widely-acknowledged and highly-publicized social problems (Seeleib Kaiser and Toivenen 2011, p. 4; Müller and Wrohlich

2014, p. 2) that any electorally-viable party would ultimately have to address. Accordingly, Clemens (2009) traces the first stirrings of the CDU's social policy modernization back to 1998, four years before Angela Merkel became the chair of the party.

The women's representation narrative is also inconsistent with the governing record of Merkel's second administration, active from 2009 to 2013. The liberal-conservative coalition, which consisted of the CDU/CSU alliance and the libertarian Free Democratic Party (FDP), was generally ambivalent about work-family reconciliation policies and ultimately acceded to a widely-panned CSU proposal to subsidize stay-at-home mothers through a monthly cash transfer called the *Betreuungsgeld*³⁵ (Henninger and von Wahl 2014). This despite once again having both a female chancellor and a female family minister.³⁶ In sum, even if female leadership was a necessary condition for Germany's observed family policy paradigm shift, it evidently was not a sufficient one.

The Harper government's decisive action on family policy is an even more confounding puzzle, which fits none of the extant theoretical explanations. The usual suspects of women's political mobilization and demographic challenges do not apply here. Women were noticeably absent from Harper's inner circle, in terms of both his cabinet ministers and his leading advisors (Ditchburn 2013). This came as Canada's national women's movement, starved of public

³⁵ The German Constitutional Court struck down the *Betreuungsgeld* in July 2015, ruling unanimously that the federal government did not have the spending authority to distribute the subsidy (Eddy 2015).

³⁶ The polarizing Kristina Schröder inherited the family portfolio from von der Leyen, who in turn went to the Labor ministry. Schröder's tenure at Family Affairs drew poor reviews from both pundits and the public (Henninger and von Wahl 2014, p. 387).

funding (O'Connor 2015, p. 290), sank to its lowest point in three decades (Collier 2015).³⁷ The action cannot be explained by demographic push factors either. Despite its low domestic birth rate, Canada's population is growing at a faster pace than that of many other industrial countries due to its high intake of immigrants.³⁸ Harper appeared to be at peace with this trend as legal immigration increased by roughly fifteen percent per year during his time as prime minister (Gunter 2015).

One other anomaly is that, despite being outwardly neoliberal in orientation, the Harper Conservatives pushed family policy into a neo-familial, Christian Democrat-type policy space characterized by direct family cash transfers, a universal family allowance, and various tax benefits (Ferragina and Seelieb-Kaiser 2014, p. 10). The centerpiece of Harper's family policy package was the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB), a monthly \$100³⁹ per child subsidy available to all parents with children under the age of six. The UCCB cost roughly three billion dollars (CAD) per year (approx. 0.15% of GDP)⁴⁰ to administer and its cost was slated to more than double by 2017-18 if the conservatives had won the 2015 election (Malanik, p. 1).⁴¹

³⁷ Plagued by infighting and financial difficulties, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) formally disbanded in 2007, leaving Canadian feminists without a consolidated national organization (Lambert and Anderson 2015). O'Connor (2015, p. 490) found that the Harper government either partially or totally defunded twenty separate women's equality organizations.

³⁸ Canada's current population growth rate of 1.07% per year (2010-2015) is about on par with the global average (1.18%). This puts it ahead of close relatives the United States (0.75%) and United Kingdom (0.63%). Germany falls near the bottom of global rankings at 0.06% (World Bank 2018).

³⁹ Unless otherwise specified, all monetary figures cited in this document are in (nominal) Canadian dollars (CAD).

⁴⁰Based on a total GDP of \$2 trillion (CAD). See <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/nea/list/gdp>.

⁴¹ The UCCB was bumped up to \$160 per child per month just prior to the 2015 federal election. At the same time, the Harper government introduced a new benefit of \$60 per child per month for each child between the ages of six and seventeen.

Another of the Harper government's major legislative initiatives was a controversial spousal income tax splitting plan that would allow family breadwinners to transfer up to \$50,000 to their lower-earning spouses for tax purposes. Income splitting came with a price-tag of \$2.4 billion (in forgone tax revenue) for its first year ("Income Splitting: What is it and who benefits" 2014).

This family policy push came at the expense of spending in other politically sensitive areas. For instance, despite Harper's hawkish posturing on the Islamic State, Russia's incursion into Ukraine, and other sources of global conflict (see Brewster 2014), he actually presided over a long stagnation in defense spending, which endured flat or negative growth over each of his last five years as prime minister. By the time Harper left office, the defense budget amounted to just one percent of total GDP, placing it in a tie for fifth from last among North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries and a full percentage point below the NATO recommendation (Pavgi 2015). A similar torpor in the Veterans' Affairs budget made Harper the target of politically damaging attacks about the inadequate treatment of wounded and mentally ill veterans (Chase 2015). Some of this criticism came from within his own party.⁴² Health care is another area of the federal budget that suffered under Harper. The prime minister allowed a ten year, \$41-billion Federal-Provincial Health Accord to expire in 2014 and subsequently moved forward with plans to reduce the annual rate of growth in federal health transfers to the provinces (Rennie 2014). This was an especially risky move given the centrality of universal health care to Canada's national identity.

⁴² Widespread accusations of underfunding and mismanagement led to the reassignment of Veteran Affairs Minister Julian Fantino in January 2015 (Chase 2015).

The family policy spending spree also placed the Harper government's razor-thin projected budget surplus of \$1.8-billion in jeopardy.⁴³ In fact, shortly after the budget was unveiled, Parliamentary Budget Officer⁴⁴ Jean-Denis Fréchette predicted that the federal government would actually run a one-billion-dollar deficit in 2015/16 due to lower than expected economic growth (Whittington 2015). Although Fréchette's prediction proved false, and the outgoing Conservative government did in fact leave Canadians with a modest surplus ("Ottawa runs 400M surplus in November" 2016), the uncertainty surrounding the budget weakened Harper's ability to credibly campaign on his economic record. This was highly inconvenient for Harper, who holds an advanced degree in economics, as he had long presented himself as a prudent manager of the national economy.

In sum, Harper's championing of such substantial family policy initiatives was inconsistent with the established theoretical notion that social policy expansion will not take place under neoliberal right governments (Huber and Stephens 2001, p. 4). It was especially puzzling given the fact that the Harper government seemingly prioritized family policy over several other vital and politically sensitive budgetary items—in the immediate run-up to a federal election, no less. This indicates that Harper and his advisors identified some strategic upside to priming family issues electorally.

As a partial caveat I must note that, as in Germany,⁴⁵ Canada's family policy reforms were first initiated in the early 2000s by a more progressive government. This occurred when

⁴³Total scheduled budget expenditures were an estimated \$288.9 billion (Payton 2015)

⁴⁴ Established in 2006 in response to a major federal government spending scandal, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is an independent officer of Parliament charged with overseeing government finances.

Liberal prime minister Paul Martin [2003-06] sought to build a consolidated national child care system. Martin pledged \$5-billion over five years for the initiative (on top of \$900-million earmarked for child care by the previous government) with a goal of creating 250,000 subsidized daycare spaces within that timeframe (White 2011, p. 12). He then undertook intense bilateral negotiations with each of Canada's ten provinces in order to build an effective national framework for cost-sharing and service delivery. Martin's fledgling child care program, however, never got off the ground as it was one of the first items to be scrapped by Harper when he became prime minister in 2006.

However, far from abandoning the child care file, Harper subsequently made the area an even larger federal budget priority. Child care spending in fact rose five-fold under Harper, from \$600-million (2004-05) to \$3.7-billion per year (2013-14). With the final round of enhancements to the UCCB and Child Care Expense Deduction (CCED),⁴⁶ it was slated to reach \$7.9-billion per year (0.4% of total GDP)⁴⁷ by 2016-17 (Malanik 2015, p. 11); a sum that would have vastly overshadowed the maximum \$1.2-billion per year for child care promised under Martin's national child care program (Liberal Party of Canada 2005). This spending would have

⁴⁵ Child care reform was first initiated by SPD family minister Renate Schmidt, who commissioned two separate reports on the matter (in 2002 and 2005, respectively). Her progress on the child care file was interrupted when Chancellor Gerhard Schröder called early legislative elections in the fall of 2005 (Saxonberg 2014, p. 244).

⁴⁶ First introduced in 1971, the Child Care Expense Deduction [CCED] allows parents to deduct various child care expenses from their income taxes. The CCED is available to the employed or in-training parents of children aged 16 and under. It is claimed by the lower earning spouse, with an overall cap of two-thirds of his or her income. As of 2013-14, the estimated annual value of the CCED was \$0.8-billion, accounting for 14.5% of total household child care expenses (Malanik, pp.6-7).

⁴⁷ Based on a total GDP of \$2 Trillion (CAD).

covered over 65% of aggregate child care expenses for families with children under the age of six (Malanik 2015, p. 11).

The sheer magnitude of these expenditures, which increased steadily over Harper’s near-decade as prime minister (See Figure 2), indicates that Harper deserves the lions-share of the credit (or condemnation) for Canada’s drastic paradigm shift in family policy, regardless of where the new government chooses to go from here.⁴⁸ Economist Andrew Jackson of the Broadbent Institute, a left-leaning Canadian think tank, in fact characterizes this spending as “Stephen Harper’s Unintended Social Policy Legacy” writing, “The Conservative fiscal legacy to the new government was [...] almost \$9 Billion in annual spending on child benefits[.]” Jackson observes that a path to further reform has been opened “thanks in part to the Harper government’s decision to spend big on questionable programs for children.” As such, Canada, like Germany, is a curious case of conservative-initiated family policy expansion.

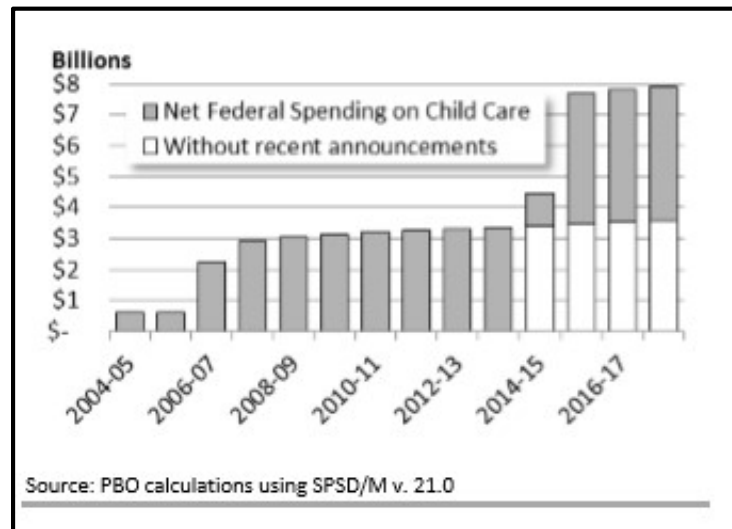


Figure 2 – Federal Spending on Child Care (2004-05/2016-17) From Malanik, 3.

⁴⁸ The Trudeau government folded the UCCB into its own Canada Child Benefit (CCB). Like the UCCB, the CCB is a monthly, per child benefit. However, unlike the UCCB, the CCB is paid out on a sliding scale. It’s worth up to \$533 per child per month for families in the lowest income category and diminishes steadily as household income increases. Families that bring in a net income of \$180,000 per year or higher are ineligible. The new benefit will cost the federal government approximately \$23-billion per year (Morneau 2016, p. 59).

The incompatibility of my cases with the extant theoretical perspectives points to the need for a more viable account of the puzzle of conservative governments and family policy—my titular ‘strange bedfellows’. Another conundrum is that of why Germany has pursued Nordic-style universalistic policies while Canada has pursued Christian Democratic-style family transfers and tax benefits. In the following section, I propose a multifaceted explanation based on political structure, issue framing, and underlying public sentiment.

2.4. Hypotheses

The above comparison provokes two theoretically important questions: [1] why have both conservative governments chosen to pursue substantial and highly-publicized family policy reforms? And [2] why did the relevant reforms take shape differently in each country (continental Europe-style transfers and tax benefits in Canada, versus Nordic-style daycare and family leave entitlements in Germany)?

The answer to the first question is relatively straightforward as it is readily apparent that both Harper’s Conservatives and Merkel’s CDU identified family policy expansion as an avenue through which to appeal to electorally important blocs of voters, a dynamic observed elsewhere (Morgan 2013). In the case of the Merkel Government, the family policy push was part of a larger project to modernize the Christian Democrats in response to the waning influence of organized religion and other traditional sources of its power (Clemens 2009; Morgan 2013). Harper, similarly, has used the child benefit and other family transfers to reach out to traditionalist but often politically disengaged suburban voters (Delacourt 2016, pp. 130-131).

One archetype that has been targeted by Conservative strategists is “Mike and Theresa”, a hypothetical middle-income couple (Delacourt 2016, pp. 130-131). Mike and Theresa have two children and pay a mortgage on a modest home in the suburbs of Toronto. Mike must travel frequently for work, leaving Theresa with the bulk of the domestic responsibilities. This archetype fits the mold of what prominent feminist scholar Jane Lewis (2001) calls the “modified-industrial model”, where both spouses work but traditional gender roles still guide the division of household labor (see also: Taylor-Gooby 2004, p.16).

Harper’s success in courting “Mike and Theresa” types⁴⁹ has been identified as a key determinant of his rise to power (Flanagan 2007, p. 225). This type of microtargeting was also central to Harper’s longer-term strategy of transforming Canada’s historically regional (east versus west) political cleavage into a more values-driven ‘urban versus suburban’ schism, as seen in many parts of the United States (Wells 2006, pp. 213-214).⁵⁰ While not identical to the dynamic identified by Morgan, this strategy nevertheless reflects the de-alignment of traditional political cleavages—which, in Canada, have historically been regionally delineated (Simeon 1975)—and new techniques modern parties must use to build electorally viable coalitions. This phenomenon has been called ‘boutique politics’ elsewhere (Delacourt 2016).

This still leaves the question of why political circumstances have motivated these conservative actors to pursue vastly different visions of family policy. Why has the generally

⁴⁹ This constituency is sometimes called the “Tim Horton’s voter” in reference to Canada’s iconic donut and coffee chain (See Delacourt 2013).

⁵⁰ Under Harper, the Conservative Party was able to make up significant ground in the seat-rich province of Ontario, which had been almost monolithically Liberal up to that point. The party’s gains were especially strong in the outer suburbs of Toronto; an area sometimes called “the 905” (for its area code) in the Canadian media. This spike in conservative sentiment across Southern Ontario was subsequently reflected in the rise of right-wing populist municipal politician Rob Ford, who became Toronto’s mayor in 2010.

neoliberal Harper government pursued a continental Europe-style familial policy package while the historically traditionalist Christian Democrats have championed a Nordic-style universalistic one? I argue here that this asymmetry can be traced back to multiple cultural, structural, and discursive variables that have motivated each party to pursue a different political strategy. In other words, I attribute the observed variation to a combination of political institutions and the framing of the family policy debate in each country.

First, I offer the following insights about Germany: (1) being in a Grand Coalition government with the SPD forced the governing CDU to moderate its position on family policy (which the CDU was subsequently able to capitalize on politically). (2) German family policy reforms have at times been framed in a natalist tone, which was only possible due to the presence of credible policy ‘spokeswomen’ (Mohamed 2013). Even though a steep decline in [West] Germany’s birth rate began towards the end of the 1960s and has persisted into the 2000s (Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen 2011, p. 334), policymakers had been hesitant to address this decline (and its potential socio-economic consequences) due to lingering recollections of the centrality of natalism to family policy under the Third Reich. Given Germany’s unique historical baggage with respect to fertility, it was of paramount importance that two credible *female* family ministers—Renate Schmidt (SPD) and Ursula von der Leyen (CDU)—were able to raise the taboo subject in a manner that was palatable to the German public. (3) Clear efforts were made to tie the family policy discourse to the broader national debate surrounding migration and multiculturalism. Such linkages were especially evident in public commentary on the Betreuungsgeld, which critics argued would have negative consequences for both the labor market integration of migrant women (who would now be paid to stay at home) and the

intercultural education of their children (who would now be less likely to attend public daycare programs with toddlers from other ethnic backgrounds). Interestingly, these arguments were most commonly utilized by pro-immigration, left-of-center actors.

By contrast, the Harper government was unencumbered by the strictures of a formal coalition and operated within a public opinion environment that is much more sanguine about the place of immigrants in society. This allowed the party to implement a more subsidy-based set of family policy reforms which generally fit with the policy preferences of its socially conservative wing (see Prince and Teghtsoonian 2007). Moreover, the Harper reforms have generally been framed in a populist, anti-intellectual manner, as characterized by the default Conservative talking point: “We all know childcare care decisions are best left to the real experts, mom and dad”—a clear rebuke of the ‘expert’ advocates of universal childcare in the academic and policy communities (Harper 2015). This communication strategy suggests a culturally-neutral approach to family policy that deliberately skirts potentially divisive notions of how parents ought to raise their children. I will survey each of the abovementioned variables below.

Independent Variable #1: Partisanship and Coalitional Dynamics

While the Christian Democrats—and specifically their media savvy family minister Ursula von der Leyen—were able to claim most of the credit for Germany’s transformative family policy reforms, the reforms pivotally took place within the context of a Grand Coalition government that included the Social Democratic Party (SPD). In fact, the coalition was characterized by a marked continuity in the family ministry as von der Leyen chose to retain a

number of SPD-affiliated staff. This group of holdovers included Malte Ristau-Winkler,⁵¹ who had been chief adviser to Renate Schmidt, von der Leyen's immediate predecessor at Family Affairs (von Wahl 2011, p. 397). Schmidt herself has been widely acknowledged for her role in getting child care on the political agenda, as well as for her efforts in reframing family policy as a "hard issue" vital to shoring up Germany's perilously low birth rate (Rüling 2010).

Von der Leyen retained Schmidt's natalist talking points but was perhaps in a better position to deliver them. Her conservative credentials were unassailable as she came from a prominent Christian Democrat political family and, prior to becoming a politician, she had raised seven children while also working as a medical doctor. As such, there was a "Nixon-goes-to-China" feel to her rhetoric, suggesting that even the most strident conservative had to acknowledge the seriousness of Germany's coming demographic crisis (von Wahl 2011, p. 396). Von der Leyen matched these words with a sweeping package of universalistic family policy reforms, which included medium-length, income-based parental leave (covering 67% of the claimant's normal salary) and, critically, a universal guarantee of publicly-subsidized daycare for one and two-year-olds (von Wahl 2011, pp. 397-8).

Coalition dynamics may also explain the falling off of family policy reforms during Merkel's second government, a solidly right-wing bloc consisting of the CDU/CSU and FDP. Daycare was a tough sell to both junior coalition partners. The classically liberal FDP favored a voucher system that enabled greater choice in child care while the traditionalist CSU advocated a monthly transfer to stay-at home parents. The latter in fact threatened to leave the governing coalition if its proposed child care subsidy did not become law (Henninger and von Wahl 2014,

⁵¹ Ristau-Winkler is male.

pp. 390-2). Further, the global economic downturn left the family ministry saddled with a 4-billion euro budget cut, forcing it to in fact pare away existing parental benefits for high earners and welfare recipients (Henninger and von Wahl 2014, p. 391) Kristina Schröder (CDU), von der Leyen's successor at Family Affairs, showed neither the aptitude nor the inclination to fight for women-friendly policies, leaving a shrinking group of CDU modernizers—which included von der Leyen—in the lurch.⁵² Perhaps sensing that this was a battle the modernizers could not win, Chancellor Merkel intervened repeatedly on the side of the CSU and traditionalists in the CDU (Henninger and von Wahl 2014, p. 392).

As observed by Henninger and von Wahl (2014), the underwhelming performance of the CDU/CSU-FDP alliance on family policy is indicative the complex partisan dynamics engendered by Germany's legislative norm of coalition governance. Although it was the CDU that took political credit for the sweeping family policy reforms passed during Merkel's first government, it is unlikely that these reforms would have been implemented without the presence of the SPD in the governing coalition. As such, grand coalition governance with a left party appears to be a key determinant of the observed policy shift.

No such tradition exists in Canada as, outside of the World Wars, the country has never seen a coalition government at the federal level. This despite the fact that it is fairly common in Canada for a single party to govern unilaterally without holding a majority of the seats in parliament, a scenario known as a minority government. This has happened thirteen times in

⁵² The Merkel government's change of course on family policy drew tacit criticism from von der Leyen, who has since moved on to the labor (2009-13) and defense (2013-present). She publicly expressed concerns about the proposed stay-at-home parent subsidy in 2013, telling leading German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* that "children need other children" to develop properly and, as such, should attend daycare (Caldwell 2013)

Canada's history (Parliament of Canada 2011). Prime Minister Harper in fact presided over the country's lengthiest ever stretch of minority governments, which lasted from 2006 to 2011, when Harper's Conservative Party was finally able to attain an electoral majority. Throughout this period, Harper was known to play parliamentary brinkmanship with the opposition parties, at times daring them to trigger an election call over contentious legislative items.

One such item was the controversial UCCB which, as mentioned earlier in the paper, Harper had initially devised as a replacement for a nascent federal-provincial accord to create more publicly subsidized daycare spaces. The child benefit was opposed by all three opposition parties and, initially, was just lukewarmly received by the public. In fact, a June 2006 study conducted by Environics Research, a leading Canadian polling house, found that the child care benefit had just a 35% approval rating among voters. Moreover, 40% of the survey's respondents agreed with the statement that the opposition parties should trigger another election if the conservatives failed to back down on the issue of child care (pp. 7, 19). However, initiating a new election campaign over child care would have been a reckless gamble for the opposition parties and it was ultimately a risk that they were unwilling to take.⁵³

It's easy to see how things may have gone differently if there were in fact a strong precedent of coalition government in Canada. The Harper Conservatives, who were at the time thirty-one seats short of the number necessary to form a parliamentary majority, would have

⁵³ The UCCB was introduced as part of the Harper government's first budget [2006/07], which passed with the support of the separatist Bloc Québécois (BQ). The Budget technically passed with unanimous consent due to a procedural mix-up, but this was largely irrelevant as the Liberals and NDP did not have sufficient votes to reject it ("Federal budget passes unopposed on mix-up" 2006).

been hard-pressed to find willing coalition partners. They may well have needed to sacrifice their child care agenda in order to obtain the requisite support from the other parties.⁵⁴

Independent Variable #2: The Presence/Absence of Policy “Spokeswomen”

Although the CDU’s embrace of universal family policy was clearly motivated by electoral considerations and facilitated by the involvement of the SPD in Merkel’s first governing coalition, the presence of female leadership nevertheless helped the party from a credibility standpoint. Von der Leyen’s political rhetoric on family policy was pointedly natalist, as she characteristically made statements like, “The question is not whether women will work... the question is whether they will have children” (Landler 2006). Further, the popular German family minister did not hesitate to use her own image as a working mother of seven children to frame the reforms she planned to implement. This type of messaging helped von der Leyen and other advocates frame family policy as a ‘hard issue’ that was central to Germany’s very demographic survival (Rüling 2008). However, coming from a male politician, such rhetoric—essentially imploring women to bear more children—would likely be perceived as paternalistic and overbearing, potentially offending the very female voters being targeted.

This in fact echoes one popular interpretation of the failure of a similar child care strategy proposed in Canada under the Liberal government of Paul Martin [2003-06]. The Martin government’s promotion of its national child care plan was viewed widely by analysts as

⁵⁴ Arguably the most dramatic moment of Harper’s time in office came shortly after his first re-election in 2008, when the opposition parties collectively threatened to form a governing coalition in response a Conservative proposal to cut public funding for political parties, among other contentious legislative initiatives. Together, the opposition parties held a slight majority (54%) of parliamentary seats (“Liberals, NDP, Bloc sign deal on proposed coalition” 2008). Harper was forced to hastily suspend parliament but was able to regroup and turn public opinion against the potential coalition, emphasizing that the hypothetical governing arrangement would include the BQ.

politically tone-deaf and ultimately ineffective. Despite being spearheaded by Social Development Minister Ken Dryden, a well-respected lawyer and former ice hockey great, the child care initiative was attacked by the Conservative opposition for being condescending to women. This sentiment was memorably encapsulated by Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) Rona Ambrose⁵⁵ when she told Minister Dryden “working women want to make their own choices. We do not need old white guys telling us to do,” during a parliamentary debate (Ambrose 2005). Noted political commentator Chantel Hébert (2007, p. 81) later remarked that Ambrose’s barb “reinforced the image of the federal government as a meddling, paternalistic uncle.”

By contrast, overt gendered framing has not been perceptible in the Harper government’s promotion of its family policy package. The initiative has instead taken something of a populist, anti-intellectual tone, characterized by the refrain “we believe that the real child care experts are mom and dad” and a more general emphasis on parental choice. This statement is clearly directed at the many advocates of universal childcare in the academic and policy communities. It also serves to remind voters of what many commentators perceived to be a patronizing attitude from the Liberal advocates of Paul Martin’s national child care strategy.⁵⁶ The Harper government’s “choice” discourse was also a subtle nod to themes of autonomy and self-determination often embedded in feminist rhetoric (Rinehart 2007, 2008).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ambrose became the interim leader of the Conservative Party shortly after the party’s unsuccessful 2015 re-election campaign. She stayed in this role until Andrew Scheer became the party’s permanent leader in May 2017.

⁵⁶ A major turning point of the 2006 federal election campaign came when Liberal Party communications director Scott Reid stated on television that parents would “blow” the Conservative child care benefit on “beer and popcorn”. The statement reinforced the perception that the Liberals believed that parents could not be trusted to take care of their own children (Wells 2006, pp. 189-90)

Due dearth of credible female voices in the opposition parties and the virtual collapse of organized women's groups at the federal level, the feminist (i.e.: 'equal opportunity') case for child care and other female-friendly family policies (see Atchison and Down 2009) was largely ignored.

Independent Variable #3: Societal Attitudes towards Migration

The natalist tone of Germany's family policy push also brings to mind a conceivable link between this issue and immigration. The most straightforward way for policymakers to address the economic challenges created by labor shortages is to open the door to migrant workers. This was the general strategy pursued by a rapidly re-industrializing West Germany, which recruited upwards of 2.5 million Turkish guest workers over the 1960s and early 1970s (Triadafilopoulos 2012). However, it would be fair to say that the Turks and other non-European migrant communities have had significant challenges in integrating with the general population— an unfortunate matter that has led to a burgeoning political culture of xenophobia on the German right and; further, is a possible impetus for policies designed to boost the birth rate among native German women. Merkel herself has periodically voiced this nativist sentiment. For instance, in a widely-covered 2010 speech to the CDU youth wing, she made the following remarks:

In the early 1960s we brought the guest workers to Germany, now they're living with us. We lied to ourselves for a while, we said, 'they won't stay long. One day they'll be gone.' But this is not the case. Of ours the multicultural approach, living side by side and being happy with each other, has **utterly failed**.⁵⁸ (Rowe 2011).

⁵⁷ Most visibly in the moniker "pro choice" used by supporters of abortion rights.

⁵⁸ Emphasis added.

Anxieties over cultural integration also appeared to contribute to the failure of the polarizing *Betreuungsgeld* (care allowance). Similar in structure to Harper's UCCB, the *Betreuungsgeld* was a monthly subsidy of 150 euros available to parents of one to three year olds who chose not to enroll their children in any form of public or publicly-subsidized daycare (Müller and Wrohlich 2014, p. 5). Devised as a measure to placate the socially-conservative CSU, the *Betreuungsgeld* began circulating in the summer of 2013 – the exact same time that the CDU's universal guarantee of daycare came into effect (Müller and Wrohlich 2014, p.1). As of the spring of 2015, the *Betreuungsgeld* went out to 450,000 German families at a cost of 900 million euros per year ("*Betreuungsgeld für fast eine halbe Million Kinder gezahlt*" 2015).

The subsidy was controversial from the very start, raising questions about the sincerity of the CDU's professed support for working women. Accordingly, the progressive opponents of the *Betreuungsgeld* derisively dubbed it the "kitchen bonus". The child subsidy's divisiveness soon made it the target of multiple political and legal attacks. Even Ursula von der Leyen, now Germany's Minister of Defense, publicly expressed concerns about the *Betreuungsgeld*, telling leading newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* that "children need other children" and as such should not skip out on daycare (Caldwell 2013).⁵⁹

In July of 2015, the *Betreuungsgeld* was struck down by the German constitutional court in a unanimous ruling. The court decreed that federal government did not have the spending authority to circulate the subsidy (Gesley 2015). The case's plaintiff was the SPD-controlled

⁵⁹ Von der Leyen held the Labor portfolio at the time of this interview.

government of Hamburg, which held that the subsidies reinforced inequalities towards low-income families and that the funds allocated to it would be better directed at improving daycare infrastructure. While many on the Canadian left would agree with this viewpoint, it is entirely inconceivable that any mainstream Canadian opposition party would go to court to have the UCCB checks rescinded. Doing so would be political suicide.⁶⁰

I hypothesize that *Betreuungsgeld*'s political fragility stems in part from its perceived association with immigrants. A disproportionate number of the child care checks have gone to migrant families, especially those based in major urban centers. For instance, 22.4% of applicants based in Berlin were identified as foreigners, despite just 13.4% of the city's population not holding a German passport (Knapp 2015). Accordingly, much of the anti-*Betreuungsgeld* rhetoric has been assimilationist in tone. Specifically, critics have argued that the subsidy enables the children of migrants to self-segregate, when they should be learning the German language and cultural customs at public daycares. These critics drew ammunition from 2012 OECD report ("Jobs for Immigrants") which concluded that direct-to-parent child subsidies could be "highly detrimental" to the well-being of both migrant women and their children. Although Germany was not one of the countries included in the study,⁶¹ the German media nevertheless used these findings to cast doubt on the *Betreuungsgeld*'s effectiveness (see, e.g., Bolzen 2012).

⁶⁰ During the 2015 federal election campaign, NDP leader Thomas Mulcair pledged to preserve the UCCB if elected prime minister, despite also promising to implement a \$15 per day national daycare program (Bonoguore 2015). Current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has replaced the UCCB with the income-tested Canada Child Benefit (CCB), which provides most Canadian parents with monthly, per child subsidies.

⁶¹ The study examined the labor market integration of immigrants in Austria, Norway, and Switzerland.

Canada, by contrast, has proven to be a more hospitable environment for non-white immigrants. In 1971, Canada became the first ever country to adopt an official policy of multiculturalism. This declaration came on the heels of the formalization of a color-blind, 'skill based' immigration system through the 1960s (Triadafilopoulos 2012, Chap. 4). The concept of 'multiculturalism' has since become central to the inchoate Canadian national identity and, critically, a part of how many Canadians now distinguish themselves from their American neighbors – who inhabit an assimilationist 'melting pot'. Accordingly, the most recent Social Progress Index (2017), a joint project of leading consulting firm DeLoitte and the non-profit Social Progress Imperative, ranks Canada second in the category of tolerance towards immigrants. By contrast, Germany places just seventeenth in the same category. This uncommon openness toward outsiders has been referred to as "Canadian exceptionalism" by a number of migration scholars (see, e.g.: Kazemipur 2006; Bloemraad 2012).

Over time, Canada's warm embrace of multiculturalism has catalyzed a major demographic shift. Immigrants now comprise just over twenty percent of Canada's population, which is the highest proportion among the G7 countries, and immigration presently accounts for two-thirds of Canada's annual population growth (Statistics Canada 2017). Critically, Canada has highest naturalization rate of any OECD country, as nearly 90% of landed immigrants⁶² ultimately attain Canadian citizenship (OECD and European Union 2015, Figure 11.A1.1).

The propensity of Canadian immigrants to become citizens and, subsequently, engaged and organized voting blocs, has made them a critical constituency for all major parties. This includes the Conservative Party, whose 2011 majority-government breakthrough was powered

⁶² Those who have established residency for at least a decade.

by a strong showing in immigrant-heavy suburban communities surrounding Toronto and Vancouver (Friesen and Sher 2011). Harper had a chance to articulate the party's conciliatory approach to multiculturalism at that year's party leaders' debate:

We favor multiculturalism [and] what Canadians need to understand... is that people who make the hard decision to leave countries where they have established for centuries or millenni[a] come here first and foremost want to belong to this country... They also at the same time will change our country and we show through multiculturalism our willingness to accommodate the differences so they're more comfortable. That's why we're so successful integrating people as a country. I think we're probably one of the most successful countries in the world in that regard (Siddiqui 2011).

The contrast between the Harper and Merkel rhetoric on multiculturalism is jarring, and perhaps explains why overtly natalist overtones have been absent from Canada's family policy discourse. Given the continued willingness of Canadians to accept immigration as a stopgap measure to stave off demographic stagnation, it's unsurprising that increasing Canada's low domestic birth rate is not a priority item on the political agenda.

One potential qualifier to this argument is that German and Canadian immigrant populations are very different in composition. Roughly 30% of the 18.5 million German residents with a 'migration background'⁶³ have ancestral roots in Muslim majority countries and an additional 30% have roots in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, or the former Soviet Union. Turks comprise by far the largest diaspora population as nearly three million inhabitants of Germany claim Turkish ancestry (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018). Berlin alone is home to over 175,000 residents with Turkish origins, comprising the single largest Turkish community outside of

⁶³ The German Federal Office of Statistics (Statistisches Bundesamt) counts, as 'persons with a migrant background': "all persons who have immigrated into [Germany] after 1949" and "all persons born in Germany who have at least one parent who immigrated into the country or was born as a foreigner in Germany." (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018).

Turkey (Statistischer Bericht 2012, p. 19). With the prevalence of Muslims (and Turks in particular) within the German migrant stock, anti-immigrant discourses have often centered on a perceived incompatibility between Western liberalism and various Islamic cultural practices—a tendency most recently exemplified in the rhetoric of the fledgling *Alternativ für Deutschland* (AfD)

Canada's immigrant population, by contrast, embodies a true cultural mosaic. No one ethnic community constitutes more than ten percent of the total immigrant population and fifteen diaspora groups number 100,000 or more (Statistics Canada 2017). The religious diversity of Canadian immigrants is also worth noting. Nearly half of recent immigrants claim Christian religious affiliation. Muslims, by comparison, make up only 17.5 percent of recent immigrants and just over three percent of the country's total population. Hindus and Sikhs are also prominent migrant communities, which each comprise over five percent of all recent immigrants (Press 2013). The religious heterogeneity of Canadian immigrants and, specifically, the relative paucity of the country's Muslim population is relevant here given the strong undercurrent of Islamophobia that underpins much of the anti-immigrant sentiment in Germany and elsewhere in Europe.

These compositional differences can be traced back to incongruities in each country's respective history with immigration (particularly since the end of World War II) which have, in turn, produced two vastly divergent citizenship regimes.⁶⁴ To be precise, Germany's immigration system, which developed in the context of a booming postwar West German

⁶⁴ The holding of dual citizenship is permitted in Canada but, in Germany, is restricted to citizens of other European Union countries (plus Switzerland) in most cases.

manufacturing economy and pressure on multiple fronts to facilitate cross-national labor mobility, has historically attracted migrants from nearby Eurasian countries with more rudimentary skill sets and lower levels of education (Triadafilopoulos 2012, pp. 75-79). By contrast, Canada's immigration system—largely the product of a progressive moment in the 1960s and 1970s—is built around an ethnically neutral 'points system' designed to bring in immigrants with the most sought after professional and vocational credentials (Triadafilopoulos 2012, pp. 101-103). The latter regime has unsurprisingly produced a better integrated and more economically successful population of immigrants. The point here being that I am not attempting to imply that 'Germans are more racist/xenophobic than Canadians', but instead to underscore that Germany has had the more troublesome history, of the two countries, with immigration. This, I will argue, is perceptible in how family policy has been discussed in the German public sphere.

2.5 Methodology

Analytical Framework

Given the temporal symmetry of my cases outlined above, I will frame this project as a Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA). CHA can be described crudely as a historically-rooted and primarily qualitative form of causal analysis that characteristically employs a process-tracing strategy to tease causal process observations (Collier 2010) out of juxtaposed case narratives. Formally, CHA includes three core components: a focus on causal analysis, an emphasis on the properties of time and sequence, and the development of systematic and contextualized comparisons (Mahoney and Rueshemeyer 2003, p.6).

One core strength of CHA is that it enables researchers to “take time seriously” (Pierson 2004) and place an analytical focus on causal sequence. Policy choices are rarely made in a vacuum, especially when it comes to a topic as contentious and culturally-loaded as the demarcation of the relationship between the state and the family. As such, any viable analysis of a change in family policy must account for the historical factors that have sustained a given policy legacy, as well as the temporally anomalous circumstances that enable a break from the past (Streeck and Thelen 2005).

This dexterity has made CHA a leading approach social policy studies. The success of CHA in social policy is evidenced by a number of ground-breaking CHA-driven studies of the origins of social policy (Skocpol 1992; Amenta 2000), its maturation (Pierson 1994; Huber and Stephens 2001), and its adaption to major cultural and demographic changes (O’Connor et al. 1999; Taylor-Gooby 2004). Above all, CHA has enabled social policy scholars to develop and refine “middle-range” theories, derived from applying general theoretical frameworks to specific cases. For this reason, Amenta (2003) concludes “comparative and historical work in social policy has... made great theoretical contributions – probably more extensive than [CHA] in other subject areas” (p. 99).

Given CHA’s proven track record in the domain of social policy, as well as the comparability of my chosen cases with one another, I view CHA as the appropriate methodological approach for this study. Specifically, I contend that, in utilizing a CHA framework, I will be able to isolate causally relevant variables by placing my coeval family policy narratives side by side and subsequently engaging in comparative checking.

Data

This study draws from a multitude of firsthand and secondary accounts of the history and trajectory of family policy reform agendas in each of my country cases. Wherever possible, I incorporate primary evidence from parliamentary debates, legislative proceedings, and the like. In my retelling of the Canadian narrative (Chapter 3), I draw from twenty-five extended telephone and in-person interviews I conducted between 2016 and 2018. The interviews were given on the basis of anonymity, with participants including: a former cabinet minister, a high-level policy aide to Prime Minister Harper, a onetime ministerial chief-of-staff, a party spokesperson, a Conservative Party affiliated pollster, and a number of prominent academics, journalists, and political activists.

I also compiled a set of over 450 relevant newspaper articles published in each country between 2005 and 2015. These articles comprise the essential input data for my statistical text analysis of the framing of family policy in each country (Chapter 5). In all, I have gathered an ample and varied selection of data which is well-suited to my multimethod research design.

CHAPTER 3: THE POLITICS OF FAMILY POLICY IN CANADA *A “NEVER-ENDING STORY”⁶⁵*

This chapter provides a historical overview of the evolution of family policy in Canada and etches out the political opportunity structure facing the Harper government as it crafted its own family policy agenda. My primary observation is that, due to a confluence of reinforcing historical, institutional, and discursive dynamics, federal policymakers have consistently favored demand-side supports to parents with children, such as tax credits and direct cash payments. This pattern has held despite the best efforts of feminists and their allies to recast family policy (and especially child care) as a crucial mechanism for securing equal opportunity for women in the labor force. The bias in favor of direct payments to parents was, in fact, reinforced by the then governing Liberal Party’s anti-poverty framing of family policy in the late 1990s and early 2000s (see: Dobrowolsky 2004; McKeen 2007). Subsequent efforts to emphasize the developmental benefits of early childhood educational interventions have fallen flat as the data from Canada’s only comprehensive daycare program, based in the province of Québec, fails to definitively validate this premise (see: Baker et al. 2015; Geloso and Eisen 2017; Haeck et al. 2015).

In short, by the time the Harper Government took office in 2006, gender equity, and with it the most compelling rationale for the Nordic model, had been steadily “written out” of

⁶⁵ Chapter title a reference to Mahon 2000.

the family policy discourse (Jenson 2009; McKeen 2000). Moreover, Canada's peculiar form of federalism has had a variable effect on the evolution of family policy, at times incentivizing the provinces to experiment with innovative new delivery schemes and, at other times, stymieing the development of national policy solutions. This is best exemplified by Québec's stand-alone daycare program, which represented a substantial departure from the national status-quo and has since been presented alternatively as a potential policy template and cautionary tale for the other provinces.

I shed more light on both the historical context and the immediate strategic environment facing the Harper government by incorporating the insights of twenty-five experts from the policy, consulting, advocacy, and academic communities, who I interviewed between 2016 and 2018 (see APPENDIX 1 for a complete list of interviewees).⁶⁶

3.1. Early History

As had been the case in the United States (Skocpol 1992), Canada's earliest public supports to mothers and children grew out of major war efforts. The earliest vestige of Canada's family policy milieu can in fact be traced back to 1918, when a children's tax exemption was appended to Canada's first ever income tax act, conceived at the time as a temporary measure to help finance Canada's participation in the First World War (Employment and Social Development Canada 2017). The child tax exemption was effectively regressive, increasing steadily with taxable household income (Battle 2008, p. 5). Moreover, the exemption

⁶⁶ The interviews were semi-structured and lasted an average of forty-five minutes to an hour each in duration. Apart from one in-person interview (Vancouver, January 3, 2018), the interviews were conducted remotely via either telephone or Skype (see Appendix 1).

was inaccessible to most Canadian families, who did not earn sufficient income to be required to pay income tax.⁶⁷ The initial child tax exemption nevertheless enshrined the notion of parenting as a socially beneficial activity and the concomitant collective societal obligation to offset at least some of the costs that parents incurred through child-rearing (Battle 2008, p. 5).

Wartime Day Nurseries

Unsurprisingly, the next significant innovation in family policy occurred in the midst of the Second World War, when an exponential increase in the number of working women, who staffed munitions factories and other essential wartime facilities, necessitated the expansion of day nurseries for the now inadequately supervised children of working mothers.⁶⁸ This led the federal government and Canada's two most populous provinces of Ontario and Québec (where the majority of wartime munitions factories were located) to launch a cost-shared Wartime Day Nursery program in 1942.⁶⁹ The costs of operating the new day nurseries were split fifty-fifty between the federal government and the participating provinces (Friendly 1994, p. 129). Parental fees were limited to thirty-five cents (worth around five dollars today)⁷⁰ per child per day (Scott 1998). The agreement ultimately funded thirty-four child care centers (twenty-eight

⁶⁷ Canada's Income War Tax Act of 1917 gave families a \$3,000 tax exemption (Burns 1917, p.24). The average annual manufacturing sector salary at the time was \$1,315 (Statistics Canada 2009).

⁶⁸ Between 1939 and 1945, the number of wage earning women in Canada increased fivefold, from 200,000 to 1,000,000 (Prochner 2000; p. 51).

⁶⁹ The program was set in motion by a parliamentary order-in-council titled, "Authorization of agreements with provinces for the care of children" (1942).

⁷⁰ All estimates of inflation presented in this chapter were generated by the author using the Bank of Canada's online inflation calculator, available at: <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>

in Ontario and six in Québec), which provided spaces for approximately 1,700 children between the ages of two and six years old.⁷¹

The federal-provincial day nursery agreements were terminated at the war's conclusion in 1945⁷² but left a mark at the municipal level. Thanks to a dedicated group of parents and social activists, the Toronto metro area was able to keep twelve of its eighteen wartime day nurseries open (Prentice 1993; Mahon 2007). In 1946, Toronto and the Ontario provincial government came to terms on their own cost-sharing agreement, the Day Nurseries Act. The legislation gave Ontario's other municipalities the option to select-in to the same arrangement—although only Ottawa, the province's second-largest city, used this provision to develop substantial child care infrastructure of its own (Mahon 2007, p. 59). In sum, the wartime day nursery program left a limited policy legacy in the province of Ontario but was ultimately too narrow in scope (catering primarily to a few major cities) to have any perceptible effect on the national policy trajectory.

3.2. The Universal Family Allowance

More consequentially, the Canadian federal government introduced a universal family allowance in 1944, ostensibly in anticipation of a labor glut that would be created by the imminent return of armed servicemen from abroad.⁷³ The new family allowance—which

⁷¹ Figure calculated by the author by multiplying the number of day nurseries by fifty (the recommended capacity for each center) ("The Place of Day Nurseries in the War Effort" 1943, pp. 175-6).

⁷² Québec's socially conservative political elite perceived the wartime day nursery program as a threat to the caregiving primacy of the Catholic Church. The provincial government shuttered all of the Québec nurseries simultaneously in October 1945 (Prochner 2000, p. 54).

offered parents a monthly payment of up to \$8 (roughly \$115 in 2017 dollars) for each child under the age of sixteen⁷⁴ and was conservatively estimated to consume \$250 million (over \$3.5 billion today and about two percent of total GNP) from the federal budget annually (Whitton 1944, pp. 416, 420; Statistics Canada 2014, Table F1-16)—was announced with little prior consultation or evidence of forethought. The opposition parties, press, and provinces were all caught off guard (Breul 1953, p. 271).

Critics of the proposed family allowance voiced concerns about its exorbitant cost and questioned then prime minister Mackenzie King's true motivations for unveiling such a big-ticket social spending item so close to Canada's next general election, which was to be held at some point in the following year.⁷⁵ Many saw King's family allowance plan as a shameless attempt to buy back the support of the voters of Québec (Breul 1953, p. 276), who the prime minister had alienated by renegeing on his initial promise not to conscript Canadian soldiers during the First World War.⁷⁶ Québec, which had by far the country's highest birth rate at the time, stood to gain the most financially from the proposed family allowance, at least in absolute

⁷³ The family allowance was also conceived as a mechanism to transition the women employed in wartime industries out of the labor force (Blake 2009, p. 2).

⁷⁴ Parents were required to enroll their children in school in order to qualify for family allowance payments (Moscovitch and Falvo 2017).

⁷⁵ As in other countries that use the Westminster parliamentary model, Canada's elections do not occur on fixed dates, yet they must be held at least once every five years. King had promised to hold an election by July 1945 (Blake 2009, p. 90).

⁷⁶ King initially promised that there would be no overseas conscription but reversed course after a 1942 national plebiscite found strong support for conscription across English Canada (although seventy-two percent of Québec's electorate voted against conscription).

terms.⁷⁷ The family allowance was also viewed as an attempt by the Liberals to blunt the momentum of the social democrat Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), which claimed a decisive victory in Saskatchewan's 1944 provincial election and was surging across the country (McHenry 1949, p. 372).⁷⁸

In spite of these controversies, the Liberal government's Family Allowances Act was passed in August of 1944 with the unanimous approval of the parliamentarians present in the House of Commons.⁷⁹ In the end, none of the opposition parties wished to be perceived by voters as miserly so close to election time.⁸⁰ The family allowances were conveniently slated to come into effect the following July, immediately following Canada's next federal election (Breul 1953, pp. 271, 277).⁸¹

In their conceptualization of the program, Canadian officials were heavily influenced by the ideas of British social architect William Beveridge, who championed a system of universal, non-contributory family allowances as a vital step to securing "freedom from want" (1942,

⁷⁷ As of 1941 the average French-Canadian family had 4.28 children living at home. By comparison, the average Anglo-Canadian family had just 2.86 children in the household. Moreover, over half of all Canadian families with seven or more children lived in Québec (Whitten 1944, p. 417).

⁷⁸ Led by the popular Tommy Douglas, the CCF won forty-seven of fifty-two seats in the Saskatchewan legislature, despite holding just ten seats going into the 1944 election. This marked the first time that a social democrat government was elected anywhere in Canada.

⁷⁹ Over 40% of all Members of Parliament were absent for the family allowances vote, reflecting the lingering controversy that surrounded the proposal (Usher 1951, p. 127).

⁸⁰ Reflecting the collectivist ethos of the time, the opposition Conservative party rebranded itself the Progressive Conservative Party in 1942, seeking to emphasize its moderated positions on various social and labor issues.

⁸¹ The Liberal Party retained government in the 1945 election but fell five seats short of the number necessary to form a parliamentary majority. The Liberals lost fifteen seats in Québec.

Assumption A).⁸² However, the Canadian family allowance system ultimately deviated significantly from the model pioneered by Beveridge, reflecting longstanding regional and ethnic tensions within the Canadian populace.

For instance, whereas the Beveridge-designed family allowances introduced in the United Kingdom reflected an ethos of natalism—beginning only as a given couple’s second child was born and rising steadily (per child) with each subsequent birth—Canada’s allowances kicked in immediately after the birth of a couple’s first child and per child payments began to taper off with the birth of the fifth. This hinted at elite anxieties about Canada’s demographic balance, as the country’s socio-economically privileged Anglo-Saxon population had a significantly lower birth rate than the French-speaking population at the time and was beginning lose ground to Canada’s burgeoning Eastern European and Slavic diaspora communities.⁸³ The design of the family allowances suggested an unstated aim to preserve the number of English Canadians relative to other groups—or at the very least, to not reward members of less prized ethnic communities for having more children than they could support financially. Charlotte Whitton, the head of the Canadian Council on Child Welfare and a leading critic of the allowances, commented at the time: “The dexterous balancing of these [ethno-linguistic] disparities is the probable *raison d’être* of the downward scale.” (1944, p. 417, italics in the original).

⁸² Leonard Marsh, who served as research director to Canada’s Advisory Committee on (Postwar) Reconstruction, studied under Beveridge at the London School of Economics in the late 1920s.

⁸³ The average Anglo-Canadian household had 2.8 children living at home, versus 4.2 children in the average French-Canadian household. All other European ethnic groups had birth rates of between 3 and 3.5 children per family (Whitten 1944, pp. 416-417).

Another important distinction came from the constraints placed on the federal government by the vertical division of powers specified in Canada's constitution. Section 92 of the British North America Act (BNA), then Canada's primary constitutional document,⁸⁴ gave the provinces formal authority over the administration of most social services, as well as "Property and Civil Rights in the Province" (Clause 13) and "Generally all Matters of a merely local or private Nature in the Province" (Clause 16). The London-based Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC), which at the time served as the final arbiter for all disputes relating to the BNA, had historically favored a broad interpretation of these enumerated provincial rights (Breul 1953, p. 278).

The JCPC had earlier rebuffed the efforts of the federal government to establish a nationwide system of compulsory unemployment insurance at the height of the Great Depression; ruling that the enabling legislation (The Employment and Social Insurance Act of 1935) encroached on provincial jurisdiction, specifically vis-à-vis the civil rights of employers and employees (Privy Council 1937, p. 4). The JCPC decision forced the federal government and the provinces to adopt a new constitutional amendment that placed unemployment insurance within the federal competencies (Section 91) under the subheading of "the regulation of trade and commerce".

Seeking to minimize the threat of another successful constitutional challenge⁸⁵ to a major federal spending bill, the King government went to great lengths to emphasize the fiscal

⁸⁴ The British North America Act (BNA), enacted by the parliament of the United Kingdom in 1867, served as Canada's de facto constitution until 1982, when it was folded into Canada's repatriated Constitution Act. The repatriation of the BNA did not alter any of its content, although a Charter of Rights and Freedoms (analogous to the United States' Bill of Rights) was appended to the new constitution.

dimensions of the family allowance and downplay its social content. Minister of Justice Louis St. Laurent,⁸⁶ for example, offered the following defense:

In principle, [the family allowances] allocate to every child maintained by a parent, up to the age of sixteen years, a certain monthly benefit the only condition attached being that the person to whom the money is paid shall apply it for the maintenance and better upbringing of that child. There is nothing else whatever; no obligation of any kind is imposed... This is merely a declaration by the Canadian government, authorized by the Canada Parliament, that the Canadian people wish to contribute so much a month for the upkeep of each child (St. Laurent 1944).

The portrayal of the family allowance as a fiscal measure (versus a social one) had important ramifications on the policy's design, implementation, and ultimate legacy. Critically, it gave economists in the federal Ministry of Finance and Bank of Canada substantial control over the details of the program (Weaver 2000, pp. 19-20). Government economists were, at the time, wedded to the Keynesian dogma that steady monetary transfers to the lower economic classes are necessary to sustain consumer demand and, by extension, economic output. Maintaining domestic demand was of particular concern to policymakers as Canada's exports slumped near the end of World War II (Usher 1951, p. 132). This was accordingly presented as a key rationale for the family allowance, as the disbursement of allowances would enable the federal government to indirectly transfer wealth from rich households to poorer ones, which tended to contain more children (Usher 1951, pp. 27-28). A 1947 cross-national study of family allowances published by the International Labour Organization in fact singled out Canada's

⁸⁵ The constitutionality of the child allowance was upheld in 1957 by Canada's Exchequer Court (*Angers v. Minister of National Revenue 1957* found in Blake 2007, p. 208).

⁸⁶ St. Laurent went on to succeed King, becoming Canada's new prime minister in the winter of 1948.

allowance scheme for its explicit emphasis on “the maintenance of domestic purchasing power, particularly that of lower income families,” (pp. 322-323).

This approach went against the advice of several domestic social policy experts. Specialists in the field of social work, citing Beveridge, held that family allowances alone would do little to enhance public welfare in the absence of other, complementary social policies. The aforementioned Whitton, for instance, argued for an integrated system of “social utilities” such as schools, hospitals, daycare centers and affordable family housing (Blake 2009, p. 99). Critics also expressed concerns that, with a lofty price tag of \$250 million per year—a monetary commitment which was likely to increase over time as Canada’s population grew—the family allowance would greatly limit the amount of federal funding available for other social programs (Blake 2009, p. 102). Such criticisms fell on deaf ears at the time, but similar arguments would later be used to much greater effect.

Family Allowances and the Québec Nationalist Movement

With nationalism steadily seeping into Québec’s political climate through the 1960s and 1970s, provincial policy entrepreneurs sought to exploit the shortcomings of the federal family allowance program as a tactic to win Québec more autonomy over social policy. Echoing the concerns articulated by Whitton and others, Québec’s landmark Castonguay-Nepveu Commission report on health and social welfare, released in 1971, called for a comprehensive, provincially administered system of social and income security policies. Such a framework, the report argued, ought to be geared to providing a universal guaranteed income sufficient to cover one’s essential needs—an objective that necessitated the complete harmonization of

federal and provincial social programs. The blueprint proposed in the Castonguay-Nepveu report thus relegated the federal government to a secondary role as financier of provincially run programs (Blake 2007, p. 216).

Québec's political leaders saw the Castonguay-Nepveu commission's findings as an opportunity to tie social policy to the ongoing multilevel dialogue surrounding the potential patriation⁸⁷ of Canada's constitution, a grand ambition of then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. Trudeau's desperation to strike a deal with the provinces (and to placate Québec in particular) was palpable, giving Québécois negotiators leverage to extract a multitude of concessions on the family allowance and other social programs. Led by reformist Premier Robert Bourassa (in office between 1970 and 1976), Québec lobbied to have family allowances added to Section 94A of the then British North America Act, which empowered the provinces to create their own old age pension and supplementary benefit programs (Blake 2007, p. 222).

Trudeau was not willing to go this far but, as an act of appeasement, he agreed to launch a major study centered on how to integrate federal and provincial social security policies. This review, conducted in the early part of 1973, resulted in significant changes in both the composition and the administration of family allowances (Blake 2007, p. 234). The reforms, which made their way through parliament in the fall of 1973, included a tripling of payouts, the indexation of allowances to the cost of living, and making allowances taxable on a progressive scale—calculated based on the income of the higher earning parent (Blake 2007, pp. 236-237; Battle 2008, p. 5). More consequentially, the family allowance overhaul empowered individual

⁸⁷ At this point the British North America Act, a statute enacted by the British Parliament in 1867, was Canada's de-facto constitution. The patriation movement involved efforts on the part of federal and provincial politicians to forge a blueprint for a new 'made in Canada' constitution—a feat that was ultimately accomplished in 1982.

provinces to determine the amount paid out per child (beyond a floor mandated by the federal government) and variations in amount based on the age of the child or the size of a given family (Blake 2007, pp. 235-236). This marked the first time in Canadian history that a federally financed and administered program was subject to adjustment at the provincial level, signaling the beginning of a new era in intergovernmental relations (Blake, p. 230).

Predictably, Québec was one of three provinces that elected to exercise its newly-won right to modify the family allowance.⁸⁸ Correcting the federal family allowance's perceived bias against larger families, Québec's new benefit was to increase with each child, plateauing at the fourth. The family allowance concession was perceived as a major policy victory for Bourassa's Liberal government, which was re-elected with a strong mandate one month after announcing the new program; gaining 30 seats in Québec's National Assembly to control 102 of its 110 total seats. The triumph inspired subsequent provincial governments—of both federalist and independentist orientations—to push for further policy autonomy (see Béland and Lecours 2006).

The 1973 family allowance expansion ultimately marked the acme of universal federal income supports for families with children. The oil shocks that commenced that fall ushered in a long period of austerity politics in Canada, as in and much of the industrialized world. The family allowance was, in fact, an early casualty of the times as policymakers could no longer justify sending monthly checks to middle and upper-income families while the new economic realities placed severe strains on even the most essential of social services (Bercuson et al. 1986, p. 103). Federal funding for family allowances was steadily rerouted to income targeted

⁸⁸ The provinces of Alberta and Prince Edward Island also adopted their own family allowance schemes.

family assistance programs through the late 1970s and 1980s (McKeen 2007, p. 154). These curtailments were generally carried out through stealthy, technocratic, and incremental tactics that evaded detection by the Canadian public—namely the de-indexation of benefits and clawbacks of payments to higher earners (See Battle 1993). The (by then greatly diminished) federal Family Allowance was scrapped all together by the Conservative government in 1993 and replaced with an income-tested Child Tax Benefit (CTB) (Pierson and Myles 1997, p. 448).⁸⁹

Although largely overlooked by social policy scholars today (Blake 2009, p. 2), Canada's universal family allowance program nevertheless left a significant policy legacy in that it provided Québec's nationalist vanguard with a convenient focal point in their bid for greater policy autonomy. By wresting a measure of control over family allowances, Québec established an important precedent of pursuing a unilateral family policy. This would prove consequential as Québec later built North America's most comprehensive system of child care and family benefits (see Section 3.6 of this chapter), a move which itself had significant ramifications for the national policy debate.

3.3. The Canada Assistance Plan and its Policy Legacy

Multiple scholars point to the consolidation of the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) as a critical juncture in setting the future trajectory of Canada's family policy regime (see, e.g., Mahon 2000; Pasolli 2015). CAP, finalized in 1966, was the ultimate product of over two years of sustained federal-provincial negotiations aimed at developing a comprehensive, cross-

⁸⁹ Québec's stand-alone universal family allowance continued through 1997, when it and several other programs were folded into the new, income-based Integrated Child Allowance (Baril et al. 2000).

national framework for the delivery of social services for those in need (Bella 1979, p. 451). The CAP agreements essentially represented a commitment, on the part of the federal government, to cover half the cost of most provincially-administered welfare and social assistance programs (Moscovitch 1988).

The project was loosely patterned after the War on Poverty agenda that was being pursued at the time in the United States. Lester Pearson, then Canada's prime minister, also sought to use CAP strategically to coopt the social policy agendas of multiple regionally-rooted political movements (Bella 1979, p. 440). Pearson was especially wary of two prairie-based parties: the collectivist New Democratic Party (NDP) (a successor party to the CCF), and the agrarian-populist Social Credit Party. Both parties had enjoyed long stretches in government at the provincial level (in Saskatchewan and Alberta, respectively) and a federal breakthrough for either would likely have come at the expense of Pearson's Liberal Party.

The Pearson government initially attempted to limit the scope of CAP to income maintenance and skill training programs for adults. However, led by Ontario—which by this point had by far the country's most robust child advocacy network (see Mahon 2007; Section 3.1 of this chapter)—the provinces made a successful push to have child welfare included under the CAP umbrella (Bella 1979, p. 449). Ottawa and the provinces ultimately agreed to a fifty-fifty cost sharing arrangement for the provision of daycare services for the children of those deemed to be 'in need'⁹⁰ by provincial authorities (Hum 1983, p. 51). This was just one of

⁹⁰ Under CAP a 'person in need' was defined as: "(a) a person who, by reason of inability to obtain employment, loss of the principal family, provider, illness, disability, age or other cause of any kind acceptable to the provincial authority, is found to be unable...to provide for himself, or for himself and his dependents or any of them, or (b) a person under the age of twenty-one years who is in the care or custody or under the control or supervision of a child welfare authority, or a person who is a foster-child[.]" (Hum 1983, p. 29).

several joint financing programs initiated under CAP. Others included subsidies for the blind, elderly, and disabled. All told, child welfare related spending comprised five percent of all federal CAP expenditures, totaling roughly twenty million dollars per year (about \$150 million today) (Hum 1983, p. 37).

While undoubtedly conceived with the best interests of children in mind, CAP had the unanticipated consequence of limiting the scope of future reform efforts. As observed by Pasolli (2015, p. 48), CAP effectively embedded child welfare in the national social assistance framework, creating institutional resistance to subsequent efforts to universalize access to child care and other essential children's services.

The first of such efforts came just a few years later, when the landmark 1970 report of Canada's Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) presented a link between modernizing Canada's family policy regime and securing the equality of opportunity for women in the professional realm. The report's findings gave feminist groups and their allies an opening to agitate for a national daycare program and other maternal employment supporting social policies. However, the feminist push saw only limited success as, by this point, CAP was already politically entrenched. I describe this episode in greater detail in the next section.

3.4. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women

Influenced by a strong cross-national gender equality movement associated with 'second wave' feminism,⁹¹ Canada's Liberal government established the RCSW in 1967

⁹¹ Canada, at the time, was under pressure to ratify two separate gender equality conventions, which were being circulated by the United Nations and International Labour Organization, respectively (O'Connor et al. 1999, p. 208).

(O'Connor et al. 1999, p. 208). The commission, chaired by journalist Florence Bird, was given a mandate to “report upon the status of women in Canada, and to recommend what steps might be taken by the Federal Government to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society.” One central focus of the commission was “the present and potential role of women in the Canadian Labour force, including the special problem of married women in employment and measures that might be taken under federal jurisdiction to help in meeting them[.]” (Bird et al. 1970, vii).

After hearing the testimony of 890 witnesses and receiving over a thousand more written submissions (Bird et al. 1970, ix-x), the commission released its final report in the fall of 1970. The report offered 167 recommendations for policymakers, the majority of which dealt with either the role of women in the labor force or the economic and social rights of women within the family structure.

One major theme to come out of the report was the inadequacy of the extant CAP framework in providing the proper level of support for working mothers. For instance, the report found that “existing day-care services can serve only a fraction of [working] mothers” and that the CAP mandated needs test “discourages mothers from applying” for subsidized daycare spaces (p. 266). The authors also observed that “federal financial assistance to day-care centres through the Canada Assistance Plan ha[d] been ineffectual partly because it [was] limited to a share of operating costs only” and failed to provide adequate support for the capital costs incurred through the construction of new centers—a design flaw that exacerbated the chronic shortage of daycare spaces and other essential daycare infrastructure nationwide (pp. 269-270).

The report concluded that “private initiatives cannot cope with so large of a problem” and that “[the state] alone can plan and direct a well-ordered network of [daycare] services which will avoid the duplication of facilities in some areas to the neglect of other communities.” (p. 267). The commission accordingly recommended that “the federal government immediately take steps to enter into agreement with the provinces leading to the adoption of a national Day-Care Act.” They suggested that the federal government pay half of operating costs and, during an initial start-up period, seventy percent of capital costs under this new national framework (p. 271).

The authors estimated that an adequate national daycare system—covering one-tenth of all Canadian children under three and one-quarter of children between the ages of three and six—would cost \$500 million (about \$3.2 billion today and roughly 0.5% of GDP) per year to administer and proposed that the cost burden to government be defrayed by parental user fees levied on an income-based sliding scale. The report stated that an expanded, user fee supported daycare regime would “ensure that clients are drawn from all levels of society and would lift daycare out of the context of poverty.” The authors calculated that “[d]aily operational costs for a good day-care amount to approximately \$4.60 [\$29.50 in 2017 dollars] per child” but made no formal suggestion of what the standard parental user fee should be.

The report also recommended that relevant federal and provincial employment laws be updated to grant all employed women the right to claim eighteen weeks of paid maternity leave without risk of losing their jobs during their time away from work (p. 87). At this point, only two Canadian provinces, British Columbia and New Brunswick, had mandatory maternity leave policies in place and leave times across the rest of the country varied widely from

employer to employer (p. 86). The commission suggested that the new maternity leave scheme be financed through the existing, contribution-based national unemployment assistance framework, which entitled workers to fifty-five percent of previous earnings during temporary periods outside of the labor force (pp. 87-88). The report made a passing reference the paternity leave model found in parts of Scandinavia but did not go so far as to recommend the creation of any new formal laws to entitle new fathers to paid leave from work (p. 273).

The RCSW and their feminist allies found a sympathetic ear in then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.⁹² The forward-thinking Trudeau had initiated a number of socially progressive reforms during an earlier stint as Canada's Minister of Justice (1967-1968). This included legalizing both abortion and the use of pill form contraceptives, as well as significantly easing legal restrictions on divorce. As such, the RCSW agenda resonated ideationally with the forward-thinking prime minister and he stood to bolster his reputation as a social reformer by implementing the commission's recommendations. Trudeau also saw the pan-Canadian women's movement, which brought together francophone and Anglophone feminist groups, as a potential bulwark for national unity (Vickers et al. 1993, p. 82). Trudeau, who at this point controlled a comfortable majority of the seats in Canada's parliament, acted quickly on several of the RCSW recommendations.

Within a year of the report's publication, the Trudeau government passed a federal maternity leave law that entitled all new mothers with twenty or more insurable weeks of work experience to claim fifteen weeks of cash benefits through the unemployment assistance system (Statistics Canada 2003). Though this fell short of the eighteen-week period suggested

⁹² Pierre Trudeau was the father of incumbent Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau.

by the RCSW, it was nevertheless a vital step in making Canada's employment regime more family friendly. Other significant changes stemming from the RCSW report included new federal legislation mandating pay equity in the public service and prohibiting hiring discrimination on the grounds of gender or family status (p. 45). Institutionally, the report led to the creation of a cabinet-level Minister for the Status of Women in Canada (SWC) portfolio and women's offices in both the federal public service and the Privy Council of Canada (O'Connor et al. 1999, p. 209). These institutional reforms were later replicated by most of the provinces (Brodie 2008, p. 153).

Another important consequence of the RCSW was the formation of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). NAC—an umbrella organization comprised of over thirty allied feminist groups—was established in 1972 with the objective of sustaining pressure on policymakers to implement the remainder of the commission's recommendations (Vickers et al. 1993, p. 4). NAC soon became Canada's preeminent women's advocacy network and anointed itself the "legitimate [national] parliament of women" (Vickers et al. 1993, p. 69). Its ranks swelled to 140 constituent groups by the end of the decade and would reach nearly 600 by the late 1980s – with a combined membership of approximately five million Canadian women (Bashevkin 1996, p. 220; Vickers et al. 1993, pp. 4, 107). Critically, NAC managed to secure the inclusion of language endorsing gender equality in Canada's constitutionally-enshrined Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which was promulgated in 1982; coincidentally the same year that the Equal Rights Amendment was defeated south of the border (Hosek 1983).

Progress was more slow-going on the RCSW's recommendations pertaining to daycare as Prime Minister Trudeau expressed a hesitancy to encroach on what he viewed as provincial terrain—especially as sovereigntist sentiment had begun to foment in Québec. Trudeau

reaffirmed this trepidation in a direct correspondence with NAC President Doris Anderson, writing: “The delivery of social services is a provincial jurisdiction, with the federal government having no authority to deliver child care services directly, except in its own limited jurisdiction [under CAP],” (29 June 1982, found in Timpson 2002, p. 57). One notable concession Trudeau did make was to extend federal CAP payments to offset daycare infrastructure and capital costs (White 2017, p. 204). The Trudeau government also provided funding for a NAC organized national daycare conference, convened in Winnipeg in the fall of 1982. One month prior to his retirement from politics in the summer of 1984, Trudeau announced the creation of a new, four-person task force on child care.⁹³

One final, unintended reverberation of the RCSW was the ensuing proliferation of a countervailing organized anti-feminist movement. This cause has been championed most visibly by the Toronto-based REAL (Realistic, Equal and Active for Life) Women of Canada, established in 1983. As the acronym ‘REAL.’ indicates, the organization was founded on the premise that Canada’s official women’s movement had been hijacked by feminist ideologues and purports to be a voice for the ‘silent majority’ of Canadian women who support traditional family values (“About REAL Women of Canada” 2016). REAL. was further galvanized by the controversial *R. vs. Morgentaler* Supreme Court decision of 1987, which struck down all legal restrictions on the procurement of abortions in Canada. Having now cultivated a strong donor base and allies at various levels of government, REAL is arguably the most influential women’s organization in Canada today, with a grassroots membership base of 50,000 across over one hundred affiliate groups (Interviewee no. 12, 6 March 2018).

⁹³ The child care task force was led by Dr. Katie Cook, a prominent sociologist.

3.5. The Push for a National Daycare Program: Take One

Canada's women's movement remained mobilized and relatively influential through the early-to-mid 1980s, in fact comparing favorably to counterparts in the other liberal welfare states (Bashevkin 1996; Brodie 2008; Rodgers and Knight 2011). The high-water mark for organized feminism in Canada arguably came during the fall 1984 federal election campaign, when the leaders of all three major parties participated in a televised debate on women's issues. The debate, organized by NAC, is to date the only event of its kind in Canadian history (Richardson 2014, p. 23).

Progressive Conservative (PC) Brian Mulroney, who emerged from the 1984 election with a sizeable parliamentary majority, was greeted with a cautious optimism by NAC and other advocacy groups. Straining to differentiate himself from hardliner contemporaries Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, Mulroney had pleasantly surprised many feminists with his conciliatory campaign pitches; promising to, for instance, combat ongoing injustices perpetrated against Aboriginal women and fight for greater representation of women in executive and elective positions (Bashevkin 1996, p. 219).

Leading by example, Mulroney appointed six women to his first cabinet of forty parliamentarians. Two – Flora MacDonald and Patricia Carney – received senior cabinet posts (“Twenty-Fourth Ministry”, 2018).⁹⁴ Prior to this point in Canada's history, no more than three women had ever served concurrently in a federal cabinet, making Mulroney's sextet a meaningful departure from the status quo (Chappell 2003, p. 80). Mulroney subsequently

⁹⁴ Employment and Immigration and Energy, Mines, and Resources, respectively (“Twenty-Fourth Ministry, 2018).

appointed an unprecedented number of women to federal agencies, the senior civil service, the Senate, and the Supreme Court of Canada (Bashekvin 1998, p. 123). These personnel moves reflected a desire on the part of Mulroney to placate, and potentially even coopt, organized feminists.

As a further putative gesture of good faith toward women's groups, Mulroney soon turned his attention to Canada's still unresolved daycare question. The child care task force that had been set up by Trudeau released its final report in the spring of 1986, calling for a nationwide universal system of child care to be co-financed through federal and provincial monies, as well as modest parental user fees (Friendly 2006). Mulroney quickly endorsed the task force's mission and set up his own special committee, composed of elected members of parliament from all parties, to develop an appropriate child care strategy.

Mulroney's child care committee released its own report one year later. The committee's report, titled *Sharing the Responsibility*, recommended \$700 million per year (0.14% of GDP)⁹⁵ in new federal spending for child care. This proposed federal funding package comprised: a new child care expense credit worth a maximum of \$900 annually per child; a yearly tax refund of up to \$200 per child for parents who utilized unlicensed care; new capital and operating grants for daycare centers; and tax incentives to encourage private businesses to set up on-site daycare centers. All told, roughly sixty percent of the proposed spending was earmarked for parental tax credits and direct payments (reported in "Day-care Proposals Called Backward Step" 1987). The parliamentary report was greeted with immediate skepticism by

⁹⁵ Based on an estimated GDP of \$500 billion (Department of Finance Canada 1987, Annex 2)

women's groups, who held that the proposed system would do little to shore up the country's severe shortage of daycare spaces ("Report on Day-care Condemned" 1987).⁹⁶

The report nevertheless provided a basic template for the Mulroney government's subsequent \$6.4 billion national child care strategy, unveiled in December 1987 by then Minister of Health and Welfare Jake Epp. Ceding some ground to the critics, the national strategy reduced the scope of parental tax credits and deductions (which would now comprise just over one-third of federal child care spending), and also established a target of 200,000 new child care spaces over seven years—roughly one-quarter of the number needed to keep pace with the long-run goal (endorsed by both the Mulroney government and Child Care Task Force) of making affordable child care available to all families in need by the early-2000s (Friendly 2006).⁹⁷ The strategy earmarked four billion dollars in federal funds over seven years (about 0.1% of GDP)⁹⁸ in support of the new spaces, which would be delivered through a to-be-determined federal-provincial cost-sharing arrangement.

Pursuant to the child care strategy announcement, the Mulroney government introduced Bill C-144, *The Canada Child Care Act*, in the House of Commons in June of 1988. Bill C-144 dealt primarily with the obligations of the federal government under the forthcoming cost-sharing arrangement with the provinces, as the concomitant tax measures had already been appended to the federal *Income Tax Act*. Under the proposed child care act, the federal

⁹⁶ According to one estimate of the state of child care in 1987, Canada's existing supply of 243,545 licensed spaces met only thirteen percent of the need from children aged twelve and under (Phillips 1989, p. 166).

⁹⁷ Figure calculated by the author using the estimated shortage of child care spaces (1.65 million) (Corroborated in "Bill C-144: A Critique of the Proposed Child Care Act" 1988).

⁹⁸ Figure calculated by the author using a baseline GDP of \$500 billion per year.

government would share operating costs on a fifty-fifty basis and cover seventy-five percent of capital costs, up to a maximum of the previously announced four billion over seven years (Philips 1989, pp. 166-7).

While a definite improvement on the framework presented in the first committee report, Bill C-144 was still opposed by NAC and over twenty allied groups (Lind and Prentice 1991, 106). Child care advocates found the complete absence of provisions for national standards, caregiver qualifications, and quality benchmarks to be especially problematic (“Bill C-144: A Critique of the Proposed Canada Childcare Act” 1988). The relevant sections of the draft legislation, written in a nearly indecipherable legalese, stated only that Ottawa would jointly deliberate with each province: “the aspects of child care services in respect of which standards are required to be implemented in the province and the time within which they are to be implemented” (Sections 4.1. (c) and (d), found in Teghtsoonian 1993, p. 108). Moreover, while the four billion dollars promised by the federal government was a good start, it ultimately placed a hard cap on child care related transfers to the provinces, which up to this point had been delivered through the open-ended CAP system (Timpson 2001, p. 152). The federal government’s decision to extend funding eligibility under the child care act to commercial operators was also controversial, although the acceptability of for-profit providers was already an issue that split child care advocates along both ideological and regional lines (Rebick 2005, Chap. 5; Interviewee no. 16)

There were legitimate reasons for the Mulroney government to tread lightly on each of the abovementioned areas. With child care already established as an area of provincial jurisdiction, strict federal standards for program delivery would rest on shaky constitutional

footing—although some advocates pointed out that federal lawmakers had sidestepped this problem earlier by orienting Canada’s national health care legislation around a more flexible set of ‘objectives’ (Teghtsoonian 1993, p. 108). Further, roughly forty percent of Canada’s existing child care spaces at the time were commercially operated, which made the wholesale exclusion of for-profit providers from the federal program a political non-starter (Timpson 2001, p. 152). Bill C-144 also included an ‘opt-out’ clause that gave individual provinces an option to decline the new federal funding and continue to receive support for child care under the pre-existing, open-ended CAP arrangement (“Bill C-144: A Critique of the Proposed Child Care Act” 1988).

Bill C-144 made its way through the House of Commons before the summer was out, but then got held up in the Senate, which still held a sizeable Liberal majority. Concerned by what they perceived as a lack of due diligence by the Progressive Conservative majority in the lower house—who appeared to be eager for a quick win on social policy in the lead-up to the expected fall election campaign—members of the Senate elected to strike up their own Subcommittee on Child Care (Friendly 2000, p. 14). The Senate committee moved at a more deliberate pace, soliciting testimony from a wide range of stakeholders, including several of the abovementioned opponents of the bill (Phillips 1989, pp. 171-2). The detour in the Senate caused the clock to run out on the child care bill, which was shelved when Mulroney moved to dissolve parliament in early October.

Child care received a fair deal of attention at the outset of the fall 1988 federal election campaign,⁹⁹ but the race ultimately broke down into a de facto referendum on free trade with

⁹⁹ The Liberal Party promised to create 400,000 new spaces over seven years, at a cost of \$7.8 billion. The NDP did not pledge any more money for child care but promised to deliver the promised 200,000 spaces in just 3.5 years (Phillips 1989, p. 172).

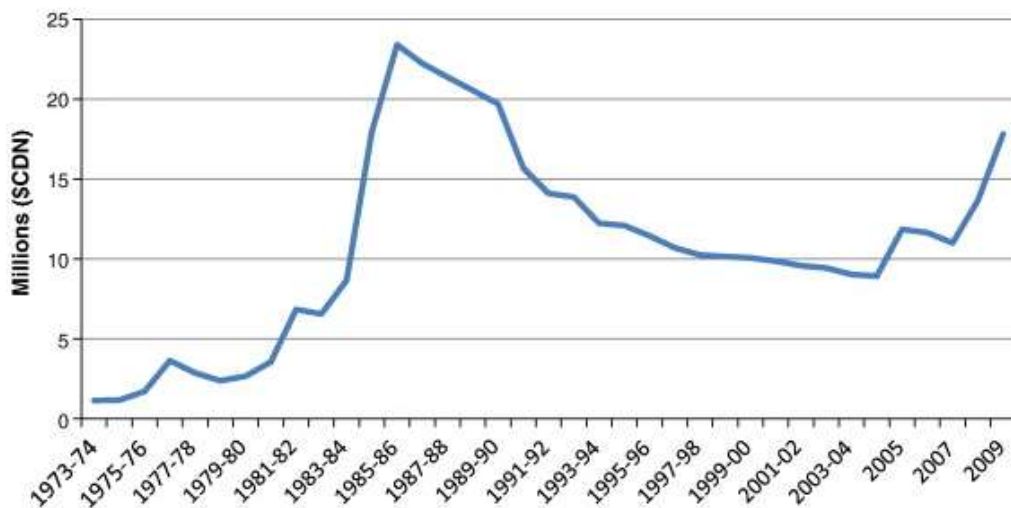
the United States (see Brodie 1989). Mulroney's Progressive Conservatives lost thirty-four seats and seven percent of the popular vote in the November 21st ballot, yet nevertheless returned to Ottawa with an intact parliamentary majority and a mandate to move forward with the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. Mulroney's second and final term (1988-1993) was subsequently dominated by the mammoth agendas of continental free trade and constitutional reform—and often sidetracked by a steady drip of scandals—leaving insufficient time, resources, and political will for another substantial social policy initiative.

The collapse of Bill C-144 ultimately marked a significant turning point for advocacy groups and effectively set off a “decades-long erosion and delegitimization of [Canada's] women's movement” (Rodgers and Knight 2011, p. 570). NAC's standing with the federal government suffered an immediate and precipitous decline; so much so that the minister responsible for the status of women, Barbara McDougall, refused to even meet with members of the NAC lobby during their 1989 conference at Parliament Hill (Bashevkin 1995, p. 233). Lamented one NAC activist: “We had no [child care] bill because we killed it. The government sure was mad at us.” (Quoted in Bashevkin 1995, p. 237). NAC's vocal opposition to continental free trade and the Mulroney government's constitutional reform agenda created further strains with Ottawa (Lambert and Anderson 2006).

The falling-out was reflected in a steady loss of federal monetary support. NAC's core operating grant of \$600,000 per year was reduced by twenty percent in the 1989 budget and was halved by 1991 (Bashevkin 1996, p. 232; Pal 1993, p. 228). Funding also dried up for the Women's Program, a grant issuing body maintained within the federal Department of the Secretary of State. The Women's Program, which had distributed nearly \$12.5 million in grant

monies over the 1987-88 fiscal year, was an indispensable patron for multiple federal and provincial advocacy groups, including NAC and the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association (Pal 1993, p. 224). Federal support for women’s groups continued to decline through the 1990s—this despite the election of a more ideologically friendly Liberal government in 1993 (See Figure 3.1). The loss of government patronage caused long-simmering tensions within NAC to boil over, leaving the organization in disarray.¹⁰⁰

**Figure 3.1 - Women’s Program Funding, 1973-2009
(2010 dollars)**



From Rogers and Knight 2011, p. 572

While the deteriorating economic climate of the time meant that federal funding for women’s groups would likely have been slated for cuts anyways, it’s worth noting that 1989 was also the year that REAL Women first obtained federal grant money through the Women’s Program, receiving a modest payment of \$21,212 to help put together their annual general

¹⁰⁰ Chaviva M. Hošek, who served as president of NAC between 1983 and 1986 before going on to serve a number of senior posts in politics, academia, and business, spoke of her time with NAC as “the harshest political experience [she] ever had,” remarking that she was “shocked by the divisiveness” of the organization (Goar 2005).

meeting in Ottawa. The pro-family organization had filed three unsuccessful applications with the Women's Program in the years prior (Steuter 1992, p. 300). The Women's Program's about-face on REAL broke from a longstanding internal policy of only issuing grants to 'equality-seeking' entities (Pal 1993, p. 147).

As has been observed elsewhere (see: Collier 2015; Rodgers and Knight 2011), one irony about the Canadian women's movement is that was, to some degree, a victim of its own early success in engaging the federal government. NAC's initially cozy relationship with Ottawa meant that it did not need to develop much of a grassroots fundraising structure. However, as the organization would soon find out the hard way, being so heavily reliant on the federal government's patronage made it highly vulnerable to changes in the political climate. Moreover, early wins on constitutional reform and abortion created heightened expectations among members that proved unrealistic as NAC took on more complex, multi-jurisdictional issues like child care.¹⁰¹ With the national women's movement down-and-out and the federal government preoccupied, for the time being, with slashing deficits and getting back into the good graces of creditors, the next significant family policy innovation would be pursued at the provincial level.

3.6. Québec's Family Policy 'Breakthrough'

Starting with the release of the abovementioned Castonguay-Nepveu report in 1971, the province of Québec has followed a quasi-autonomous course on public health and social

¹⁰¹ NAC ceased operations in 2007 due to insolvency (Lambert and Anderson 2017).

welfare policies (Jenson 2013, p. 631).¹⁰² While Québec's 'go-it-alone' approach has at times been merely symbolic, with provincial social programs being almost identical to the corresponding federally-administered ones found in the other provinces (McRoberts 1993, p. 141), family policy is one area where the differences have been meaningful. Such deviations from the national current have reflected logics of pronatalism, feminism, and solidarism at various points in time. This has resulted in an anomalous long-run policy trajectory that combines elements of the conservative, liberal, and social democratic policy paradigms (see Jenson 2013). I focus on two substantial reforms—the 1988 baby bonus and the new family policy agenda initiated in 1997—as well as the legacy that the later has left for the rest of the country.

The Baby Bonus

Owing to the steady decline in birth rates over the two decades prior, Québécois policymakers embraced a new paradigm of “demographic pronatalism” in the 1980s (Maroney 1992, p. 7). The pronatalist narrative, constructed by nationalists in both major provincial parties and an influential cadre of academic demographers,¹⁰³ cast Québec's fertility slump as an existential threat to the province's continued survival as a culturally and linguistically distinct entity within a “sea of North American Englishness.” (Maroney 1992, p. 8). After two provincewide consultations on family policy (conducted in 1982 and 1987, respectively) and a

¹⁰² Québec also developed province-specific programs for social assistance and pensions (cite)

¹⁰³ As observed by Maroney (1992), most of Québec's professional demographers had received training at the French Institute of Demographic Studies (INED), which was well-known for its positivist and pronatalist curriculum, particularly under founding director Alfred Sauvy (1945-62).

series of high-profile provincial Cultural Commission hearings (1984-5), the then governing Liberals unveiled a new 'baby bonus' scheme in the spring of 1988.

Reflecting a long-standing cultural veneration of *la famille nombreuse* (Maroney 1992, p. 21), the new, non-taxable baby bonuses escalated with birth order. The payments, delivered in the form of an advance on income tax credits, were initially set at \$500 for the first and second child and then \$3,000 for the third child and each additional child. Following two rounds of increases, the payouts plateaued in 1992 at: \$500 for the first child, \$1,000 for the second child, and \$7,500¹⁰⁴ for each additional child (Levesque 1991, p. 61). Adding to what was already the most generous family benefits regime in North America, the baby bonuses reflected a modern pronatalism "based not on religious exhortation but on the monetary incentives of the market-driven new family economics" (Maroney 1992, p. 26).

Although followed by a perceptible bump in the provincial birth rate (Kay 1990), the baby bonus was not universally celebrated. Feminists, who constituted a critical swing demographic in both provincial elections and the sovereignty debate (see Jenson 2013, p. 644), criticized the policy for perpetuating a 'biological-reductionist' worldview that made motherhood the centerpiece of feminine identity (Maroney 1992, p. 12). One more pragmatic line of objection related to the advisability of making payments escalate with birth order as a family's major capital investment typically comes following the birth of the first child—the marginal cost decreasing with each additional birth (Maroney 1992, p. 27). Fortunately for the critics, they would not have to wait long to challenge the primacy of the baby bonus.

¹⁰⁴ This sum was paid out in quarterly installments, through the child's fourth birthday, so as to discourage the improper use of benefit monies (Kay 1990).

The 1997 Reforms

The mid-1990s provided a suitable opening for a change of direction due to several accommodating factors, paramount among which was a dire need for the then governing Parti Québécois (PQ) to refurbish its political brand. A polarizing fall 1995 referendum on Québec's independence saw the proposed motion to secede from Canada fail by a margin of just over one percent. Narrow though it was, the defeat of the sovereignty bid nevertheless triggered the immediate resignation of then Premier Jacques Parizeau, the de facto leader of the pro-secession camp. On his way out, Parizeau publicly attributed the referendum result to "money and the ethnic vote" (Farnsworth 1995).

Parizeau's parting shot, an escalation of the 'leave' side's already charged rhetoric, cemented widespread perceptions of the PQ as reactionary, xenophobic, and downright racist. The persistent characterization of the party as an ethno-nationalist entity was especially problematic given the ambiguous international law surrounding secession and the spate of ethnic violence that had accompanied the then ongoing secessionist claims-making in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere (Hebert 2008, pp. 151-2). In short, any viable future claim to Québec's political autonomy (from both a domestic and global perspective) would need to be built on more than just language and ethnicity (Beland and Lecours 2006, p. 82).

With sovereignty off the table for the time being, the PQ government looked to re-embrace its social democratic roots. In an effort to formalize this change in tone and establish the appropriate set of policy objectives, the party convened a Summit on the Economy and Employment in October of 1996. The Summit marked the first time in the province's history

that the government opened formal ‘quadripartite’ policy consultations with representatives from labor, business, and civil society groups (Lévesque and Mendell 1999, p. 17). Despite differing motivations and agendas heading into the summit, the parties ultimately forged a consensus around the new paradigm of Social Economy, which proposed a synergistic relationship between public, voluntary, and for-profit entities acting jointly in pursuit of the collective well-being. The model specified a critical role for cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, and civic associations (Bouchard 2013).

One of the key substantive items to come out of the summit was a new blueprint for family policy as feminists, child development experts, and other participants were able to sell then premier Lucien Bouchard on the necessity (and potential political upside) of a complete overhaul (Jenson 2013, p. 628). A government white paper released two months after the summit’s conclusion (*Les enfants au cœur de nos choix*) outlined the core priorities that would shape the government’s new approach to family policy and unveiled a corresponding set of planned reforms. Placing a distinct—and, to this point in the province’s history, unprecedented—emphasis on promoting employment and the equality of opportunity, the document proposed: a new targeted family allowance (available to all low-income parents with dependents under the age of eighteen), a new paid parental leave scheme (delinked from unemployment insurance), various child-friendly modifications of the provincial tax code, full and half-day kindergarten for five and four year-olds (respectively), and, most prominently, five dollar per day child care for children aged four and under (Jenson 2013, p. 646).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ The program was scheduled to begin, in September 1997, with four-year olds and then incrementally expand to younger ages until all children were eligible by the fall of 2001 (Gouvernement du Québec 1997, p. 21). This target was reached in September 2000, one year ahead of schedule (Jenson 2013, p. 652-3).

The new direction in family policy signified a critical defeat for pronatalists, who lost their favored escalating ‘baby bonus’. In fact, the newly-integrated family allowance paid out a higher sum for first-borns than it did for later-borns, reserving the highest payouts (\$3,900 annually) for the first-born children of single parents (Gouvernement du Québec 1997, p. 15). Moreover, increasing the birth rate was formally removed from the province’s list of family policy objectives (Jenson 2013, p. 625). The shift away from pronatalism was astute politics, as the PQ sought to avoid any action that could draw accusations of nativism from elsewhere in Canada (see Beland and Lecours 2010, pp. 82-3). However, one downside of this de-emphasis of reproduction (and the role of mothers therein) was a concomitant de-gendering of family policy as a whole. Jenson (2013) observes a “discernible decline in the rhetoric of gender equality in the post-1997 Family Policy as compared to its predecessors,” (p. 660).

In keeping with the Social Economy concept, and in particular its emphasis on the inclusion of ‘third sector’ civil society actors, the new child care services would be delivered through a network of non-profit ‘Centres de la Petite Enfance’ (CPEs) and smaller home-based daycares.¹⁰⁶ Each CPE was to be governed by a board of directors composed of at least seven persons, with a requirement that at least two-thirds of board members be the parents of program enrollees (Friendly et al. 2007, p. 65). The CPEs were authorized to accommodate between eight and eighty children, subject to provincially established space requirements and staff-to-child ratios (“Types of childcare services” 2018).

While the CPEs managed day-to-day administration, the provincial government’s role would be to provide requisite financing to cover the gap between the mandated five dollar a

¹⁰⁶ Home-based daycares in Québec may only serve a maximum of six children (Friendly et al 2018, p. 50).

day user fee and program operating costs, primarily through direct grants to individual centers (Jenson 2013, p. 652). The Province, which had placed a moratorium on new licenses for commercial daycare centers in 1995, initially envisioned that the remaining for-profit centers would be absorbed into the CPE structure. However, facing an unexpected level of organized resistance from commercial operators and a desperate need for the spaces they could contribute to the system, officials begrudgingly made the new subsidies available to select for-profit providers, although at a less generous level than what the non-profits received. The moratorium on new commercial licenses was lifted 2002, leading to a steady increase in the amount of for-profit daycare spaces as a percentage of the total (Jenson 2006, pp. 12, 14).¹⁰⁷

Even with the continued involvement of for-profit operators, Québec's new daycare program was a complete game-changer. Starting from a baseline of around 54,000 total spaces in 1997 (Senkiw 2003, p. 16), the program generated an average of 15,000 new subsidized spaces per year over the first eight years of its existence. Although the rate of growth slowed somewhat from there, Québec accumulated a total stock of over 215,000 subsidized spaces by the early 2010s (Fortin et al. 2012, p. 3)—enough to serve roughly half of all children aged four and under. The number has since surpassed 230,000 (Friendly et al 2018, pp. 44, 51). While parental fees have increased over the years—now starting at a baseline of \$8.05 per day and rising incrementally for parents who earn more than \$50,000 per year (see “Daily daycare costs” 2018)—Québec still offers parents, by a wide margin, Canada's most affordable daycare services. The per space cost of daycare is, in fact, three times higher in Manitoba, the province

¹⁰⁷ Longitudinal studies of daycare services in Québec have produced substantial evidence that commercial operators systematically provide lower quality care than non-profit ones (see Japel et al 2007)

that comes closest, and over six times higher in neighboring Ontario (see Table 1). The program is also relatively cost-effective with an annual budget of roughly \$2.5 billion, approximately 0.6% of provincial GDP (Fortin 2017). This actually puts Québec slightly below the average, among OECD members, of 0.7% GDP spent on early childhood education and care (“Public spending on childcare and early childhood education” 2016).

Table 1 – Cost of center-based child care by province

Province	Median annual parent fee per space, combined infant, toddler, preschooler (2015)
British Columbia	\$10,860
Alberta	\$10,060
Saskatchewan	\$6,984
Manitoba	\$5,972
Ontario	\$11,648
Québec	\$1,824
New Brunswick	\$8,052
Nova Scotia	\$8,816
Prince Edward Island	\$7,224
Newfoundland-Labrador	\$9,336
National Average	\$8,544

Source: Press and Leung 2015

Just as their architects had hoped, Québec’s 1997 family policy reforms laid the groundwork for a new claim to cultural distinctiveness based on social solidarity. The province’s consistently popular daycare program has, in particular, become a focal point of this self-styled ‘solidarism’ (See Beland and Lecours 2010, pp. 83-6). However, it would be a mistake to overstate the magnitude of the changes as Québec’s family policy regime has retained both

neoliberal and familial elements. In addition to the growth of the for-profit child care sector and the shift to income-targeted family benefits discussed above, Québec has preserved Canada's only universal tax credit for families with children—in conformity with the long-running familial tradition of direct, flat-rate parental subsidies (Jenson 2013, p. 648).¹⁰⁸ Making note of such aberrations, Jenson (2013) classifies Québec as a “mixed regime... falling more on the market performance side,” (p. 627).

Criticisms of the Québec Model

Although justifiably celebrated, Québec's daycare program has not been immune from criticism—much of which is valid. Observers have been especially critical of the uneven distribution of spaces, leading to excess capacity in some parts of the province and multiyear wait-times in less well-served areas (Campbell 2006, pp. 210-11; Jenson 2013, pp. 655-56). Moreover, serious concerns have been raised with regards to the fairness of the system, as higher-income parents have been shown to receive preferential access to in-demand spaces (“Quebec's unfair lottery” 2009). Perhaps most troublingly, lingering fears about the general quality of care provided through the system, and the potential long-run developmental consequences therein, have been validated in recent studies (see Baker et al. 2015; Haeck et al. 2015). These shortcomings are widely acknowledged by proponents and detractors of universal child care alike. In fact, multiple advocates with whom I spoke cited the legacy of Québec's program as a mixed one for other provinces.

¹⁰⁸ The non-refundable tax credit is, at present, worth a minimum of \$676 for the first child and \$625 for each additional child (“Child Assistant Payments – Quebec” 2018).

“The issues with Québec’s program are long-standing,” remarked one of my interviewees, a former chief-of-staff to a federal minister; noting that the government of Québec has knowingly sacrificed program quality in order to keep daily user fees in the single-digits, thereby encouraging advocates elsewhere to emphasize unrealistic price targets (Interviewee no. 4, 24 August 2017). For instance, child care activists in the province of British Columbia have made the price point of ten dollars per day central to their branding (see: 10aday.ca).

Other interviewees expressed similar sentiments. One, a Montréal-based academic who has done extensive longitudinal research on the quality of daycare services in Québec, lamented that misinformed observers in other provinces cling to an idealized vision of the ‘Québec Model’: “People don’t really understand what’s going on here. They think that we have this great system when, in reality, the quality is just not that good,” noting, in particular, the proliferation of substandard for-profit care and the most lopsided staff-to-child ratios in the country (Interviewee no. 14, 29 March 2018).

Evidence of negative developmental outcomes stemming from questionable program quality is beginning to come to light as the program’s earliest cohorts reach adulthood. A controversial 2015 working paper, co-authored by economists from the University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, linked the introduction of Québec’s subsidized daycare program in the fall of 1997 to a “sizeable negative shock in non-cognitive skills... with little impact on cognitive test scores”, finding that “cohorts with increased child care access subsequently had worse health, lower life satisfaction, and [for boys] higher crime rates later in life,” (Baker et al. 2015, abstract). Although the authors utilized

a dubious methodology that grouped program enrollees and non-enrollees together (See Gordon 2015), the study nevertheless received substantial media attention due to the proximity of its release to Canada’s fall 2015 general election.¹⁰⁹ Another 2015 study, published in the journal *Labor Economics*, found evidence of a negative effect on school readiness for daycare attendees from low-income households (Haeck et al. 2015).

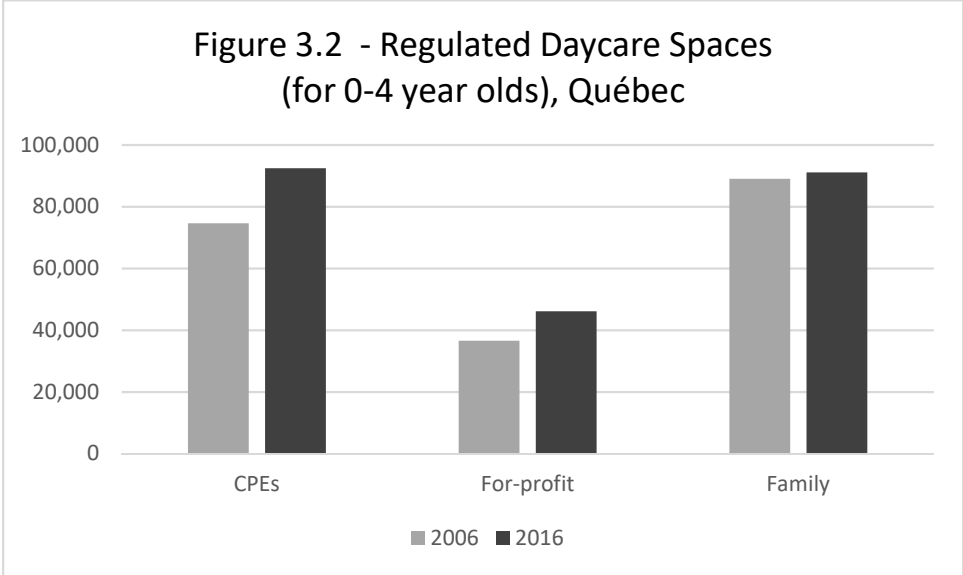
The excessive focus on Québec has fostered an insular national discourse, giving neoliberal critics pretense to use these acknowledged shortcomings as an indictment of the general concept of universal child care. One recent example is a March 2017 bulletin put out by the Vancouver-based Fraser Institute, arguably Canada’s most influential think tank,¹¹⁰ which characterized Québec’s daycare program as “a flawed policy model” and claimed that “the evidence from a number of jurisdictions, but especially Québec, casts major doubt on the notion that there are important [developmental and labor market] returns that can be expected from current spending on daycare programs of the Québec model,” (Geloso and Eisen 2017, p. 7).

Such commentary is both malicious and ironic as several of the defects of Québec’s daycare program can be traced back to residual neoliberal components. For instance, commercial daycare centers, which have been shown to provide a consistently inferior quality of care versus CPEs and family daycare (see Japel et al. 2005), have expanded steadily and now provide just over twenty percent of all subsidized spaces (see Figure 3.2). One child care expert

¹⁰⁹ One of the study’s co-authors, Kevin Milligan, has expressed regret that the paper was released so close to the 2015 election (personal correspondence, 3 January 2018).

¹¹⁰ “The Global Go To Think Tank Index Report”, published annually by the University of Pennsylvania, has ranked the Fraser Institute as the top think tank in Canada over each of the past ten years. The Fraser Institute was ranked twenty-first overall and fourth in social policy in the most recent set of rankings (see: McGann 2018, pp. 62, 126).

whom I interviewed went so far as to characterize the ideologically-tinged attacks on the Québec model as the product of a “concerted conservative campaign” to delegitimize the Canadian child care movement (Interviewee no. 15, 29 March 2018).



Source: Friendly et al. 2007; 2018

Be that as it may, there is some limited evidence that the continued negative press surrounding Québec’s daycare program could be dampening support for universal child care elsewhere in the country. While public opinion polls on child care have been all over the map (see Environics 2006; Vanier Institute 2003), the 2015 edition of the Canadian National Election Study—the country’s most comprehensive and reliable public opinion dataset—recorded a ten percent decline in the proportion of respondents who agreed that the government should “fund public daycare” (see Table 2).

Table 2 – “What should the government do?” (Survey Question)

	2008	2011	2015
Fund public daycare	63.4%	63.2%	53.4%
Give money directly to parents	29.5%	29.0%	32.8%
Don't know/no response	7.1%	7.8%	13.7%
Respondents:	2451	3362	7288

Source: Canadian National Election Study

3.7. The ‘Children’s Agenda’ Pivot

While the fallout from Québec’s 1995 referendum gave provincial activists an opening to pursue an ambitious new social agenda, it had much the opposite effect on federal policymakers. Caught off-guard by the closeness of the vote, the federal government promised, in its 1996 Speech from the Throne,¹¹¹ to limit federal involvement in areas of provincial jurisdiction and to compensate provinces that elected to ‘opt-out’ of coordinated initiatives in favor of their own, comparable stand-alone programs. This was a clear effort to preempt future accusations of its meddling in Québec’s internal affairs (Harmes 2007, p. 421). Ottawa’s self-imposed exile from provincial matters closed the door, for the time being, on the prospect of any major new pan-Canadian social policy initiatives.

Yet one power that Ottawa retained—and which the provinces were more than happy for it to exercise—was its capacity to compensate certain families directly through the income tax system (Mahon and Phillips 2013, p. 422). This explains why the parties were able to reach a consensus in favor of a new National Child Benefit (NCB) system in 1997.

¹¹¹ Broadly similar to the State of the Union Address in the United States, the Speech from the Throne—delivered at the opening of each parliamentary session by the Governor General—outlines the federal government’s core legislative priorities for the year.

Created in response to a concerning national trend of worsening child poverty,¹¹² the NCB was premised around the reconfiguration of the existing federal child tax benefit, which was substantially increased (by around \$650 million per year) and had its prior cap of \$500 per family removed. Announced in the 1997 federal budget, the new Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) was worth a maximum of \$605 for the first child, \$405 for the second, and \$330 for each additional child. In response to the increased financial support from Ottawa, the provinces agreed to reallocate monies previously earmarked for their own social assistance payments to frontline services for low-income families with children (Battle 1997, pp. 2-3).¹¹³

Policymakers hoped that the NCB would “take children off welfare” by replacing the preexisting matrix of multilevel child welfare payments with a single consolidated child benefit available to all low-income households with children, irrespective of parental employment status. This essentially gave all Canadian children a basic minimum income (Pierson and Myles 1997, p. 448). The policy was a major win for the provinces, which gained fiscal breathing room from the higher federal transfers to low-income families without having to sacrifice policy autonomy. Québec nevertheless exercised its recently established right to opt-out, declining to participate in the program (Noël 2012, p. 425).

As memories of the 1995 referendum faded and federal budget surpluses accumulated, Canada’s Liberal government tepidly reasserted itself into a position of leadership on family policy. On the heels of the NCB, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien signaled his intention to develop

¹¹² By 1995, the national child poverty rate sat at twenty-one percent, having increased by just under six percent since the beginning of the decade. The rate remained stubbornly high despite a recovering economy and falling unemployment through the mid-1990s (Battle 1997, p. 2).

¹¹³ On average, around 39% of provincial revenues saved through the NCB were rerouted to child care subsidies (Mahon and Phillips 2013, p. 425).

a more comprehensive national framework for child well-being. This led to the adoption, in the spring of 1999, of the National Children’s Agenda (NCA): a joint federal-provincial statement of intent to work cooperatively towards the health, safety, and future success of all Canadian children. The parties specified six associated goals, which included “improv[ing] economic security for families to help maximize child well-being” and “enhance[ing] early childhood development because the first few years are important for children’s lifelong abilities, health, and well-being,” (Health Canada 1999). The Government of Québec once again chose to stay on the sidelines but endorsed the objectives of the NCA.

The NCA provided a framework for the financing and administration of a myriad programs, targeting areas like pre-natal care, nutrition, parenting strategies, early childhood learning, and community supports. Services were generally delivered in a ‘trickle-down’ manner, with the federal government transferring seed-money to the provinces (at a rate of around \$450 million per year) which, in turn, issued grants to the community-based organizations that worked directly with children and families. The arrangement left the provinces free to decide, within limits, what specific programs to fund (McKeen 2007, p. 155). Between the CCTB and NCA, the federal government contributed roughly \$2.85 billion per year (0.3% of GDP) to family subsidies (McKeen 2007, p. 159; White 2011, p. 7).¹¹⁴

Although more the product of jurisdictional wrangling than ideological machinations, the NCA nevertheless perpetuated a neoliberal perception of child development and the role of the state therein. In particular, the agenda’s deemphasis of the structural inequities underpinning child poverty in favor of direct caseworker interventions catered to individual ‘at-

¹¹⁴ Figure calculated by author by adding figures found in McKeen 2007 (p. 159) and White 2011 (p. 6).

risk' families betrayed an implicit assumption that child poverty occurred as a result of the personal failings of parents. Accordingly, the services offered under the NCA umbrella (while varying somewhat from province to province) tended to be individualized and corrective. For instance, the NCA sponsored numerous home visitation and counselling programs. This microlevel focus left little room for more collective solutions like universal child care (McKeen 2007, pp. 157-8).

3.8. Child Care Goes Federal, Yet Again

Following Jean Chrétien's retirement from politics in 2003, Paul Martin took his long-awaited turn as prime minister. Martin, who held a high-profile as Chrétien's minister of finance for nearly a decade (1993 – 2002),¹¹⁵ received much of the credit for Canada's dramatic economic turnaround through the mid-to-late 1990s (see Mohamed 2017, pp. 547-50), making him quite popular with the pro-business 'Bay Street' community. However, Martin carried a more dubious reputation with social advocates owing to the perception that the cuts to social spending that he implemented as finance minister were more dramatic and mean-spirited than was necessary (see Stanford 2003).

In an effort to soften the 'deficit-hawk' persona he had cultivated as minister of finance, Martin immediately turned his attention to social policy. He quickly determined that there would be a significant political upside in making a renewed push for a pan-Canadian child care program (See White 2011, p. 8). Child care checked multiple boxes for Martin as, by improving

¹¹⁵ Martin was unceremoniously removed from the post in June 2002 amidst accusations that he and supporters had been secretly plotting to oust Prime Minister Chrétien ("The Chrétien-Martin feud boils over" 2002).

the availability and quality of educational daycare programs across the country, he stood to bolster his progressive bona fides and reverse a current of negative international attention Canada was beginning to receive for the existing patchwork system (see Philip 2004). Campaigning for better child care would also give Martin an angle to reengage with Québec voters, who were at the time abandoning the Liberals in droves as scandalous details continued to emerge surrounding the administration of a federal sponsorship program based in the province.¹¹⁶ Through a new child care initiative, Martin sought to communicate to Québécois that, despite the party's transgressions, it still presented a vision of social justice that was attuned to the province's core values (Interviewee no. 4, 24 August 2017).

Child care was accordingly the primary social policy plank in Martin's first reelection campaign, called just six months into his tenure as prime minister. Martin and his co-partisans campaigned heavily on the merits of a five-year, five billion-dollar plan to create 250,000 regulated child care spaces across Canada—enough for approximately eighteen percent of children in need under the age of five (Wells 2004). At multiple points in the campaign, the Martin Liberals cited Québec's stand-alone daycare program as a source of inspiration. For instance, an excerpt in the party's official platform read:

Québec provides the exceptional example. It is the North American leader in early learning and care. In Québec's system, community-based organizations provide child care at a moderate fee. This is a standard to which early learning and care across Canada should be lifted. Learning from each other and embracing what has worked elsewhere in Canada, makes us stronger as a nation and as a people. That's what our federation is all about (*Moving Canada Forward* 2004, p. 29).

¹¹⁶ The sponsorship scandal, also known as AdScam, involved a series of revelations relating to the mismanagement of the Liberal government's Québec-based sponsorship program, active between 1996 and 2004. Established shortly after the 1995 referendum in an effort to boost the federal government's tarnished brand in Québec, the program essentially became a slush fund that paid Liberal-friendly advertising firms for little to no work, with much of this money being funneled back to the party via campaign contributions. The scandal was especially damaging to the Liberal Party's standing among Québécois voters ("Federal Sponsorship Scandal" 2006).

Having been chosen to lead the newly-unified Conservative Party of Canada just two months prior, Opposition Leader Stephen Harper was caught off guard by Martin's snap election call.¹¹⁷ Harper's fledgling Conservative Party was forced to go into the campaign without having even established a formal platform. This meant that Harper was unable to present a detailed alternative to Martin's child care proposal—or to offer much beyond generalities on most policy areas. Harper nevertheless impressed many voters with his tenacious, disciplined approach to campaigning, giving Martin an unexpectedly strong fight. As such, the summer 2004 election was much closer than most pundits expected it to be. Yet Martin still returned to Ottawa in the fall with what he termed a “stable minority” government (Krauss 2004).

Martin signaled that child care would be a top priority of his first electoral mandate by tapping Ken Dryden, his new minister of social development, to lead the effort. Although a political newcomer, Dryden boasted a pristine reputation and substantial name recognition. Widely-respected among social activists following decades of recognized community leadership and well-known across Canada for his Hall of Fame career as a professional ice hockey player, Dryden appeared to be the ideal candidate for the assignment. His involvement gave new found hope to beleaguered child care advocates. For instance, one write-up published in the *Toronto Star* read, “With a marquee name like Ken Dryden, there's the best chance in a long while that Ottawa will not just listen, but act,” (Wells 2004).

¹¹⁷ Following the collapse of the Progressive Conservative (PC) party in the 1993 federal election, a split occurred in the country's right, pitting the weakened PC against the upstart Reform Party/Canadian Alliance based in Western Canada. After seeing the right-of-center vote split in the next two federal elections, the parties came to terms on a merger in the fall of 2003. Stephen Harper became the first leader of the newly-unified Conservative Party of Canada after winning almost seventy percent of the popular vote in the party's March 2004 leadership election.

In their statements on the plan, Martin, Dryden, and their surrogates placed a heavy emphasis on the developmental aspects of educational child care. This was part of a deliberate framing strategy informed by the prime minister's personal interactions with domestic research elites (White 2011, p. 10).¹¹⁸ This discursive shift was instrumental, at the time, in elevating child care beyond mere 'babysitting' and establishing early childhood education as a legitimate national policy priority (see White 2004).

Dryden struggled to adapt to the cut and thrust of politics¹¹⁹ but was ultimately able to secure bilateral agreements on early learning and child care with all ten provinces by the end of 2005. Perennial non-joiner Québec was, in fact, the first province to finalize a funding agreement with Ottawa, accepting \$1.125 billion over five years to bolster its daycare program ("Governments of Canada and Québec Sign Funding Agreement" 2005). Altogether, the federal government committed a sum that was just under the advertised five billion dollars over five years, with the provinces receiving between \$27 million (Prince Edward Island) and \$2.5 billion (Ontario) ("Early Learning and Child Care Agreements" 2005). The provinces were given substantial flexibility over how to distribute these funds. For instance, they could decide for themselves whether to subsidize commercial operators within their respective borders.¹²⁰ The

¹¹⁸ Several of my interviewees singled out medical researcher Dr. Fraser Mustard, founding president of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, as an instrumental player in linking the early childhood development research community to Prime Minister Martin's inner-circle.

¹¹⁹ In a widely-covered February 2005 parliamentary exchange, Minister Dryden was left flabbergasted when opposition critic Rona Ambrose remarked that Canadian women "don't need old white guys telling us what to do." One prominent journalist wrote of the interaction: "[Dryden's] well-meaning but wooden responses to his articulate critic reinforced the image of the government as a meddling, paternalistic uncle," (Hebert 2008, p. 81).

¹²⁰ A source who took part in the bilateral negotiations informed me that the parties agreed going in to leave the issue of non-profit versus for-profit service delivery off the table (Interviewee no. 4, 24 August 2017).

provinces were also left alone to determine what mix of the funding would go to universal and income-targeted programs (McKeen 2007, p. 161). This stated, all parties agreed to respect the principles of “quality, universality, accessibility, and developmental services” (QUAD) in program delivery (White et al. 2016). The last of these agreements were finalized just days prior to the Martin government’s defeat in a late November vote of confidence, which immediately triggered a new election campaign.¹²¹

The ‘Child Care Election’ of 2006

While the framework established by Martin and Dryden fell well short of anything that approached ‘universal child care’, the plan still attracted a great deal of coverage in the 2005/06 federal election campaign—arguably framing the race more than any other issue (see Coyne 2007). Child care presented a useful contrast for both major parties. For the Liberals, the early learning agreements were one of scant few policy victories that the Martin minority government could point to over its year-and-a-half lifespan. The Liberals sought to leverage the child care promise to press their advantage on compassion issues over the Conservatives who, as Martin was keen to point out, had recently dropped the qualifier “Progressive” from their party name.

This time the Harper Conservatives were prepared, releasing, at the outset of the campaign, a child care platform that surprised many in terms of both its generosity and level of

¹²¹ Hoping to capitalize on the release of the *Gomery Commission Report*, which documented the gross mismanagement of the Québec-based federal sponsorship program between 1996 and 2004; opposition MPs issued a motion of no confidence against the Martin government on November 28. The motion passed by a margin of 177 votes to 133, with the support of all three opposition parties (“Liberals lose confidence of the house” 2005).

detail. The Conservative child care package, coming with a total price tag of \$10.9 billion over five years (0.15% of GDP), included: \$1.4 billion to honor the federal-provincial early learning agreements through 2006-07; \$1.25 billion in grants and tax incentives to enable businesses and community organizations to create 125,000 new daycare spaces over five years; and, centrally, a new universal annual cash benefit of \$1,200 per child (paid in monthly installments of \$100) available to all parents with children aged five and under. The taxable child benefit would help some two million children at an annual cost of \$1.6 billion (Rinehart 2007, p. 47).

Caught off-guard by the scale and specificity of Harper's newly unveiled child care platform, Martin hastily announced, less than twenty-four hours later, that a re-elected Liberal government would spend at least an additional six billion dollars to finance the child care agreements through 2015 ("Liberal Child Care Commitment will be Made Permanent" 2005). The third-party NDP soon joined the fray, promising a total of \$16 billion over four years to subsidize 200,000 new daycare spaces, increase the Child Tax Benefit by a thousand dollars per child, and create a new federal children's commissioner ("NDP Policy Platform includes \$71B in spending" 2006). Reflecting on the peculiarity of the chain of events, one journalist remarked, "The Conservative Party seemed to have designed an entire election campaign around an issue traditionally of more concern to women than to men—and the other parties followed suit," (Rinehart 2007, p. 48). Initial polling found a slight overall preference for Harper's child care plan (48% to 45%), although women still preferred the Liberal plan by a margin of seven points (50% to 43%) (Strategic Counsel, 8 December 2005 found in Rinehart, p. 49).

A catastrophic glitch in Liberal messaging less than a week into the campaign would serve to tilt the momentum on child care permanently in the Conservatives' favor. Appearing in

a televised panel discussion broadcast on Sunday, December 10th, Liberal Party communications director Scott Reid¹²² seemed to suggest that, left to their own devices, parents would spend the Conservative child benefit irresponsibly: “Don’t give people twenty-five bucks a [week] to blow on *beer and popcorn*,” Reid remarked. “Give them child care spaces that work.”

Reid’s comments understandably provoked an immediate backlash, forcing him to apologize one day later and prompting Prime Minister Martin to give the child benefit a partial endorsement. When questioned on Reid’s remarks by reporters, Martin responded, “There’s no doubt in my mind that parents are going to use [child benefit payments] for the benefit of their families. Let there be no doubt about that,” (“Liberal apologizes” 2005). Reid’s gaffe has since been widely identified as one of the major turning points in the campaign, as the ‘beer and popcorn’ slight cemented the public’s perception of the Liberals as arrogant, elitist, and out of touch.

Going in for the kill as the Liberals faltered, Harper foreshadowed the language that he would consistently use to frame his party’s approach to family policy. “I say there are already millions of child care experts in this country,” Harper told the media in a rebuke of Reid’s comments. “Their names are mom and dad and that’s who we’re going to work with,” (Taber 2006 found in Snow and Moffitt 2012, p. 282). This framing was highly effective as both a repudiation of the Liberal Party’s perceived air of superiority and a preemptive strike against the professional child care researchers and advocates he would later marginalize as prime minister.¹²³

¹²² Mr. Reid declined a request to be interviewed for this project.

Capitalizing on further unforced errors and a pervasive desire for change on the part of voters, Harper's Conservatives put an end to the Liberal Party's thirteen-year run in power. After winning 124 of 308 seats and improving his party's vote share by nearly seven percent, Harper returned to Ottawa in early February to lead a new Conservative minority government. Tellingly, one of Harper's first actions as prime minister was to cancel the Liberal Party's child care agreements. The new Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) was costed into the Harper government's inaugural budget and checks began to circulate in July.¹²⁴

While it would be virtually impossible to pinpoint the precise effect of the child care debate on the election's outcome, it's undeniable that it provided the campaign with one of its principal storylines. This was reflected in column inches as, over the forty-nine-day campaign period, child care was mentioned in fifty-three pieces in the right-leaning *National Post* and twenty-seven in the center-left *Globe and Mail* (Rinehart 2008, p. 5).¹²⁵ The election result was thus a vindication of the Conservative Party's unconventional stratagem to place child care at the forefront of the policy discussion. I accordingly explore how party insiders formulated this strategy in the following section.

¹²³ The Harper government made several enemies in the research community but was especially hostile to child care research and advocacy groups. During the Harper years, pro-child care groups lost access to funding through the Women's Program on the grounds that they engaged in partisan 'lobbying' activity that should not be subsidized by taxpayer money (Interviewee no. 18, 17 April 2017).

¹²⁴ The Harper government also cut part of the CCTB to help finance the UCCB (Battle et al. 2006, p. 1).

¹²⁵ The *Post* and *Globe*, respectively, are Canada's only two English-language national newspapers.

3.9. The Genesis of the Child Benefit

As with much of Harper's policy agenda, the origins of the UCCB can be traced back to the interim period of eighteen months between the 2004 and 2006 elections (see Paré and Berger 2008). The closer than expected 2004 vote was cause for optimism, but there was also a general agreement that Martin had managed to survive by raising the specter of Harper's hidden right-wing agenda. Party insiders understood that, if the Conservatives were to have a shot at emerging victorious from the next federal election, the party would have to present a moderate, but nevertheless clear, alternative to the Liberals (see Flanagan 2007, esp. chap. 7).

Child care was quickly identified as a potential soft spot for the Liberals as, despite the enthusiasm with which Martin and Dryden trumpeted their new framework, Conservative MPs found more lukewarm sentiments among their constituents. This ambivalence was especially marked in suburban and exurban settings, where the demand for regulated daycare spaces did not generally match the level that existed in the more densely-populated major cities. One interviewee, who was first elected to the House of Commons in 2004 to represent a riding in the suburbs of Ottawa, reflected: "My constituents were concerned that they would end up getting the worst of both worlds – having to pay taxes to subsidize daycare programs that they were not even planning to use," (Interviewee no. 1, 17 June 2016). Conservative strategists were especially attuned to these voices as the party's overarching strategy for the 2006 election was to tap into "soft conservative" attitudes among suburban voters—with medium

density communities in Southern and Eastern Ontario being an especially high priority (Interviewee no. 3, 15 November 2016).¹²⁶

The solution was to develop a child care strategy that acknowledged the reality of dual earner families and escalating daycare fees, yet nevertheless gave voters a semblance of choice over how to care for their children. Harper had initially favored a new, per child income tax deduction but was ultimately sold on the visibility of a universal child benefit (Flanagan 2007, p. 226). A monthly child care check was easy to explain to voters and, once it was received, could be directly traced back to the federal government (see Figure 3.3). This was in keeping with the party’s broader philosophy of crafting marquee policies that had “the virtue of being hands-on, personally identifiable, and good for consumers” (Ellis and Woolstencraft 2006, p. 72).¹²⁷ Internal party polling also found that the child benefit played well with a few unexpected niche demographics, such as single mothers. One party pollster told me, “The sample size was quite small, but we found that single mothers appreciated having real, tangible money that they could use to help with their short-term expenses,” (Interviewee no. 2, 8 November 2016).



Figure 3.3 – A standard UCCB check

¹²⁶ Marketing expert turned Conservative Party strategist Patrick Muttart is generally credited with developing the party’s voter targeting strategy in the run-up to the 2006 election (see Flanagan 2007, chap. 7; Paré and Berger). Muttart has since returned to the private sector and presently works as a corporate affairs director for tobacco giant Philip-Morris. He did not respond to a request to be interviewed for this project.

¹²⁷ Another exemplar of this philosophy was Harper’s decision to cut the national consumer sales tax, called the Goods and Services Tax (GST), by two percent.

3.10. Family Policy and the Harper Agenda

Once in government, the Harper Conservatives continued to utilize family policy innovation as a tool to engage key demographics, signal political virtues, and fill the news cycle. Three initiatives—pursued near the beginning, middle, and end, respectively, of the Conservative government’s lifespan—truly exemplified this strategy: Child Fitness/Art Tax Credits; The Muskoka Initiative on Maternal and Newborn Health; and, more controversially, spousal income splitting for tax purposes.

Children’s Fitness/Art Tax Credits

Three months into his tenure as prime minister, Harper set up an expert panel to consider a federal tax intervention to fight childhood obesity.¹²⁸ The panel reported back to the prime minister in October, calling for the creation of a new tax credit to help offset parental fees for qualifying physical activity programs (Leitch et al. 2006). The panel’s recommendations formed the basis of the Harper government’s subsequent Children’s Fitness Tax Credit (CFTC), introduced at the beginning of 2007.

The CFTC allowed parents of children aged fifteen and under to claim up to \$500 in eligible program enrollment and registration costs, amounting to tax savings of up to \$75 per child (Spence et al. 2010).¹²⁹ Uptake was strong from the outset as the tax credit was claimed by 1.3 million taxpayers in its first year and 1.5 million in 2008 (Reach 2012, p. 363)—

¹²⁸ The panel was chaired by pediatric surgeon Kellie Leitch. Dr. Leitch was later elected as a Conservative MP for the Southern Ontario riding of Simcoe-Grey.

¹²⁹ The creditable component of the CFTC, which reduced taxes owed by parents on a dollar-for-dollar basis, was calculated by multiplying total (per child) expenses incurred by the lowest marginal tax rate (\$500 * 15%). See Reach 2012, p. 363.

comprising over a quarter of eligible families.¹³⁰ In keeping with the successful 2006 campaign strategy, the CFTC provided a direct, tangible good to the suburban parents ('hockey dads', 'soccer moms') who were most aggressively courted by the party. The CFTC is notable as the first, and thus far only, child fitness related national income tax credit in the world (Sauder 2014, pp. 75-6). It has since been studied as a potential policy template for several jurisdictions (see Reacher 2012).

Following up on the success of the CFTC, Harper proposed a companion tax credit for music, art, and drama lessons in the fall of 2008 (Taber 2008). This idea was put on hold due to the ensuing global financial crisis, but the promised Children's Art Tax Credit (CATC) eventually materialized in the Conservatives' 2011 budget, allowing parents to claim an additional \$500 in program fees. At their height, the child activity tax credits cost the federal government a combined \$153 million in forsaken tax revenue (Goar 2015).

The CFTC and CATC made for good optics as they gave the prime minister and his caucus an opportunity to organize a near endless stream of photo opportunities at hockey rinks, community centers, and art studios.¹³¹ Hoping to generate similar streams of positive press, provincial governments rapidly began to introduce their own child tax credits.¹³² By the time Harper left government, six of Canada's ten provinces and one of its three northern territories had each implemented some combination of children's fitness and art tax credits (Sauder 2014,

¹³⁰ At this time, there were approximately 5.5 million Canadians aged fourteen and under (Statistics Canada 2007).

¹³¹ Prime Minister Harper made a sustained effort to make ice hockey central to his political brand, going so far as to write a non-fiction book on the sport's history while in office (see Scherer and McDermott 2011).

¹³² The province of Nova Scotia introduced a physical activity tax credit prior to the federal government (Sauder 2014, pp. 78-80).

p. 84). What's especially interesting about this pattern of diffusion is that such tax credits were introduced by Liberal, conservative, and NDP governments—representing an impressive cross-partisan consensus on their favorability (or at least their electoral upside). This despite research indicating that the credits were most commonly claimed by upper-income Canadians and had little to no influence on whether parents chose to enroll their children in extra-curricular activities (Spence et al. 2010).

Interestingly, the CFTC and CATC are both prime examples of the type of tax policies that Harper campaigned vigorously against in his former career with the National Citizen's Coalition (NCC), a prominent taxpayer advocacy group based in Toronto. Harper served as president of the NCC between 1998 and 2002 and, in this capacity, sought to shift Canadian public opinion in favor of broad-based tax relief, tax code simplification and other standard fiscal conservative agenda items. The CFTC, CATC, and other 'boutique' tax credits introduced by the Conservative government in fact drew sharp criticisms from several of Harper's former allies at right-leaning think tanks and advocacy groups (see Gollom 2015). One source who I spoke to, who served as a regional director for the likeminded Canadian Taxpayers Federation during Harper's time as NCC president, told me: "I was familiar enough with Harper's views to know that he's sold out his former principles," adding that boutique tax credits are "nothing more than a cheap and pointless way of being able to signal common virtues to a targeted group [and] fill space in the media cycle," (Interviewee no. 25, 28 May 2018).

Rebukes like this one signify that the Harper government's approach to family policy was driven primarily by electoral considerations and, if anything, represented a departure from the prime minister's established ideological convictions. Moreover, while nuclear suburban

families were the obvious target audience for the child tax credits, it would be a stretch to characterize these measures as narrowly ‘socially conservative’—noting, once again, the drive of provincial governments (of each partisan stripe) to emulate the federal tax credits. This reaffirms the broader thesis that the Harper Conservatives utilized family policy in an anomalous and at times counter-intuitive manner that defies conventional expectations of right party governance.

The Muskoka Initiative

One Harper-era project that is somewhat more difficult to pin down is the former prime minister’s championing of maternal and newborn health in the global arena. In a move that surprised many (see Caplan 2010), Harper utilized Canada’s turn in hosting the annual Group of Eight (G8) Summit in 2010 as a launching pad for what became the \$40 billion multilateral Muskoka Initiative on Maternal Newborn and Child Health (MI-MNCH). Although not falling within the purview of (domestic) family policy, MI-MNCH is nevertheless worth examining here because the initiative was crafted, in part, to appeal to a domestic political audience (see Brown 2018).

About a year-and-a-half prior to the event, Harper was approached by a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) hoping to persuade the prime minister to use the upcoming summit to spearhead a major global humanitarian venture (Vandenberg 2017). At

this point, Harper had just won his first re-election bid¹³³ but was looking to soften his “nasty brand” after a bruising, attack filled election campaign (Marland 2016, p. xiv).

The prime minister and his staff heard several pitches but were ultimately swayed to make maternal and child health the summit’s core theme. Advocates sold Harper on this position by pointing to the lack of global progress on United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) pertaining to child mortality and maternal health (MDGs 4 and 5, respectively). MDG 5 was, at the time, the worst performing indicator as maternal mortality rates had not improved appreciably since the early 1990s (Kirton et al. 2014). This was a source of significant anxiety in the global development community as the 2015 deadline for the fulfillment of the MDGs loomed.

According to a source who was a senior executive with the Canadian chapter of a leading global anti-poverty NGO at the time and, in this capacity, had multiple face-to-face interactions with the prime minister in the lead up to the G8 summit, Harper was converted by “the evidence-base we were able to provide in support of maternal and early childhood interventions, as well as the [relative] cost effectiveness of such interventions.” My source also observed Harper and his advisors in the PMO appreciated that a potential maternal and child health campaign lent itself to a straightforward policy narrative (‘saving women and children’) that could be “understood by soccer moms across the country,” (Interviewee no. 24, 14 May 2018).

¹³³ The Conservatives gained sixteen seats in the 2008 federal election but still fell a dozen short of the number needed to attain a parliamentary majority.

Three weeks after formally assuming the G8 Chair in January 2010, Prime Minister Harper indicated that “aid for mothers and children in poor countries” and “child and maternal health” would be the two major themes of the upcoming summit (Scofield 2010). Interestingly, the prime minister’s formal declaration came in the form of editorial published in the left-leaning *Toronto Star*, where he wrote:

As president of the G8 in 2010, Canada will champion a major initiative to improve the health of women and children in the world's poorest regions. Members of the G8 can make a tangible difference in maternal and child health and Canada will be making this the top priority in June. Far too many lives and unexplored futures have already been lost for want of relatively simple health-care solutions (Harper 2010).

Harper was able to obtain financial pledges from several of his fellow G8 heads-of-government in the months leading up to the June summit. At the summit itself, the parties announced a combined package of \$7.3 billion over five years to kick-start the MI-MNCH, with Canada providing roughly forty percent of this funding.¹³⁴ With the subsequent involvement of the UN and major civil society actors like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, a total of \$40 billion was raised in support of the initiative by the end of the year (Kirton et al. 2014, p. 194). This funding had an immediate and substantial effect on targeted populations as, in the four years that followed the 2010 summit, global child and maternal death rates declined at the fastest pace ever recorded (Kirton et al. 2014, p. 197).

Though a clear victory from a global development perspective, the MI-MNCH was largely overshadowed at home by the proxy debate over abortion that it triggered. The opposition Liberal Party immediately questioned why the plan lacked details on family planning

¹³⁴ Canada pledged \$2.85 billion over five years in support of the MI-MNCH

and insisted that funding for abortions be included in the final package (Kirton et al. 2014, p. 191). Liberal Foreign Affairs Critic Bob Rae later put forth an Opposition Motion in the House of Commons calling on the government to “include the full range of family planning, sexual, and reproductive health options, including contraception” in the initiative and, more provocatively, to “refrain from [globally] advancing the failed right-wing ideologies previously imposed by the George W. Bush administration in the United States,”¹³⁵ (“Ignatieff takes blame for motion defeat” 2010). Harper administration officials sought to dodge this issue for as long as possible but, with exactly two months to go before the summit was scheduled to begin, then Minister of Development Bev Oda announced that the initiative would not provide funding for abortion under any circumstances (“No Abortion in Canada’s G8 Maternal Health Plan” 2010).

The chain of events led some observers to suspect that Harper had purposefully baited the opposition into raising the issue of funding for abortions. The premise here is that, given the political untenability of reopening the abortion debate domestically, Harper instead chose to signal his common virtues with the pro-life segment of his base through the MI-MNCH. For instance, Jex (2017, p. 45) writes: “[I]n order to satisfy the socially conservative demands of his evangelical constituency... Harper had to move the [abortion] debate overseas,” (see also: Tiessen 2015).

However, such claims likely overstate the political acumen of Prime Minister Harper. “The notion that Harper used Muskoka as some sort of Machiavellian ploy is totally bogus,” stated one source who was a key player in the coalition of NGOs attempting to sway Harper on

¹³⁵ A reference to the Bush (II) administration’s policy of restricting public funding to foreign NGOs that perform or advocate abortion.

maternal and child health; noting that the coalition had decided early in the consultation process to keep abortion services out of the discussion (Interviewee no. 24, 14 May 2018). This narrative is also rejected by the University of Toronto based G8 Research Group, the entity that has produced the most detailed and comprehensive study to date of the political process leading to MI-MNCH (Kirton et al. 2014, p. 191).

Although somewhat tangential to the rest of the chapter's focus on domestic family policy, the MI-MNCH is nevertheless significant as an exemplar of Stephen Harper's sustained strategy of leveraging humanitarian issues that vulnerable populations (an issue area that has historically favored progressive actors) to broaden his political appeal. By choosing to devote substantial political capital to a meaningful global humanitarian initiative targeting vulnerable women and children abroad, Harper continued to tread a path that baffled observers and challenged existing perspectives on the behavior of right-of-center political leaders.

Income Splitting

Harper appeared to tack closer to his base in the lead up to the fall 2015 federal election when he moved on a long-delayed promise to initiate spousal income splitting for married couples with children. A favored policy of the former Reform Party/Canadian Alliance—who held that Canada's individualized income tax structure discriminated against families where one parent stays at home—income splitting was one of just a few social conservative friendly proposals to be included in the first policy declaration of the post-amalgamation Conservative Party of Canada (2005, p. 8). However, the global financial crisis that began two years into the Harper mandate moved the prime minister to delay the introduction of income splitting until such time as the federal budget returned to a surplus position (Lahey 2017, p. 51).

The appropriate economic conditions for income splitting materialized around a year prior to the federal election anticipated for the fall of 2015. Although long a core party family policy plank, income splitting provoked an unexpected degree of public bickering within the usually 'on-message' Conservative Party ranks.

The first sign of trouble appeared in February 2014, when then Finance Minister Jim Flaherty appeared at a press conference promoting that year's federal budget. As the budget indicated that the government was headed for a surplus in 2015, Flaherty was asked by reporters about the party's income splitting promise. Flaherty answered candidly: "I'm not sure that overall [income splitting] benefits our society," noting that "[i]t benefits some parts of the Canadian population a lot and other parts... virtually not at all." Flaherty concluded that the proposal needed a "long, hard analytical look," (Curry and Wingrove 2014).

Although Flaherty tragically passed away just two months later, without having an opportunity to fully clarify his position, his comments nevertheless exposed a rift over the policy between fiscal and social conservatives in the party caucus. Slated to cost the federal government \$2.2 billion per year in foregone tax revenue and expected to benefit just fifteen percent of Canadian households—with high income single-earner families gaining the most (Scholz and Shaw 2015)—income splitting presented questionable optics going into the upcoming federal election campaign. The infighting ultimately led to the defection of a Toronto-area MP, Eve Adams, who cited the prime minister's insistence of moving forward with income splitting as part of her rationale for crossing the floor in early 2015 to join the opposition Liberal Party (O'Malley 2015).

The backlash against income splitting vexed party strategists, who scrambled to find a compromise. As one interviewee, who worked as a senior policy advisor to the prime minister at the time, explained: “Income splitting was a policy initiative that was grassroots driven [but became] a point of contention internally due to its regressive aspects.” She added, “We did our best to try to smooth out some of its flaws,” referring to the government’s concession of capping the maximum benefit to families at \$2,000 (Interviewee no. 23, 4 May 2018). The party also moved to increase universal child benefit payouts (discussed further in the next section), so as to be able to credibly campaign on “helping one-hundred percent of parents with children” (Interviewee no. 1, 17 June 2016). The income splitting episode nevertheless underscored the inherent fragility of Harper’s ‘big blue tent’ and showed just how politically sensitive of a domain family policy can be for modern conservative political coalitions.

The 2015 Campaign: Going ‘All-in’ on the Child Benefit

Facing his toughest challenge yet due to voter fatigue, scandals, and a revitalized opposition, Harper dipped into his successful 2006 playbook at the outset of the 2015 campaign—placing the child benefit once again at the center of the policy discussion. In fact, the prime minister took the unusual step on the eve of the campaign of circulating a confidential letter urging Conservative MPs to emphasize recent UCCB enhancements to their constituents (see Figure 3.4).



PRIME MINISTER · PREMIER MINISTRE

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Colleagues,

Our Government understands that moms and dads work hard to raise their children and take care of their families. We also know that parents play the most important role in the development and care of their children.

Our Conservative Government has always stood up for the financial interests of middle class families. Every day, parents make tough decisions to balance their own chequebook and they expect their government to do the same. They understand that budgets do not balance themselves. That is why our Conservative Government is continuing to make life more affordable for families in Canada, while still balancing our own budget.

Tomorrow marks a historic day in our effort to help families. Tomorrow, almost four million families will receive a lump-sum payment from the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB). As you know, last fall we increased the Universal Child Care Benefit for every child under 6 to almost \$2,000 per year. We also expanded the Universal Child Care Benefit to include, for the first time, a \$720 benefit annually for children aged 6 through 17.

While these new amounts took effect on January 1, 2015, parents continued to receive the old amounts for the first 6 months of 2015. Tomorrow, parents will receive a retroactive lump-sum payment for the difference, for a total of nearly \$3 billion being directly deposited into the bank accounts of Canadians. This is the single biggest one-time direct payment in Canadian history. It means families will receive payments of about \$520 for each child under 6 and \$420 for each child 6 through 17. Moving forward, parents will continue to receive the full amount of the increased Universal Child Care Benefit every month.

Our enhanced UCCB will benefit almost 4 million families – every family in Canada with children and double the number of families that previously received the UCCB. The enhanced UCCB is in addition to our recent doubling of the Children's Fitness Tax Credit, and our Family Tax Cut. The Family Tax Cut allows couples with children under 18 to split their income and reduce their tax burden by as much as \$2,000.

Combined with other actions taken by our Conservative Government since 2006, a typical family of four can receive up to \$6,600 in tax relief and benefits in 2015.

Figure 3.4 – Confidential Letter sent from Harper to Conservative caucus, 20 July 2015.

Starting in July of 2015 and compensating families retroactively from January of that year, the UCCB expansion boosted payouts to \$160 per month for each child under six and offered a new monthly stipend of \$60 for each dependent aged between six and seventeen. The UCCB boost was budgeted to cost four billion dollars per year, bringing total annual federal spending on children benefits to eighteen billion (1% of GDP) (Department of Finance Canada 2015, Table 5.2.6). This reflected an aggregate increase of over sixty percent in children's benefit spending under Harper's watch (Malanik 2016, p. 6; see Figure 3.5).

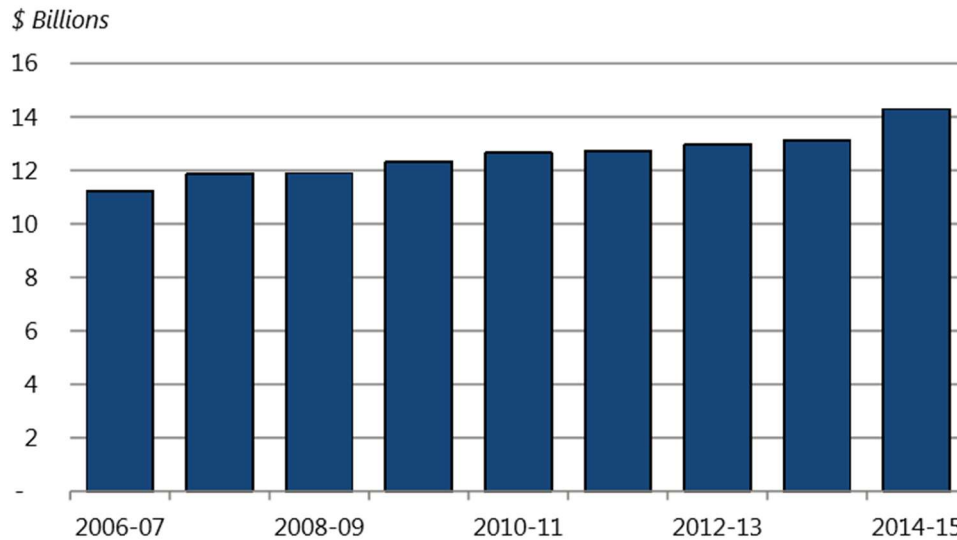


Figure 3.5 – Children’s benefit expenditures under the Harper government. (Malanik 2016, p. 6)

Analysts warned that, coming on the heels of the \$2.2 billion income splitting pledge, the new child benefit would obliterate the federal government’s scheduled surplus (Fekete 2015a). The UCCB announcement nonetheless gave the Conservatives a short-term poll bump and put the opposition parties on the defensive (West 2015).

Recognizing that the tide had turned irreversibly towards direct payments to families, the Liberal Party, now led by Justin Trudeau, upped the ante—proposing its own (more costly and progressive) child benefit. Trudeau’s means-tested, tax-free Canada Child Benefit (CCB) would deliver monthly payments to parents on a sliding scale, providing as much as \$533.33 per month for each child under six and \$450 per month for dependents between six and seventeen (“Canada Child Benefit (CCB) Payment Amounts” 2018).¹³⁶ This comprised a four billion dollar increase over the plan proposed by Harper, which would bring total federal spending on child

¹³⁶ Households earning \$30,000 per year or less are eligible for the maximum benefit. Payouts decrease in proportion to income and reach zero at a household income of around \$190,000 per year (“Child and family benefits calculator” 2016).

benefits to twenty-two billion dollars (1.3% of GDP) (Fekete 2015b)—marking a dramatic reorientation for a party that once dismissed such payments as ‘beer and popcorn’ money.

NDP leader and Leader of the Official Opposition Thomas Mulcair promised to maintain the UCCB at its increased payouts while, at the same time, pledging to implement a five billion dollar per year national framework for fifteen dollar a day child care—all while consistently running balanced budgets (Dehaas 2015). Mulcair’s budget math was widely questioned by experts (see Raj 2015) and his daycare plank did little to drum up enthusiasm for a campaign that many viewed as a disappointment.¹³⁷ Mulcair’s cause was further hindered by press coverage that emphasized the negative aspects of Québec’s daycare system (see Sec. 3.6).

The fall 2015 campaign concluded with a surprising majority government victory for the third-party Liberals; who were able to exploit voter complacency with Harper, reverse the NDP’s previous gains in Québec, and capitalize on their new leader’s camera-friendly image. Trudeau delivered on the CCB in his first budget—financing the program, in part, by scrapping the Conservative UCCB, income splitting, and child activity tax credit programs.¹³⁸ Legitimately one of the most significant humanitarian measures in Canada’s history, the CCB has thus far helped lift around 300,000 children out of poverty. The government plans to index the benefit to inflation during the summer of 2018, which will help sustain this impact (“Backgrounder: Strengthening the Canada Child Benefit” 2018).

¹³⁷ the 2015 federal election was the first in history where the NDP was portrayed, from the outset, as a legitimate contender to form government. The party instead wound up losing fifty-one seats, 10.9% of the popular vote and its status as the Official Opposition.

¹³⁸ The CCB also replaced the pre-existing Canada Child Tax Benefit and National Child Benefit

Postscript

While Harper's UCCB-centered strategy was not as effective this time around as it had been in 2006, the 2015 campaign nevertheless had substantial and quite possibly irreversible effects for the trajectory of Canadian family policy. In his willingness to devote as much as one percent of Canada's GDP to child benefit programs, Harper made it politically impossible for either of the opposition parties to repurpose this spending to facilitate the creation of more daycare spaces. Doing so would literally entail taking money out of the hands of millions of Canadian parents. With about 1.3 percent of the country's GDP now devoted to the Trudeau government's CCB—and the program not going anywhere anytime soon—there is no longer sufficient space in the federal budget to sustain any serious national framework supporting universal child care. Even using the conservative figure of nine thousand dollars per child, the rough amount that Québec spends each year to sustain its daycare program (Eisen and Geloso 2017, p. 1), a national program subsidizing spaces for half of all children aged five and under would cost the federal government nearly ten billion dollars per year (Friendly et al. 2018, Table 9). Accordingly, for the foreseeable future, all substantial action on child care will have to be pursued at the provincial level.

3.11. Conclusion and Key Takeaways

If the preceding discussion of evolution of family policy in the Canada over the past century has one clear takeaway, it is that the trajectory of policy has been shaped to the greatest degree by the character of concomitant policy discourses. It is no coincidence that universal daycare came closest to becoming a reality when the national discourse involved the

status of women in Canada and the question of how to reduce the economic and cultural barriers that precluded women from participating fully in society. After the influence of the organized women's movement faded, progressives struggled to construct a new narrative that would justify substantial federal involvement in the provision of child care. The effort to shine a light on the growing problem of child poverty in the 1990s, while commendable, lent itself to means-tested measures and targeted casework interventions (versus universal programs that would also benefit families living above the poverty line). Moreover, the effort to emphasize the long-term developmental benefits of 'early childhood education' in the early 2000s now appears short sighted as data indicating the opposite comes out of the country's sole comprehensive political program. Finally, with the partial exception of Québec at various points in its history, Canada's political culture appears antithetical to demographic philosophy of pronatalism. As such, the country's relatively low birth rate (1.6bpw) is unlikely to be constructed as a political crisis, so long as native-born Canadians continue to hold to hold their historically sunny disposition toward immigration.

After being gifted the 'beer and popcorn' soundbite from the Liberals, Stephen Harper steadily remade Canada's family policy landscape to lock-in his preference for direct payments to parents over using federal funds and leadership to increase access to regulated child care. Harper's subsequent family policy maneuvers reflected both innovative efforts to broaden his base of political support and, collectively, a substantial reorientation of the policy trajectory.

CHAPTER 4: THE POLITICS OF FAMILY POLICY IN GERMANY *FROM 'CRISIS' TO OPPORTUNITY*

As the archetypal conservative (or Bismarckian) welfare state, Germany has historically been characterized by social policies that perpetuate a traditionalist 'male breadwinner, female caregiver' model of the nuclear family and assume a male industrial worker centered job environment. However, following the unification process of the early 1990s and an ensuing unemployment crisis that delegitimized the established paradigm of economic governance (see Esping-Andersen 1996), Germany has embarked on a radical transformation of welfare state institutions, experimenting with both neoliberal and collectivistic policy solutions during this timeframe (Hinrichs 2010).

Several of the most dramatic of these changes have been initiated in the domain of family policy. Responding to widespread anxieties about an aging population (Henniger et al. 2008, stubbornly low birth rates (Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen 2011), and middling educational outcomes (Waldow 2009), German policymakers have forged a broad consensus on the favorability of the "Nordic model" of dual earner and early childhood education supporting family policies. This has given way to, over the past decade, a dramatic overhaul of the preexisting policy paradigm; highlighted by a new system of income-related, medium-length parental leave benefits (which explicitly endorses a dual carer model of parenting) and

substantial investments towards universalizing access to center-based daycare for children aged one and older. The new focus on family policy also reflects the increased participation of women in the policymaking process, especially since the election of Angela Merkel as Germany's first female chancellor (see von Wahl 2011; Morgan 2013). As women (traditionally expected to play the primary caregiving role in child rearing) generally face the most severe tradeoffs between family and career aspirations, it follows that family policy (the primary mechanism that policymakers can utilize to moderate such tradeoffs) would become a more immediate priority as women gain greater influence over the policy agenda (see: Atchison and Down 2010; Morgan 2013).

Germany's recent family policy reforms have been subject to a great deal of academic inquiry, with scholars especially fixated on the anomaly that the reform agenda has been led (or at least accelerated) by the Christian Democrats, historically the primary defender of the male breadwinner family (see, e.g.: Fleckenstein 2011; Morgan 2013; von Wahl 2008, 2011). However, less attention has been paid to the linkages between family policy and Germany's longstanding struggles with the social and economic incorporation of various migrant communities, which I argue here is a neglected consideration that helps to explain why the trajectory of family policy has shifted so dramatically and with such a broad, cross-partisan base of support. The family policy – migration nexus was particularly evident in the debate over the proposed care allowance (*Betreuungsgeld*) for the stay-at-home parents of children between the ages of one and three.

This chapter follows the same basic structure of the preceding one, tracing the general history of German family policy to the Merkel premiership and demonstrating that the

prevailing opportunity structure made it most politically expedient for the Christian Democrats to coopt the family policy of the rival Social Democrats. This was central to an overarching rebranding process designed to make the party more palatable to key electoral constituencies—including, but not limited to, younger women. The Christian Democrats resembled the Conservative Party of Canada in this respect. However, unlike Harper’s Conservatives, Merkel’s Christian Democrats were motivated by political circumstances to embrace a more universalistic set of reforms. The chapter is informed primarily by a broad reading of the secondary literature, party manifestos, coalition treaties, and other political documents. It also draws from a more systematic content analysis of coverage from two of Germany’s leading daily newspapers (see Chapter 5).

4.1. Early History

Germany is a widely recognized pioneer in social insurance, with national social policies dating back to the early 1880s (Hinrichs 2010, p. 47). Yet it would be fair to place the genesis of modern (West) German family policy at the early 1950s, when the Allied Powers that had occupied the country since the end of World War II handed control over to domestic authorities. Konrad Adenauer, West Germany’s first chancellor, established a federal Ministry of Family Affairs in 1953 to oversee the development of the new regime’s family policy (Mätzke and Ostner 2010c, p.137). The political dominance, at the federal level, of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) during this critical juncture¹³⁹ meant that

¹³⁹ The CDU/CSU governed continuously between 1949 and 1969.

West Germany's first generation of family policies served to prop up the archetypal male-breadwinner family model and perpetuate an overarching culture of familialism.

This logic was reflected most directly in the structure of the country's first family allowance (Kindergeld), created in 1954. The allowance was made available, on a per child basis, to families with three or more children (Haanes-Olsen 1972, p. 20). The Kindergeld was initially paid out at a flat rate of 40 Deutsche Marks (DM) per month (around five percent of the average monthly manufacturing wage) for each child from the third onward but was later converted to an escalating bonus—paying 50, 60, and 70DM for the third, fourth, and fifth (and each subsequent) child, respectively. The Kindergeld was paid for by private employers for the first decade of its existence but the federal government took on this burden in 1964 (Hanes-Olsen 1972, p. 22).

Although similar in form to the pronatalist family allowance found in Québec during the late 1980s and early-to-mid 1990s, the German allowance was itself designed to promote social solidarity and interdependence. The Kindergeld was established on the premise that (with employers doing their part by paying fair wages) the typical male industrial worker ought to earn a sufficient income to support a conventional four-member family—consisting of a husband, wife, and two children. As such, the rationale of having the family allowances only kick in with the birth of the third child was that there existed a social imperative for families with two (or fewer) children to support larger families financially (Mätzke and Ostner 2010c, p. 140). The governing CDU/CSU later showed some sensitivity to the problem of socio-economic

inequality by extending a reduced benefit of 25DM per month to the second child of low-income families in 1961 (Hanes-Olsen 1972, p. 22).¹⁴⁰

Per the foundational Christian-democratic ‘subsidiarity principle’,¹⁴¹ direct services to families were decentralized to the greatest degree possible and, in practice, left largely to religious authorities.¹⁴² This meant a near total absence of consideration for families that deviated from the conventional nuclear structure. For instance, public daycare was virtually non-existent and school-days typically ended in the early afternoon—with few after-school programs to keep the children of employed parents occupied until the end of a standard workday (Augustin-Dittmann 2010).

However, West Germany’s pre-unification family policy paradigm was somewhat more contested than is often portrayed. At various points in time, actors sought to challenge the primacy of male breadwinner sustaining social institutions (Mätzke and Ostner 2010c). Such contestations were most visible through the 1970s and early 1980s, when Social Democratic Party (SPD) dominated the chancellorship and the Green Party emerged as a conduit for postmaterialist values. These challenges, while not strong enough to alter the general policy trajectory, nevertheless gave way to some non-trivial, if incremental, changes. For instance, the Kindergeld was made available to first-born children (irrespective of parental income) in 1975; a reform that lessened the expectation that employers would deliver a “family wage”. Four years

¹⁴⁰ This part of the program was financed solely by the federal government.

¹⁴¹ A cornerstone of Catholic social thought, the ‘subsidiarity principle’ holds that social matters should be dealt with at a local level, and without the intervention of the central government, whenever possible.

¹⁴² Still fresh memories of Germany’s recent experience with totalitarianism led to a common sentiment of “privatism” among the German population, leading citizens to aggressively reject any intrusion of the state into the ‘private sphere’ of family life (Joosten 1990 found in Mätzke and Ostner 2010c).

later, in 1979, the SPD-Free Democrat government introduced a modest maternity leave benefit. The benefit entitled working mothers to a paid leave-of-absence of up to six months following childbirth, with a maximum payout of 750DM¹⁴³ per month (Geisler and Kreyenfeld 2012, p. 4).

Just as importantly, this period was characterized by a perceptible change in the discourse surrounding family policy as prevailing norms relating to marriage and gender roles began to soften (Mätzke and Ostner 2010c, p. 141). This discursive shift even extended to the CDU/CSU—historically a champion of the traditional family. By the mid-1980s the Christian Democrats (at this point under the leadership of modernizer Helmut Kohl) adopted the rhetoric of parental “choice” (not unlike the Harper government in Canada) and proposed a corresponding “sequential” model of family policy accommodative of part-time employment of mothers with school-aged children (Fleckenstein 2011, p. 549-50; Mätzke and Ostner 2010c, p. 144). The cornerstone of this philosophy was a set of alterations to parental leave and parental benefits introduced in 1986. The new system entitled working mothers to stay at home for up to ten months after childbirth¹⁴⁴ but also extended the flat-rate benefit (600 DM for each of the first six months)¹⁴⁵ to non-working mothers (Ondrich et al. 2002, pp. 7-8). The 1986 reforms also, for the first time in the country’s history, established a right to paternity leave, entitling new fathers to take up to nine months off work—although few chose to exercise this right

¹⁴³ The Deutsche Mark to US Dollar exchange rate was around 2:1 at the time (Marcuse 2005).

¹⁴⁴ The maternity leave period was increased several times, ultimately reaching three years (with eighteen compensated months) in 1992 (Ondrich et al. 2002, p. 4).

¹⁴⁵ From the seventh month onward, benefits were calculated on a sliding scale based on family income and phased out for higher income households (Ondrich et al. 2002, p. 8).

(Ejrnæs and Kunze 2013, p. 860). For working parents, time spent on care leave would also count toward future old age insurance benefits (Seeleib-Kaiser 2002, p. 33). One objective of these reforms was to "place family and paid work on an equal footing" by giving stay-at-home caregivers monetary compensation (Jurczyk et al. 2004, p. 716).¹⁴⁶

Thus, while the major challenges to the status quo would come following unification (discussed in the next section) West Germany had, by this point, already taken some small but collectively meaningful steps away from the male breadwinner model. In fact, at the time of unification, roughly half of all West German married couples could be classified broadly as dual earner, with wives mostly taking up part time work (Rosenfeld et al. 2004, p. 110).

4.2. Unification

Over the four decades between the post-World War II partition of Germany and the fall of the Berlin Wall, East and West Germany had each adapted radically different political, economic, and social institutions. One of the most dramatic differences between the two Germanies concerned the prevalence of women in each country's domestic labor force. While West Germany, as discussed above, was a quintessential male-breadwinner economy with jobs for women concentrated in the part-time labor pool, East Germany boasted a near parity of women and men who were active in the labor force (Rosenfeld et al. 2004, p. 111).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Recipients of parental leave benefits were authorized to work part time for a maximum of nineteen hours per week (Jurczyk et al 2004, p. 716).

¹⁴⁷ Part-time employment was still more prevalent among women than men in East Germany. By 1989, 27% of employed women worked part-time jobs (versus just 2% of employed men) (Rosenfeld et al. 2004, p. 114).

With women much more heavily engaged in the formal economy, East Germany unsurprisingly developed a more comprehensive set of employment-supporting family policies. Pivotal, center-based child care for infants, toddlers, and even older children was culturally accepted and made widely available by the state.¹⁴⁸ In fact, a solid majority of East German children aged eleven and younger were enrolled in child care facilities at the time of unification (Ahnert and Lamb 2001, p. 1843). East Germany's expansive system of nursery schools, kindergartens, and after-school programs was available to virtually all parents, who paid only nominal fees. Daily hours of operation ran from 6am to 6pm, which comfortably accommodated most standard work schedules (Ahnert and Lamb 2001, p. 1846).¹⁴⁹

With unification came the monumental task of attempting to harmonize the highly disparate policies of the two German republics. The economically superior West Germany was ultimately able to project most of its core political institutions and policies onto its former neighbor but, in one notable concession to the East, the parties agreed to a constitutional guarantee of part-time child care for all children between the ages of three and six (Bredtmann et al. 2009, p. 7).¹⁵⁰ Although symbolically meaningful, the child care guarantee (which came into effect in 1996) was something of an empty gesture—over eighty percent of three to six-year-olds in the West and virtually all children within this age range in the East were already

¹⁴⁸ East German parents who chose to raise their children exclusively at home were often criticized for their “petit bourgeois” aspirations (Ahnert and Lamb 2001, p. 1844).

¹⁴⁹ Due to its unique geographical position, West Berlin adapted several aspects of the Eastern model of child care. For instance, nearly 20% of West Berliner children under the age of three attended child care facilities at the time of unification (versus 2% in the country as a whole). After-school programs were also more widely available in West Berlin (Ahnert and Lamb 2001, pp. 1847-8).

¹⁵⁰ The child care promise was, in part, a concession to East Germany in exchange for the continuation of West Germany's more restrictive abortion policies in the unified republic (Goldberg 1995, p. 541).

enrolled in a formal child care program at the time of unification (Ahnert and Lamb 2001, p. 1846).¹⁵¹ The new constitutional amendment did nothing to address the real problem of a lack of *full-time* child care and neglected the prevailing gap in provisions for children under the age of three.

Of greater significance to the long-run trajectory of family policy (and the German welfare state as a whole) was the severe jobs crisis that was set off by unification. The euphoria surrounding the long-awaited reunion of East and West Germany had blinded policymakers to the logistical challenges that would come with merger of two vastly different economies, particularly within the respective domains of monetary policy and wage-setting (see Lindlar and Scheremet 1998). This led to a chaotic post-unification period in which millions of workers were displaced. Although concentrated in the former East Germany, which lost over a third of its preexisting jobs within two years (Lindlar and Scheremet 1998, p. 5), the job losses placed a severe strain on [West] Germany's now unified system of social insurance—already under stress prior to unification (see Esping-Andersen 1996).¹⁵² Public finances were further squeezed by the annual subsidies that the former West Germany was now obligated to pay the East, which comprised an average of seven percent of its total GDP per year (Lindlar and Scheremet 1998, p. 1).

After a period of impasse policy elites ultimately came to the realization, by around the middle of the decade, that major structural reforms would be necessary to salvage the national

¹⁵¹ The concept of early childhood education has a long history in Germany, rooted primarily in the research of pedagogue Friedrich Fröbel (1782 – 1852).

¹⁵² The Unification Treaty specified that West Germany's social insurance programs would be made available to citizens of the former East Germany (Seeleib-Kaiser 2002, p. 29).

economy. Above all, it was understood that Germany's male breadwinner supporting social insurance regime would need to be dramatically restructured. The system, which was designed to enable male wage earners to continue to support their families through periods of temporary and longer-term unemployment (i.e.: sickness, disability, layoffs), placed a major financial burden on employers, who per the longstanding social contract matched worker contributions to social insurance schemes on a fifty-fifty basis (Hinrichs 2010, p. 48). The model also created problematic incentives within the labor market as displaced workers faced little pressure to find new jobs right away (Berthold and Fehn 2002, p. 14). Accordingly, governments led by both major parties instituted a series of controversial measures designed to activate able-bodied workers and pare down "non-wage labor costs to employers" (Hinrichs pp. 46-7).

However, while acknowledging the need for greater competitiveness in the economic realm, both major parties maintained the normative conviction that the state ought to play a substantial role in protecting wage earners and their families from social risks. Accordingly, an effort was made to offset retrenchment measures implemented in the labor market during the 1990s and early 2000s with more generous direct subsidies to families. Calling this shift a "dual transformation" of the German welfare state, Seeleib-Kaiser (2002, p. 35) observed, "Increasingly, support for the family through public policies has become the 'new' normative reference point for [German] social policy, whereas in the past it was primarily related to the risks of the wage earner."

4.3. The Red-Green Coalition (1998 – 2002)

Despite the reorientation of the German welfare state observed by Seeleib-Kaiser, one area where Germany continued to lag was in the provision of institutional child care services for children under the age of three. In fact, by the time the Red-Green government led by Gerhard Schröder came to power in 1998, just seven percent of under threes had a place in a child care facility. The enrollment rate was less than three percent in the former West Germany (Seeleib-Kaiser 2002, p. 34).

The Red-Green coalition remained focused on attempting to roll-back the ongoing unemployment crisis through its first term, but child care appeared on the political agenda as the government's first reelection campaign approached in 2002.¹⁵³ In their pre-election coalition treaty, the SPD and Greens promised to introduce 'sufficient' child care infrastructure, covering at least twenty percent of children under the age of three by 2010 (Jüttner et al 2011, p. 97). Child care was subsequently one of the defining issues of the 2002 campaign (Rüling 2010, p. 162) as Edmund Stoiber, the Bavaria-based chancellor candidate for the Christian Democrats,¹⁵⁴ countered with a promise to quadruple the existing child benefit, bringing it to 600 euros per month for each child under three years of age ("Giant Steps" 2002).

Despite a still anemic economy and internal discord, the Red-Greens managed to retain a narrow majority in the Bundestag, with the CDU only improving its standing by a disappointing three seats. Stoiber's child benefit pledge was viewed in retrospect as a

¹⁵³ The SPD-Green coalition made modest enhancements to parental leave and child tax credit programs during its first administration (Fleckenstein 2011, p. 551).

¹⁵⁴ In an unusual move, the party chose to run CSU chair Stoiber as its chancellor candidate instead of then CDU chair Angela Merkel.

miscalculation that reinforced his image as a hardline traditionalist, thus perpetuating the CDU/CSU's problematic trend of alienating women and young urbanites (Fleckenstein 2011, p. 557-8).

Following the 2002 election, veteran SPD legislator Renate Schmidt inherited the Family Affairs portfolio. Schmidt immediately commissioned multiple scientific studies of Germany's extant child care regime and potential directions for future reform (Rüling 2010, p. 169). On the basis of this research—which presented an evidence base supporting the expansion of child care services, citing potential upsides for child development and long-run population stability—Schmidt was able to get a substantial reform package through the Bundestag by the end of 2004. The act, titled the Day Care Cost Sharing Law¹⁵⁵, legislated that 1.5 billion euros saved annually by the German Länder due to recent labor market reforms be reinvested in child care for children under three (Jüttner et al 2011, p. 98)¹⁵⁶. In proposing a direct transfer of public funds from (passive) labor market policies to family policy, the Day Care Cost Sharing Law was a clear continuation of the “dual transformation” of the German welfare state identified by Seeleib-Kaiser (2002). The Law set a target of 230,000 new spaces by 2010, which would serve roughly twenty percent of the target population (39% in the East and 17% in the West) (Rüling 2010, p. 161).

In addition to her successful efforts to increase the supply of child care spaces, Schmidt made the important discursive contribution of introducing the concept of ‘sustainability’ to

¹⁵⁵ Tagesbetreuungskostenbeteiligungsgesetz.

¹⁵⁶ Over two-thirds of Germany's child care facilities are run by either local councils (33%) or churches (35%) (Bird 2016, p. 84).

frame the proposed reforms (see Ahrens 2010). Specifically, Schmidt drew from analytical research of family policies in Germany and elsewhere to draw a causal link between her modernization agenda and the intergenerational sustainability of the German welfare state.¹⁵⁷ Pivotaly, this gave her a depoliticized, evidence-based angle from which to address the country's low domestic birth rate—heretofore a sensitive topic for obvious historical reasons relating to the climate of hypernatalism (within white, Christian families) that prevailed during the Nazi years. Schmidt's "sustainable family policy" agenda even included a formal medium-term birth rate target of 1.7 births per woman, a gesture which would have been unimaginable just a few years earlier (Rüling 2010, p. 171).

4.4. Family Policy and the CDU's Rebranding

Notwithstanding the well-received child care reforms crafted by Minister Schmidt, Gerhard Schröder's Red-Green coalition went into yet another election campaign as the underdog—having failed to turn around the national economy and alienating much of its progressive base with cuts to unemployment assistance. A disastrous showing for Schröder's SPD in spring 2005 elections held in traditional party stronghold North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany's most populous Land) motivated the chancellor to schedule a surprise early election for that fall, claiming that his coalition needed a new mandate to restore its credibility (Hawley 2005).

¹⁵⁷ Schmidt also utilized the results of the first cross national Program for the International Student Assessment (PISA) study (published in 2001)—which placed Germany outside of the top twenty in math, science, and reading—to advocate for greater investments early childhood education ("Making Germany Child-Friendlier" 2005). The PISA report found that the German school system was especially ineffective for children from disadvantaged social backgrounds (Bird 2016, p. 83).

This time, Schröder faced off against CDU Chair Angela Merkel. Merkel, who had been active in CDU politics since unification, was something of an anomaly as a Protestant, East German woman in a party historically dominated by Catholic, West German men.¹⁵⁸ She had nevertheless steadily built a reputation among her co-partisans as a capable (if less than dynamic) party manager and electoral organizer (Williarty 2010, pp. 171-2). At the time of Chancellor Schröder's unexpected election call, Merkel held the posts of CDU party chair and leader of the joint CDU/CSU parliamentary caucus, making her the logical choice to stand as the bloc's candidate for chancellor. This marked the first time in history that either major party had nominated a woman for the position.

Merkel's CDU/CSU alliance headed into the campaign with a commanding lead over the SPD in the public opinion polls, but the race tightened considerably as the mid-September election date loomed closer. In contrast to her party's previous chancellor candidate, Edmund Stoiber, Merkel was conspicuously tight-lipped on family policy. Moreover, the CDU/CSU electoral manifesto took no position on either child care or family leave (Fleckenstein 2011, p. 558).¹⁵⁹ The CDU/CSU ultimately won a narrow plurality of both seats (by four) and the popular vote (by less than one percent) but fell well short of attaining the requisite number of seats necessary to form a majority coalition with its favored partner (The Free Democrat Party [FDP]).

¹⁵⁸ Williarty (2010, p. 166-7) points out that Merkel's 'triple outsider' status arguably helped her in the early going of her political career as, in the period immediately following unification, the Christian Democrats made a concerted effort to place members of demographics that were historically underrepresented within the party into "positions that were at least symbolically important."

¹⁵⁹ Merkel dropped Stoiber's family allowance proposal in favor of new family tax benefits (Fleckenstein 2011, p. 558).

With no other viable options available (outside of running a new election), the CDU/CSU and SPD looked to form a Grand Coalition government. Following nearly a month of negotiations, the parties came to terms on a coalition agreement that would make Merkel the country's new chancellor. The CDU/CSU – SPD coalition treaty of 2005 notably endorsed the latter's Day Care Cost Sharing Law and proposed (unspecified) sanctions for Länder that failed to expand child care capacity at a fast-enough pace (Rüling 2010, p. 161). The document also cited child care enrollment as an important tool for "strengthening [the] intercultural skills" of "migrant children" (*Working together for Germany* 2005, p. 114).

Enter Ursula von der Leyen

Somewhat unexpectedly given the coalition treaty's endorsement of the SPD's child care strategy, Merkel assigned the Family Affairs portfolio to physician Ursula von der Leyen, a high-profile CDU deputy representing Lower Saxony. Von der Leyen had substantial appeal to the party base as a married mother of seven and a scion of one of the country's leading Christian Democrat dynasties.¹⁶⁰ Notwithstanding this pedigree, she surprised many by accelerating her predecessor's efforts to modernize German family policy—drawing substantial attention to herself in the process.

Von der Leyen's first major project at Family Affairs was an effort to make the country's parental leave system better-suited to women who worked full-time.¹⁶¹ The predecessor Red-

¹⁶⁰ Von der Leyen's father, Ernst Albrecht, served as prime minister of Lower Saxony from 1976 to 1990.

¹⁶¹ The idea of adopting a Swedish-style wage-related system of parental leave was first proposed by the SPD in 2005 (Fleckenstein 2011, p. 551).

Green coalition had made a few modest alterations to the system during its time at the helm, notably extending a larger monthly benefit for parents who chose to take shorter leave times.¹⁶² However even at this increased rate (topping out at 450 euros per month), parental leave payments were still far too modest to provide most professional women with adequate compensation to offset time spent outside of the labor force (Williarty 2010, pp. 179-80).

Before the year 2005 was out, von der Leyen unveiled a radical new blueprint for a wage-related parental leave system. The new proposals, which were expressly patterned around the system that existed in Sweden (Fleckenstein 2011, p. 561), included: twelve months of paid leave (providing 67% of previous earnings up to a maximum of 1,800 euros per month) for the primary caregiver (usually the mother); an additional two months, compensated at the same rate, for the non-primary caregiving parent (usually the father); and a tax write-off for up to 3,000 euros in annual child care expenses (Harding 2006). Single parents would also be entitled to fourteen months of wage-related paid leave under the new law (Kluve and Tamm 2012, p. 988). Paradoxically (for a policy championed by a CDU-affiliated minister), the proposed changes to parental leave offered the least upside for two parent families where just the primary caregiver took time away from work. In such circumstances, the participating parent would be eligible for just twelve months of leave. Collectively, the changes to the parental leave law were expected to cost the federal government an additional four billion euros per year (Williarty 2010, p. 180).

¹⁶² Under the Red-Green law parents who chose to take twelve months of leave were eligible for up to 450 euros per month. Those who took the standard twenty-four month could only receive a maximum of 300 euros per month.

The proposed changes to parental leave were criticized on multiple fronts. Much of this criticism was directed at the notion of two additional months of family leave for the non-primary caregiver, which was ridiculed as a “diaper changing internship” by one prominent CSU member. Some social conservatives voiced more serious allegations that the new family leave law was an exercise in social engineering intended to marginalize the role of the traditional family in society (Benhold 2010). For its part, the SPD criticized the plan for benefitting relatively affluent women the most and doing less for low-income parents, noting that the minimum monthly benefit was slated to go down by 150 euros (Williarty 2010, p. 180).¹⁶³ Von der Leyen’s reform package nevertheless prevailed after receiving the endorsement of the chancellor in mid-2006. The new parental leave law cleared the Bundestag that fall, coming into effect at the beginning of 2007 (Wiliarty 2010, p. 182; “New Year Babies” 2007).

The Family Affairs minister next went to work on continuing her predecessor’s efforts to increase the national supply of child care spaces for children under the age of three.¹⁶⁴ In early 2007, von der Leyen announced a new target of 750,000 additional child care spaces for under-threes by 2013—over three times the number proposed by the SPD’s Schmidt (Rüling 2010). The expansion, which would create spaces for roughly thirty-five percent of all German children under the age of three, was to be accompanied by an extension of the existing legal guarantee of child care to cover children aged one and older, starting in 2013 (Blum 2010, p. 95). This

¹⁶³ From 450 euros to 300 euros (Williarty 2010, p. 180).

¹⁶⁴ Von der Leyen retained several of the staff members who had worked at Family Affairs under her predecessor Renate Schmidt (von Wahl 2011, p. 397). This included SPD-affiliated civil servant Malte Ristau-Winkler, who has been cited as the “architect of... sustainable family policy.” (Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen 2011, p. 347)

entailed a four-billion-euro direct federal contribution, with the rest of the initiative to be financed by the Länder¹⁶⁵

Von der Leyen once again courted controversy—this time with some of the most stinging attacks coming from prominent Catholic religious leaders. One prominent Bavarian cleric, Archbishop Walter Mixa of Augsburg, warned that the proposed expansion of child care would harm children emotionally and “reduce women to breeding machines” (Crossland 2007).¹⁶⁶ The plan was also criticized by Cologne Archbishop Joachim Meisner (“German Bishop Slammed” 2007). Von der Leyen’s co-partisans in the CDU/CSU caucus were less vocally critical, but the Family Minister’s actions created a tense internal environment. One prominent news outlet characterized her as “the most hated woman in the Christian Democracy.” (Zeit online 2007 found in Fleckenstein 2011, p. 560).

Von der Leyen’s child care plan was much better received in the national media—as was the minister herself. By this point, the notion that the birth rate posed a threat to Germany’s future economic well-being was virtually taken for granted (see Seeleib-Kaiser and Toivonen 2011) and the minister’s plan was presented accordingly as a long-overdue effort to adapt the German welfare state to match the reality of the dual earner economy. Even the center-right *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* commented: “[The child care debate] is not about faith but about finding pragmatic solutions to the everyday problems of many parents.” Adding, “What families (let alone single-parent families) living in one of Germany’s conurbations can still

¹⁶⁵ The Länder received an increased share of revenue from the federal value-added tax to help finance their end of the child care agreement (Heiland 2012, p. 30).

¹⁶⁶ Interestingly, “breeding machine” (Gebärmachine) was also a term used by feminists, during the 1960s and 1970s, as a pejorative slang for ‘stay-at-home mother’.

survive on a single income?” (Crossland 2007). Von der Leyen was widely viewed as the ideal person to lead this initiative, particularly given her own experience with raising a large family while concurrently pursuing a career in medicine (See Bennhold 2010). Pivotaly, von der Leyen appealed to voters outside of the Christian Democrats’ base. As a columnist for the center-left *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote: “Von der Leyen is dusting off the conservative image of the family. The conservatives need such role models to become electable for young women in big cities. The SPD has recognized this as a danger, but there is little it can do.” (Crossland 2007). This surfeit of positive coverage led to von der Leyen placing second in a 2008 list of Germany’s most popular politicians (based on public opinion surveys), finishing behind only the chancellor (von Wahl 2008, p. 43).

Behind the von der Leyen Reforms

While von der Leyen was the face of the CDU’s family policy reorientation, the shift reflected a longer-term strategy initiated by Merkel nearly a decade earlier in her then capacity as CDU’s General Secretary. Following 1998’s election—where the party had fared worse with female voters than with male ones for just the second time in its history (Wiliarty 2010, p. 171)—Merkel and other party elites surmised that the party’s continued adherence to traditional, male breadwinner supporting family policies had become a political liability. This led Merkel herself to establish an intraparty commission to explore possible avenues for family policy reform. The panel released an internal position paper in 1999 calling for the adoption of policies that give parents “real” choice between the traditional and dual earner paradigms. This meant supporting both generous family allowances and the expansion of child care facilities.

This theme resurfaced in the party's 2002 election manifesto but was overshadowed by Bavarian chancellor candidate Edmund Stoiber's persistent image as a hardline social conservative. This characterization contributed to a second consecutive loss at the hands of Gerhard Schröder's Red-Green coalition as the CDU/CSU's woes among younger women and urbanites continued (Fleckenstein pp. 557-8).

The 2002 defeat was especially deflating for the CDU/CSU as the embattled Schröder government had appeared vulnerable going into the campaign (Clemens 2009, p. 129; Fleckenstein 2011, p. 558). In preparation for the next election, Merkel (by then party chair, leader of the party caucus, and presumptive nominee for chancellor) set up two subsequent commissions: one on "Parents, Family, and Employment" and another on how to appeal to voters in large cities. Each of these bodies recommended that the CDU/CSU work to create more child care spaces for children under three and related family-friendly infrastructure (Fleckenstein 2011, p. 558).

The internal shift on family policy failed to produce any immediate electoral dividends. In fact, the CDU/CSU share of the popular vote in 2005 was down over three percent from 2002 and only two-tenths of a point higher than it had been in 1998 (Morgan 2013, p. 90). However, once the Grand Coalition was in place, it put Merkel in a position to "steal themes – as well as younger, urban, and female swing voters – from the SPD," (Clemens 2009, p. 131). Von der Leyen's experience at Family Affairs is perhaps the purest example of this strategy in action. Thus, while Merkel herself has often stayed mum on family policy—generally striving to maintain a balance between modernizers and social conservatives in her caucus (Fleckenstein 2011, p. 560; Wiliarty 2010, p. 182)—the reform agenda promoted so masterfully by von der

Leyen was the culmination of an electorally-motivated reorientation engineered by the now chancellor years earlier.

To this point, we see a similar pattern in Germany to what was observed in Canada. In both cases, right-of-center parties utilized family policy innovations to bolster their respective levels of support within targeted 'swing' demographics. Moreover, the Christian Democrats and Conservative Party of Canada each managed to 'steal' the issue from a rival progressive party claiming 'ownership' of family policy for a certain period of time (Petrocik 1996). However, the differences between the two cases come to light when examining the unexpected intensity of the debate surrounding the *Betreuungsgeld*, a monthly child benefit not unlike Stephen Harper's Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB). I turn to this controversy in the next section.

4.5. The *Betreuungsgeld* Debate

With her approval rating holding steady, Merkel led the CDU/CSU to a gain of fifteen new seats in the 2009 federal elections. This put the alliance in a position to form a majority governing coalition with the Free Democratic Party (FDP), the party closest to them ideologically. While this would ostensibly place fewer obstacles in the way of the chancellor's preferred governing agenda, the liberal-conservative coalition faced an early stumbling-block on the issue of child care.

The Bavaria-based CSU was adamant that it would only participate in the governing coalition on the condition that the parties introduce the *Betreuungsgeld*: a monthly child allowance for parents of one to three year olds who chose not to enroll their children in publicly funded child care. CSU officials argued that the reforms previously secured by von der

Leyen solely benefitted parents who sent their children to state-subsidized daycare facilities and held that a direct monthly cash benefit was necessary to offset the relative loss to parents who cared for their children at home (Bird 2016, pp. 82-3).¹⁶⁷ The CSU was able to secure the inclusion of the care allowance in the CDU/CSU – FDP coalition treaty after party leader Horst Seehofer threatened to break off negotiations if the proposal fell through (Henninger and von Wahl 2014, p. 392).

Although ostensibly consistent with the long-running German (and more directly Christian-democratic) principle of recognizing the monetary value of household caregiving work, the *Betreuungsgeld* set off an unexpected level of public squabbling within Merkel's second coalition. Moderates from the CDU, noting that the Merkel government was already falling behind on its promise to create 750,000 new child care spaces by 2013, questioned the wisdom of rerouting nearly a billion euros per year to a program that would do nothing to increase fertility, discourage women's labor market participation, and potentially deprive toddlers of essential early childhood education. At one point, twenty-three CDU-affiliated Bundestag deputies threatened to vote against the *Betreuungsgeld*. The junior coalition partner FDP also objected to the child allowance, expressing a general desire to limit social entitlements and instead pursue tax cuts ("Pay to stay at home" 2012).

The chancellor ultimately intervened on the part of the CSU, whipping her coalition allies into supporting the *Betreuungsgeld* bill as it reached the floor of the Bundestag in November 2012. The legislation, which passed by a comfortable margin of twenty-eight

¹⁶⁷ At the urging of the CSU, an endorsement of a 'home-care-benefit' was tacked on to von der Leyen's child care reform package. However, the relevant legislation gave the government until 2013 to decide what form this benefit would take (Heiland 2012, pp. 30-1).

votes,¹⁶⁸ authorized the federal government to begin circulating checks in August 2013. The monthly payments were slated to start at 100 euros per child and increase to 150 per child one year later (“Bundestag beschließt umstrittenes Betreuungsgeld” 2012).

However, the battle over the Betreuungsgeld did not end here as the SPD and allies elected to challenge the benefit’s constitutionality. The legal challenge culminated in a summer 2015 Federal Constitutional Court hearing, in which the SPD government of northwestern Land Hamburg was the principal plaintiff. The court sided unanimously with the plaintiff, ruling that the federal government lacked the constitutional authority to unilaterally impose a nationwide child allowance.¹⁶⁹ The decision drew the endorsement of SPD-affiliated federal Minister of Family Affairs Manuela Schwesig, who commented, “it shows that the care allowance was the wrong approach and has no future.” (Gesley 2015).¹⁷⁰

It was one thing for the SPD to oppose the Betreuungsgeld during the legislative process and quite another for the party to actively kill the benefit nearly two years after it had already started going out to families. At the time of the constitutional court decision, the monthly allowance was being received by over 455,000 families, with the largest number based in North Rhine-Westphalia (see Figure 4.1). It is curious that the SPD would be willing to risk alienating

¹⁶⁸ Six coalition members (two from the CDU and four from the SPD) voted against the bill. Two more abstained (one from each party) (“Bundestag beschließt umstrittenes Betreuungsgeld” 2012).

¹⁶⁹ The constitutional court reserved comment on the plaintiff’s more contentious claim that the Betreuungsgeld violated the principle of ‘equal treatment’ by reinforcing gender divisions between men and women (Gesley 2015).

¹⁷⁰ The federal government stopped taking new Betreuungsgeld applications immediately after the constitutional court announced its verdict but families who were already enrolled continued to receive payments through part of 2016 (Breining 2016).

over 100,000 families in such a strategically vital part of the country, especially given the role that early elections in North Rhine-Westphalia played in ending the last SPD-led government.

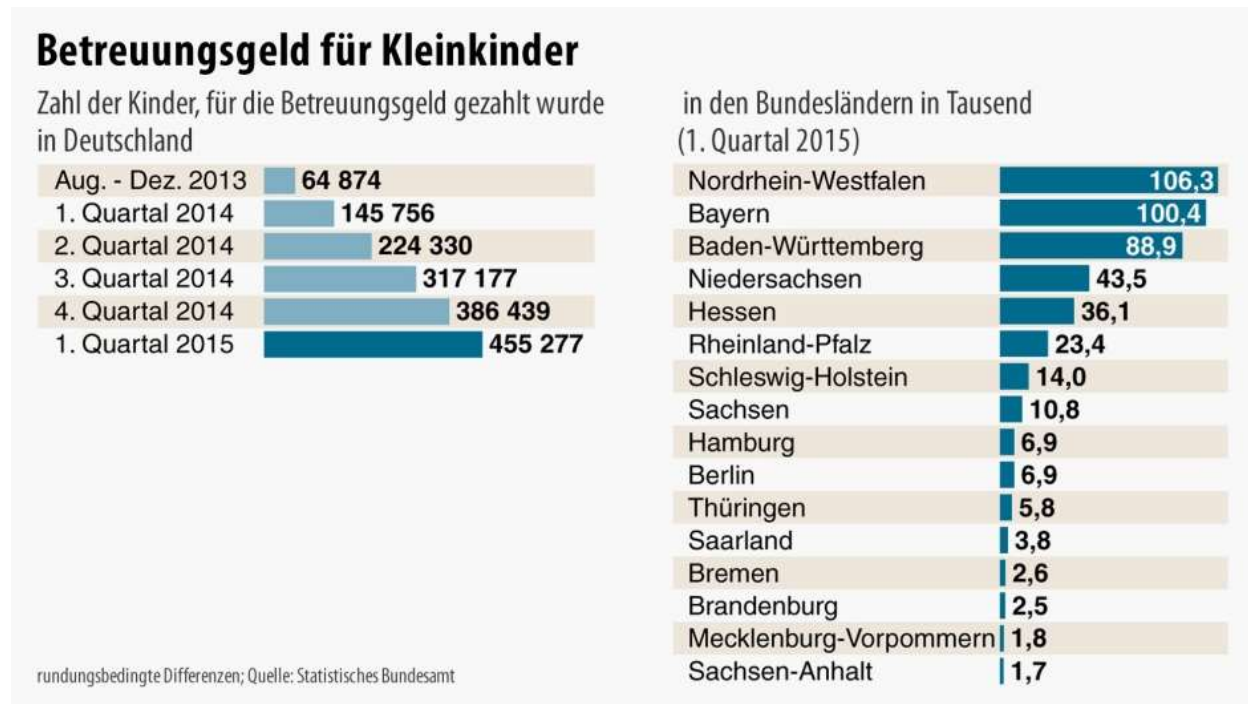


Figure 4.1 – Betreuungsgeld recipients by Land (From “Muss ich mein Betreuungsgeld jetzt zurückzahlen?” 2015)

The answer to this puzzle may lie in how opposition to the Betreuungsgeld was framed—especially by the SPD and progressive elements within the CDU. Anti-Betreuungsgeld arguments tended to take a paternalistic tone, emphasizing the benefit’s disproportionate appeal to less well-educated, lower income parents. Opponents of the allowance often voiced concerns that, in tempting such parents to choose money over child care, the availability of the benefit would exacerbate the already problematic ‘parenting gap’ between privileged and non-privileged children. Many were especially anxious about the potential effect of the allowance on minority families, where both women and children may face cultural barriers to learning German and other job-relevant skills (See Fendel and Jochimsen 2018). Observes Bird (2016, p. 83):

Here we see the attitude towards disadvantaged families: they ought to send their children to state institutions as early as possible so that they, firstly, escape the bad influence of these poor parents and, secondly, start being educated properly from an early age.

The framing obviously contained both racial and class implications, but it would nevertheless be difficult to envision this rhetorical tack having the same level of success if it were not (at least implicitly) directed at an ‘othered’ minority community—think back to Liberal Party communications director Scott Reid’s remarks about “beer and popcorn”. Unsurprisingly, headscarf-clad women and other migrant caricatures figured prominently in political cartoons lampooning the *Betreuungsgeld* (see Figure 4.2 for an example).

Figure 4.2 – “*Betreuungsgeld*” (political cartoon)



Translation: “100-euro *Betreuungsgeld*? Cash in hand? It’s a really good deal! And the kids can learn German from home.” (Stuttman 2012)

Such arguments differ importantly from the selectivist claims associated with welfare chauvinism.¹⁷¹ They instead accept migrants as a fixture of German society and support generous social policies that would best help migrants integrate with the cultural mainstream. In this respect, such benign appeals to helping migrants and their children mirror arguments

¹⁷¹ It is worth noting that the right-populist Alternative fuer Deutschland (AfD) was in favor of the *Betreuungsgeld* (“Families need replacement for childcare allowance” 2015).

that have been made by integrationist center and left parties in Scandinavia (Grødem 2017). This suggests a budding progressive migrant-centered political discourse in parts of Europe that, given this project's focus, I can only scratch the surface of here. In this context, it would suffice to say that this discourse played a role in delegitimizing the Betreuungsgeld and therein helped to keep Germany's family policy trajectory moving in the Nordic direction.

4.6. Conclusion and Key Takeaways

As compared to her counterpart Stephen Harper, Angela Merkel's management of family policy presents a useful contrast. In both cases, leaders utilized new family policy proposals as a means of courting key 'swing' demographics. However, the German historical, institutional, and discursive context led the strategically-minded Merkel (See Wiliarty 2010, chap. 7) to gravitate towards a Nordic, dual earner supporting package of reforms—namely medium-length, wage-related parental leave and substantial enhancements to the availability of institutional child care for children under three.

Three specific variables stand out in this story. These are: Grand Coalition governance, the visibility of women in elite policy discourses, and the availability of issue linkages between family policy and migration. Regarding the first variable, it is critical that the family policy ideas that Merkel's Christian Democrats would ultimately capitalize on were first developed within the SPD. The 'cross-pollination' of these ideas to the CDU would likely not have taken place outside of the context of a Grand Coalition government. Further, the delicate points about Germany's birth rate raised by the issue's "spokeswomen" (see Mohamed 2013) as a device to frame family policy as a matter of national importance would not have been utilized as

effectively by male politicians. Such rhetoric coming from a man—essentially asking women to bear more children for the good of the nation’s future—would undoubtedly have come off as paternalistic and demeaning. Finally, the political discourse tying the Betreuungsgeld to migrant families worked in tandem with other arguments to delegitimize the benefit (which, at face value, was consistent with the longstanding Christian democrat tradition of ascribing monetary value to household labor). The thrust of this objection to the child allowance, at least implicitly, was “the state knows how to raise your toddler better than you do.” This argument would not have been viable if directed squarely at the general population—as evidenced by the “beer and popcorn” episode in Canada.

CHAPTER 5: A TOPIC MODEL OF MEDIA FRAMING OF THE UCCB AND BETREUUNGSGELD

In this chapter, I use a statistical topic modeling technique to parse out dominant frames in media coverage of family policy in Germany and Canada, respectively. My specific focus here is on the contrast between discourses surrounding the Harper Government's Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) and the Merkel Government's short-lived Betreuungsgeld (care allowance).¹⁷² This comparison is central to my general argument because, as stated earlier, I view the failure of the Betreuungsgeld as emblematic of a broader cultural shift away from familialism in Germany and toward a Nordic-style dual earner paradigm (see Hinrichs 2010). Moreover, a side-by-side comparison of these coeval discourses reveals telling aspects of the normative dimensions of the debate in each country.

I analyze a sample of 467 news stories published on the UCCB and the Betreuungsgeld between 2005 and 2015. I do so via an automated topic model, which uses a statistical algorithm to classify text documents thematically. My empirical findings are largely consistent with my ex-ante hypothesis that the German debate was a more gendered and racialized one.

¹⁷³ Discourses on 'traditional versus modern' gender roles and the cultural integration of

¹⁷² Both policies offered a flat-rate monthly stipend to parents. The UCCB entitled parents to receive \$100 per month for each child under the age of six. Similarly, German Betreuungsgeld claimants received 100 euros per month for each child between the ages of 15 and 36 months. The stipends were later increased to \$160 per child and 150 euros per child respectively.

¹⁷³ A complete breakdown of topics and exemplar documents for each sample can be found in APPENDIX 2.

migrant communities were each perceptible in the German media framing. By contrast, the Canadian articles focused primarily on the significance of the UCCB to the Harper Government's broader electoral strategy and party politics more generally. Secondary frames involved the UCCB's budgetary impact and its relevance to the related political debate over universal daycare. Canadian newspaper coverage sometimes touched on the UCCB's unique effect on women, but this narrative was generally subsumed within a larger 'social investment' tinted discourse that emphasized the economic losses incurred from inadequate public investments in child care (See Jenson 2009). Moreover, although a handful of stories in the centrist *Globe and Mail* documented reports of fraudulent child benefit claims made by foreign nationals, immigration and cultural integration were largely absent from the Canadian discourse.

The chapter proceeds as follows. I begin with a brief, non-technical introduction to topic modeling and its recent applications in political sciences. I then present my Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) oriented topic model, the data, and my results. I conclude with a broader discussion of my findings and what they say about the politics of family policy reform in each country.

5.1. Topic Modeling in Political Science

The term 'topic modeling' encompasses a suite of statistical algorithms that computationally discover textual patterns in large sets of documents (hereafter referred to as 'corpus' or 'corpa') and organize their contents thematically. Topic models do this by analyzing

the content words¹⁷⁴ of source texts to identify the themes that run through the corpus, how these themes relate to one another, and how they evolve over time (Blei 2012a, p. 77).

Topic modeling was developed by a group of computer scientists in the late 1990s and early 2000s for the purpose of enabling researchers to condense large collections of textual data while, at the same time, preserving the “essential statistical relationships” necessary for more sophisticated forms of quantitative analysis (Blei et al. 2003, p. 993). The technique has subsequently been utilized for a number of substantive purposes, which include gene sequencing (Barnett and Jaakkola 2007; La Rosa et al. 2015), historical document archiving (Blei 2013), and search engine optimization (Song et al. 2009). Although relatively new to the social sciences, topic modeling is a potentially powerful tool that gives social scientists the opportunity to organize, summarize, and annotate textual data on an unprecedented scale (Blei 2012, p. 88).

Statistically speaking, a “topic” is defined as a probability distribution over terms in a vocabulary (McAuliffe and Blei 2008, p. 1). Topics can be understood more simply as clusters of frequently co-occurring words (Reed 2012, p. 11). For instance, a topic that’s focused on election campaigns would likely contain the words “voter”, “candidate”, and “poll”—for the simple reason that these words are likely to appear together in campaign-related texts. Topic modeling is essentially a method of working backwards from a set of documents to approximate the unobserved topics that generated them (Underwood 2012). The implicit assumption here is that the topics are pre-specified before any of the observable data is generated (Blei 2012, p. 78).

¹⁷⁴ As opposed to ‘function words’, which serve grammatical purposes and have little meaning of their own.

Topic models utilize a hierarchical (three-level), mixed membership structure that allows the documents in a corpus to share information with one another (Grimmer and Stewart 2013, pp. 17-18). Topic modeling is a probabilistic, iterative process that becomes more consistent as the number of iterations increases. This means that, over time, words will become more common in topics where they are already common and topics, in turn, will become more common in documents where *they* are already common (Underwood 2012).

Operationally, topic models work by transforming the corpus into a Document Term Matrix (DTM), wherein rows correspond to documents in the corpus and columns correspond to words. The DTM is essential “input data” for topic models because it plainly displays the unique words used in the corpus and how often they appear in each document (Hornick and Grun 2011, p. 6; see Table 3). This gives the topic modeling algorithm the information it needs to sort the documents into discrete topics based on their lexical structure. Like most statistical text analysis techniques, topic models rely on the *bag of words* assumption (Blei et al. 2003, p. 994), meaning that word order is assumed to be irrelevant.

Table 3 – Sample Document Term Matrix

Docs	forc	foreign	form	formal	format	former
2009.10.29.txt	0	0	0	0	1	0
2009.11.01.txt	0	0	0	0	1	1
2009.11.04.txt	0	4	0	0	0	0
2009.11.22.txt	0	0	0	0	0	0
2009.11.28.txt	1	2	0	0	0	2
2010.05.17.txt	1	0	2	0	0	0

Applications of topic modeling to political science are rare and largely confined to the American Politics subfield. Two influential studies (Quinn et al. 2010; Grimmer 2010) use topic models to operationalize the attention and legislative priorities of United States Senators (see

also: Grimmer and Stewart 2013, pp. 18-19). Examples from comparative politics are harder to come by, although Lucas et al. (2015) offer a compelling look at the potential of topic modeling within the subfield—especially as it pertains to processing multilingual text data. I accordingly make use of a number of their suggestions here.

To my knowledge, topic modeling has yet to be applied to any substantive issue in social policy.¹⁷⁵ I nevertheless view the technique as a promising avenue to help scholars uncover the values, attitudes, and frames that underpin cross-national social policy discourses. I offer a first step here by using a simple topic model to illustrate the differences between family policy discourses in Germany and Canada, respectively.

5.2. Methodology and Data

Latent Dirichlet Allocation

The specific topic modeling technique I utilize here is Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), which is the most straightforward and widely used of the topic models (Blei 2013; Grimmer and Stewart 2013, p. 284). Loosely speaking, LDA is built on two assumptions. First, that there is a finite and fixed number of patterns of word use, and thematically-related groups of words (“topics”) tend to appear together in documents; and second, that each document in the corpus will exhibit some combination of multiple topics (Blei 2013). The second assumption is a key distinguishing feature of LDA as preexisting text classification methods restricted each document to just a single topic (Blei et al. 2003, p. 997). As such, LDA is able to capture

¹⁷⁵ This stated, the present study builds on several more conventional content analyses of the framing of Canada’s child care debate (see: Thériault 2006; Rinehart 2008; Albanese et al. 2010; Wallace 2016).

previously neglected intra-document statistical structure and, ultimately, produce a more sophisticated evaluation of the documents in a corpus. In practice, LDA generates a unique set of topic probabilities for each document, thereby giving the researcher a sense of the uncertainty of the estimates.

At a more theoretical level, LDA can be understood as a generative probabilistic model, meaning that it uses observable data to estimate a set of hidden parameters, in this case the latent topics that underlie the corpus. It does so via an iterative maximum likelihood (ML) estimation process that uses the information drawn from words and documents to compute an approximated log-likelihood of the latent variables (Reed 2012, p. 7).

Figure 5.1 is a simplified graphical representation of LDA. The basic intuition here is that the hidden Dirichlet prior parameters (β and α) create a topical structure that regulates the distribution of documents (θ) and words (z and w). In essence, the model works backwards from the observed (shaded) word “ w ”, to approximate the latent (unshaded) variables that generated it (Blei et al 2003, p. 997).

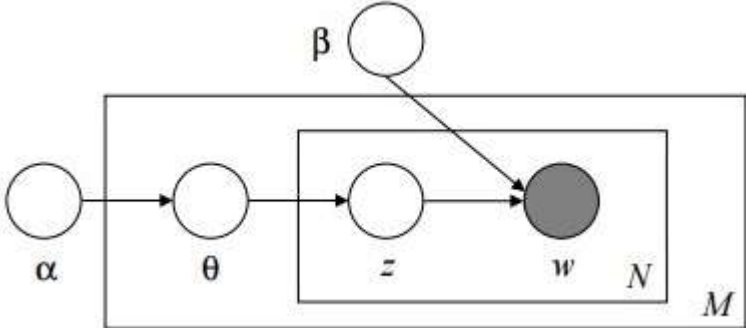


Figure 5.1 – Graphical representation of LDA (found in Blei et al. 2003)

Data

I apply LDA to a sample of 467 news stories published between December 2005 and October 2015.¹⁷⁶ The German articles were obtained from the websites of *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, based in Munich, and Frankfurt based *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. I chose these sources in part because they are the two most widely-circulated daily newspapers in Germany and partly for pragmatic reasons. The respective website of each paper features a well-organized, chronologically-ordered feature section on the Betreuungsgeld, each consisting of around 190 relevant articles.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, this pairing gives me a partisan balance as *Süddeutsche Zeitung* is generally perceived as center-left and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* as center-right.

I used a widely available machine translation application¹⁷⁸ to transcribe the stories from German to English.¹⁷⁹ As expected, this created some issues with grammatical structure, syntax, and improperly translated words. This is no cause for serious concern, however, as I removed most conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, and other grammatical words in the preprocessing stage (explained below). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the *bag of words* assumption means that topic models take word order as irrelevant, so improper syntax should not bias my results. Finally, I dealt with the possibility of error created by mistranslation by closely vetting my translated articles. I was generally able to infer the meaning of mistranslated

¹⁷⁶ My Canadian articles begin in December 2005 and my German ones begin in May 2007. Both samples end in October 2015.

¹⁷⁷ My sample consists of 188 stories from *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and 191 stories from *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, comprising a total of 379 documents.

¹⁷⁸ Google Translate.

¹⁷⁹ Following Lucas et al. (2015, p. 13), I translate all of my documents into a single common language (English in this case).

words from the context in which they were used. For instance, a June 2015 *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article about the Federal Constitutional Court’s ruling on the *Betreuungsgeld* was titled, “The Federal Constitutional Court has *tilted*¹⁸⁰ care benefit – but only for reasons of jurisdiction.” “Tilted” in this context clearly means “overturned”.

My Canadian articles come from *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post*, both based in Toronto. The *Globe and Mail* (centrist) and *National Post* (conservative) are widely viewed as rival papers (see Cobb 2004) and each has a strong national profile. They are, in fact, the only two English-language Canadian newspapers that are directly targeted at a Canada-wide audience (Newspapers Canada 2015). While both papers are headquartered in Toronto, it should be noted that the *National Post* is closely associated with Canada’s reform conservative movement, which is intellectually rooted in Western Canada.¹⁸¹ This gives my analysis at least some sensitivity to differing regional perspectives.

I identified relevant articles by entering the search terms “universal child care benefit” “ucb” and “child benefit” into a digital archive of Canadian newspapers.¹⁸² Once again, I encountered some ambiguity as the term “child benefit” may also refer to the Canadian National Child Benefit (NCB), which was a preexisting federal-provincial program that provided financial support to low-income families. I dealt with this by paying close attention to the context in which the term “child benefit” was used. For instance, articles that focused on

¹⁸⁰ Emphasis added.

¹⁸¹ Canada’s reform conservative intellectual vanguard is known colloquially as “The Calgary School” for its association with the University of Calgary. Stephen Harper himself was a graduate student in economics at the University of Calgary during the mid-to-late 1980s and early 1990s. See Rovinsky 1997.

¹⁸² Print edition.

poverty were generally referring to the NCB when they used the term. Finally, following Wallace’s earlier content analysis of print media coverage of the UCCB (2016), I excluded articles that mentioned the benefit as part of a general overview of party platforms and budgets.

This left me with a corpus of 88 articles in total: 46 from the *National Post* and 42 from the *Globe and Mail*. While significantly smaller than my German sample—reflecting the lower profile of child care in the Canadian media—this corpus nonetheless sufficient for my topic model, which uses words, not documents, as its observations.

Preprocessing the data

In order to extract the most possible substantive meaning from my corpa, it was necessary to run each through a data cleansing process that removed low value text.¹⁸³ This ‘preprocessing’ included removing punctuation marks, numbers, unnecessary spaces, and commonly used filler words.¹⁸⁴ I also ran the data through a ‘stemming’ algorithm that broke down related words into a common base form. For instance, the stemming process would simplify the words “large”, “larger”, and “largest” into the common root word “larg”.

Preprocessing resulted in greatly condensed texts that consisted primarily of substantively important words. Here is one example from a *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article:

Unfamiliar unity: employers and trade unions have criticized the planned care be nefit in a joint statement. Also within the coalition, the project remains controversial - CDU General Secretary Hermann Gröhe admitted that there is

¹⁸³ The statistics and visualizations used in this paper were computed using *R* (Version 3.31). All relevant *R* code can be obtained from the author by request.

¹⁸⁴ The dictionary of English ‘stopwords’ in the *R* package *tm* (text mining) includes most conjunctions, articles, and prepositions, as well as a number of generic words like “ask”, “good”, and “small”.

still a "need for clarification"

Becomes:

unfamiliar uniti employ trade union critic plan care benefit joint statement also
within coalit project remain controversi cdu gener secretari hermann gröhe
admit still need clarif

This still left me with the problem of sparsity, which refers to computational difficulties created by a preponderance of zero-valued cells in a given matrix. Sparse matrices are problematic for most statistical operations, which waste memory and time by superfluously processing the uninformative zeros. Unfortunately, sparsity is virtually inevitable in LDA as, given the structure of the DTM (see Table 3 above), there are bound to be a high number of zero-valued cells (cells where a given word appears zero times in a document). Unsurprisingly, both of my corpa were over 95% sparse. Dealing with sparsity often involves a trade-off, however, as some infrequent words may have significant analytical value when used in a specific context. For instance, the term "career" only appears three times in my Canadian sample but may be an operative word in a handful of articles that discuss work-family reconciliation issues.

Erring on the side of caution, I removed the sparsest¹⁸⁵ three percent of words in each corpus. This ended up being terms used fewer than three times in my corpus of Canadian articles and those used fewer than twelve times in the German corpus, reducing the overall sparsity of both corpa to 87%. I then removed a few of the most frequently used words, which were in some cases so ubiquitous that they added little unique meaning to the corpus. For

¹⁸⁵ Sparsity refers to the threshold of relative document frequency of a term. The higher the level of sparsity the less salient the term is to the corpus.

instance, I removed the words “care” and “allow”—which each occurred on over 1,000 more instances than the next most common word—from my German sample.

5.3 Results

Using a spatial LDA visualization technique,¹⁸⁶ I determined that each corpus contained five non-overlapping topics. Attempts to generate topics beyond this point led to overlapping topics and, in several cases, illogical or overly-narrow categorizations. My first task was to infer topic labels¹⁸⁷ from my word clusters. Following Lucas et al. (2015, pp. 18-19), I did this by both examining the most frequent words in each topic and reading a set of *exemplar documents*—those that were a ‘top match’ for each topic. For instance, the topic I labeled “court challenge” (Germany) was composed as such:

Table 4 – Keywords and Exemplar Documents for “court challenge”

<u>KEYWORDS</u>	<u>EXEMPLAR DOCUMENTS</u>
federal, govern, state, länder, law, constitution, question, court, money	1.The FCC has overturned child allowance (FAZ, 7/21/2015) 2.A federal law is white-blue [Bavarian] (SZ, 4/14/2015) 3.The pince-nez of Karlsruhe ¹⁸⁸ (SZ, 4/15/2015)

This was one of the more straightforward topics for me to label, given both the abundance of keywords related to judicial procedure (law, constitution, question, court, etc.) and the substantive focus of each of my exemplar documents. Some of the other topics were more difficult to pin down, but I was consistently able to infer general themes from the available data.

¹⁸⁶ The LDAvis package in R, created by Carson Sievert and Kenny Shirley.

¹⁸⁷ Computer scientists are beginning to experiment with automated topic model labelling methods (see Lau et al. 2011) but it is still the norm for analysts to manually infer topic labels based on content.

¹⁸⁸ Germany’s Federal Constitutional Court is based in Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg.

The labelling process left me with the following categorizations:

Table 5 – Distribution of ‘Topics’ by Country

<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>TOPICS</u>
Germany	Implementation (26.1%); Social Change (21.3%); Coalition Infighting (18.4%); Court challenge (17.9%); Budget (16.3%)
Canada	Electoral Strategy (22.1%); Taxation (20.6%); Daycare Debate (19.8%); Scandal/Controversy (19%); Fraud/Waste (18.4%)

In the remainder of this section, I unpack these topic distributions and explain how they reflect substantial differences in the framing of family policy discourses in each country.

Germany

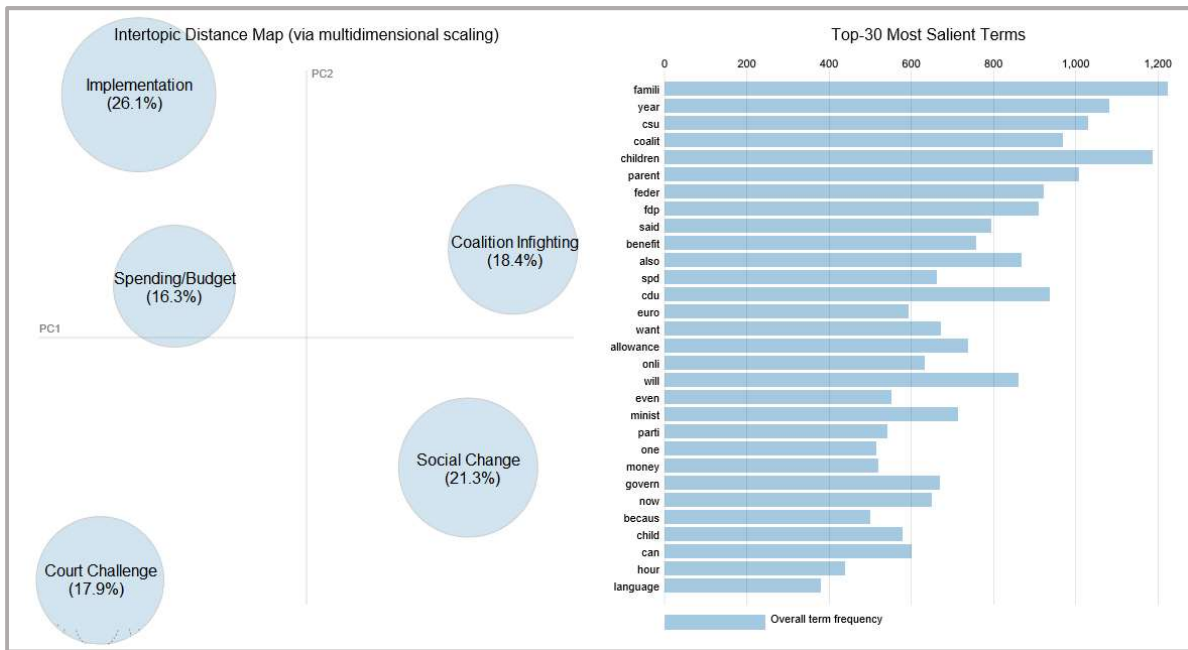


Figure 5.2 – Intertopic distance map: Germany

As shown in Figure 5.2, German news coverage of the Betreuungsgeld broke down into five broad topics. These are:

- **Implementation (26.1% of words):** This includes stories about the number of child allowance claims, the demographics of claimants, and problems related to the distribution of claims (i.e.: applicants being denied benefits). Some of these articles raise

concerns that the child allowance was being claimed disproportionately by migrant and low-income families.

- **Social Change (21.3% of words):** These are mostly negative stories about how the Betreuungsgeld reflects an antiquated notion of the traditional male breadwinner/female caregiver family model. Several include personal attacks on Family Minister Kristina Schroeder. A few of these articles express concerns that the Betreuungsgeld would reinforce the cultural oppression of women in migrant communities.
- **Coalition Infighting (18.4% of words):** These stories covered divisions over the Betreuungsgeld within the governing coalition. The benefit pit Bavaria's traditionalist CSU against a heavily female group of modernizers within the CDU and FDP.
- **Court Challenge (17.9% of words):** These pertain to the ultimately successful legal challenge to the Betreuungsgeld and the fallout of the decision for the government.
- **Spending/Budget (16.3% of words):** These articles criticize the adverse budgetary impact of the Betreuungsgeld and other frivolous government spending.

A closer look inside the topics reveals telling normative dimensions of the debate that contributed to the ultimate failure of the Betreuungsgeld. Two re-occurring themes are (1) the incompatibility of the care allowance with the modern dual earner family model and (2) its disproportionate appeal to poorly integrated migrant communities.

Both of these themes are, in fact, present in the number-one exemplar document in the 'social change' category: a November 2012 *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article titled "But yet they need the money not". The article, which my topic model categorizes as 56% social change related, is set in Neukölln, an immigrant-heavy borough of Berlin. Its author interviews a number of community leaders about their views on the imminent Betreuungsgeld, revealing a general pessimism about the program's potential effect on migrant women and children. One interviewee remarks,

Let's take a 26 year-old woman who cleans toilets for 350 euros a month. Why should she continue if she will get a 300 euro care benefit for her second child?... Then over her three years at home her husband's bad temper is exposed.¹⁸⁹

Another Neukölln resident quoted in the article voices concerns about the quality of German language education available to his son: "'Why is your German so poor?' He recently asked his son. 'Because there are no Germans sitting with me in the class,' the son responded."

This theme is hit on even more directly in the third most salient news story in the 'implementation' topic, June 2012 a *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* piece titled "Integration begins in early childhood education." As its title indicates, the article focuses on concerns that the Betreuungsgeld may impede the cultural and linguistic integration of migrant children by incentivizing their parents to care for them at home, versus sending them to a daycare center to interact with children from other ethnic backgrounds. The article makes reference to the implementation of a similar family cash transfer program in Norway which, according to an OECD study, led to a fifteen percent reduction in the proportion of working immigrants. One domestic source quoted in the article calls non-participation in daycare a "significant socialization and integration disadvantage" for children from migrant backgrounds.

The topic analysis also uncovered a number of high salience articles that characterized the Betreuungsgeld controversy as a flashpoint in a larger debate over the proper role of women in society. Several singled-out Family Minister Kristina Schröder (CDU), who was at times a lightning rod for partisan vitriol. One especially harsh *Süddeutsche Zeitung* write up (7/16/2012)¹⁹⁰ referred to Schröder as the "punching bag of Berlin politics". Schröder, the

¹⁸⁹ Author's translation.

¹⁹⁰ This article was the number-eight match within the 'social change' topic.

author writes, “is not smart enough to make deals, [she] fights the wrong battles, and [she] lacks the brazen chutzpah of her predecessor [Ursula von der Leyen].” Another *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article (4/19/2012) reads,

What Family Minister Schröder says does not fit the lifestyle of her peers: In reality, women do not suffer under the yoke of feminists, but the glass ceilings in the company and the lack of work-life balance. And this is precisely why they feel in especially bad hands with Schröder.

The unrelenting—and at times unwarranted—ad hominem against Schröder is consistent with extant research that finds that media coverage of female politicians tends to be more personal and ‘trait-driven’ than the coverage of their male colleagues (Dunaway et al. 2013). It also evidences my general argument that the elevated profile of female politicians in Germany helped shape the narrative of its family policy debate (see also: Mohamed 2013).

Canada

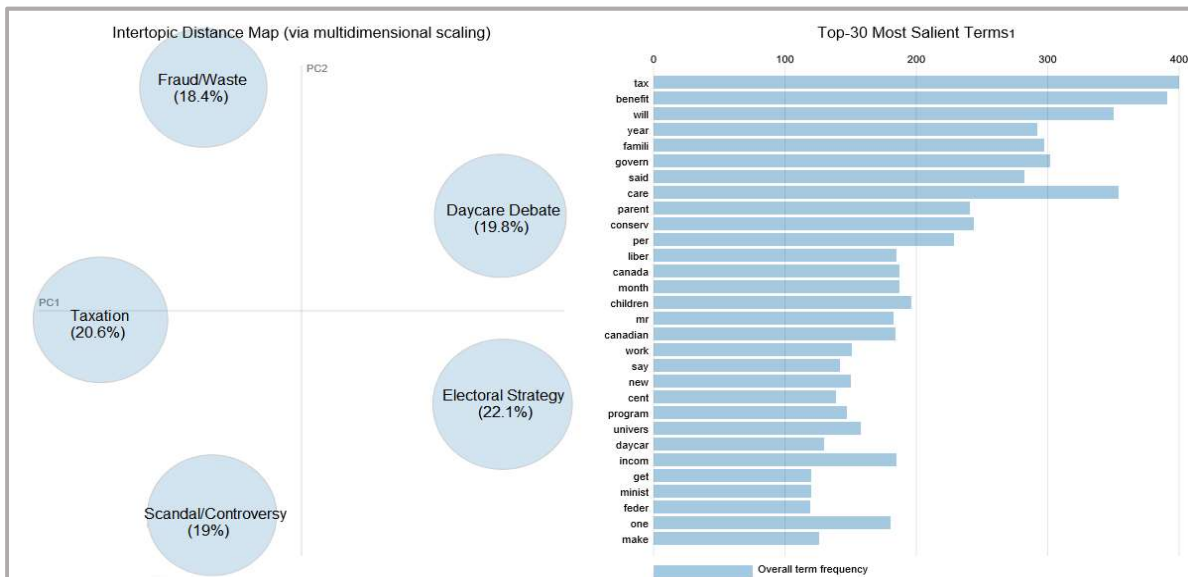


Figure 5.3 – Intertopic distance map: Canada

As Figure 5.3 indicates, Canadian media coverage of the Harper Government's UCCB

focused on the following five topics:

- **Electoral strategy (22.1% of words):** These stories discuss the significance of the UCCB to Stephen Harper's broader electoral strategy. Several characterize the UCCB, and especially the pre-election UCCB expansion (2015), as a shrewd political initiative that will help Harper win over middle-class families.
- **Taxation (20.6% of words):** These articles discuss the UCCB as part of the Harper Government's broader 'tax relief' agenda.
- **The Daycare Debate (19.8% of words):** This topic covers the pros and cons of universal daycare. Several of these articles debate the merits of the 'Québec model', where parents pay a small daily fee (~\$7 dollars) to send their children to publicly run daycare centers. Another common theme is the spiraling cost of center-based daycare in large cities.
- **Scandal/Controversy (19% of words):** These document a number of scandals involving the cost of the UCCB and its promotion. The conduct of Social Development Minister Pierre Poilievre, who was accused of promoting the UCCB in an inappropriately partisan manner, is a prominent theme here.
- **Fraud/Waste (18.4% of words):** These articles deal with various misappropriation issues involving the child benefit. Four of the top ten articles in this topic are about fraudulent child benefit claims made by foreign nationals.

From this summarization alone, it should be apparent that the debate over the UCCB was largely devoid of the volatile identity politics that animated the German discourse. To the contrary, Canada's child care debate was a rather sterilized affair that focused on electoral politics and, to a lesser extent, the policy tradeoffs between the UCCB and universal daycare. In the absence of a robust dialogue on its normative dimensions, the child benefit galvanized few and was generally framed as 'free money' doled out to potential supporters by the Harper Government. Accordingly, three of the top hits in the 'electoral strategy' category were: "If this election can be bought, the Tories will win easily" (*Globe and Mail*, 8/2/2015); "Have I got a

bribe (er, cheque) for you!” (*Globe and Mail*, 7/20/2015); and “Child care cheques give Tories a big boost; Lead in new poll” (*National Post*, 7/24/2015).

When the Canadian articles touched on the unique effect of the UCCB on women, they generally did so from a broad ‘social investment’ perspective that emphasized the possible long-run economic benefits of public spending on child care. Such benefits may stem from both the increased labor force participation of mothers and the early intellectual stimulation that children receive in daycare programs. This viewpoint is expressed directly in one exemplar document titled “The case for publicly funded daycare” (*Globe and Mail*, 10/21/2013), where the author writes:

Universal child care is a three-way economic stimulus program – it helps parents work (and reduces poverty)¹⁹¹, directly creates jobs for early childhood educators, and, if the early learning is good enough, gives a boost to the next generation of skilled labour.

Another exemplar document is titled “no greater investment.” Yet another “The daycare trade-off; Universal childcare lets more women go to work but could have a negative effect on their children”. These articles are representative of the general framing of the Canadian child care debate, which was couched in narrowly economic cost-benefit terms. More normative commentary on evolving gender roles is glaringly absent from this discourse.

Finally, in stark contrast to my results for Germany, I found no discussion of the cultural integration of immigrant groups in the Canadian media coverage of the UCCB. In fact, immigration and citizenship issues only came up in the context of a handful of stories that dealt with fraudulent child benefit applications made by foreign nationals. One story worth noting

¹⁹¹ Parentheses in the original.

documented the Québec government's efforts to block child benefit payments to Abousfian Abdelrazik, a Sudanese-Canadian dual citizen who'd been placed on the United Nations' al-Qaeda blacklist (*Globe and Mail*, 6/1/2011). The absence of a 'cultural integration' discourse here reflects Canada's generally successful history of incorporating immigrant communities.

5.4. Discussion

In this chapter, I applied a novel statistical topic modeling technique to a collection of newspaper articles documenting child care discourses in Canada and Germany. I obtained generally encouraging results, which were largely consistent with my ex-ante expectations of how each discourse broke down. My results speak positively to the potential of topic modeling as a tool for analyzing public discourses on social policy and other political topics.

Substantively, my results support the view that the German discourse was a more value-laden one that invoked normative commentary on both the role of women in society and the integration of minority communities. Such frames were useful for the opponents of the *Betreuungsgeld*, who had a larger set of arguments to draw from than the Canadian critics of the UCCB. This evidences my broader argument that the *Betreuungsgeld*'s failure reflects a cultural shift away from German familialism; one that's been intensified by changes in gender expectations and the growth of ethnic minority communities.

CONCLUSION: 'GETTING IN BED' WITH THE SILENT REVOLUTION

Summary of Findings

Building off an empirical literature that documents, since around the mid-1990s, a steady growth of public spending on family-related policies across the affluent OECD countries (see Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser 2015), this project has asked how right parties in particular have adapted to the political context created by this still unfolding “silent revolution”. By comparing the behavior of two right party-led governments over approximately the same timeframe (2005 – 2015), I have reached the conclusion that this new political landscape has generated novel opportunities for conservative political actors to utilize new family policy spending initiatives in politically advantageous ways. However, how such entities choose to do so will depend, more than anything, on the prevailing political discourses that are available for policy entrepreneurs to choose from. In short, *discourses matter*.

To be more precise, the respective family policy trajectory observed in each country during the period in question can ultimately be traced back to the victorious domestic policy narrative. In Canada, the Harper government’s favored ‘parental choice’ narrative has won out due to the failure of progressives and feminists to present a countervailing rationale for universal child care. This reflects a failed strategy, on the part of child care advocates, of downplaying the stakes for women and instead emphasizing the potential developmental

benefits of formal ‘early childhood education’—a perspective that clashes with the middling performance of Québec’s provincial daycare program over its two decades in operation. The would-be reformers dug themselves into an even deeper hole by expressing condescension towards parents who favored familial and informal caregiving arrangements over center-based daycare. By contrast, Germany presented a more favorable discursive environment for daycare and other female-friendly policies as policy entrepreneurs tapped into public anxieties surrounding the lagging birth rate and, less directly, a perceived failure to incorporate migrants into mainstream society. Furthermore, the ‘spokeswomen’ who sold Germany’s reforms were far from bashful with respect to the gendered dimensions of the debate—arguing persuasively that Germany’s antiquated framework of male-breadwinner oriented family policies left women to grapple with the impossible choice of ‘career or family’. However, while the prevailing discursive context in each country is an important part of the story, it was ultimately Harper and Merkel, respectively, who identified and seized opportunities for political gain through the creation of new family policies. In doing so, each meaningfully altered their respective country’s family policy regime.

Canada

Starting with Canada, the Harper government quite ingeniously picked up on feminist themes relating to ‘choice’ and self-determination, in the run up to the 2006 election, to sell what was effectively a pittance for stay at home mothers. When a Liberal operative pointed out (correctly) that the \$100 per month offered through Harper’s child benefit amounted to little more than “beer and popcorn” money, the Conservatives received yet another opportunity to

characterize the Liberals as a group of overbearing “old white guys” who were trying to tell parents (and especially mothers) what to do—as one female Conservative MP phrased it. With virtually no organized national women’s movement to speak of,¹⁹² this brand of faux feminism went largely unchallenged (Rinehart 2008). The Conservatives undoubtedly ‘won’ the issue of child care, which ultimately helped them claim victory in the 2006 election.

Once in office, Prime Minister Harper recognized that small, targeted family benefits and tax credits were an effective mechanism for reaching key niche demographics and filling the media cycle (Interviewee no. 25, 28 May 2018). While Harper’s proclivity for ‘boutique’ micro-policies alienated some of his closest ideological kin, it was universally recognized as good politics and spawned a number of imitators (of all partisan stripes) at the provincial level. For instance, while child activity tax credits were virtually non-existent¹⁹³ before Harper took office, such credits could be found in most of Canada’s provinces by the time he left—collectively accounting for nearly \$270 million in public spending (Sauder 2014, p. 76).¹⁹⁴

Harper’s more lasting contribution to Canada’s family policy regime came in his willingness to pour substantial sums of money into the national child benefit system, particularly toward the tail end of his time in office. Hoping to recapture the magic that the UCCB brought for his Conservatives in the 2006 campaign, Harper pushed all of his chips into the center of the table in the lead up to the fall 2015 election—cutting a child benefit check for every household dependent under the age of eighteen in Canada. While this ‘vote buying’

¹⁹² Due in part to the failure of the first push for a national daycare program in the mid-1980s.

¹⁹³ At this point one child activity tax credit existed, in the small Atlantic province of Nova Scotia, costing the provincial government around one million dollars per year (Sauder 2014, p. 76).

¹⁹⁴ This figure includes both federal and provincial child activity tax credits.

gambit proved unsuccessful, it drove total federal child benefit spending to an effectively irreversible one percent of GDP, greatly limiting the family policy options available to the incoming Liberals. With twenty-three billion dollars per year (1.3% of GDP) now devoted to the Trudeau government's sliding scale child benefit, and payouts slated for indexation this coming summer (2018), Canada will remain a benefits centric family policy regime for the foreseeable future. This makes it highly unlikely that the federal government will get involved, in any meaningful way, in helping the provinces generate a sufficient number of high-quality subsidized daycare spaces. Parents outside of Québec will have to get used to paying some of the highest child care fees in the OECD (Luxton 2016).

Germany

Moving over to Germany, Chancellor Merkel was fortuitous to come into office at a time when talking about the nation's low birth rate was no longer taboo and even more fortunate to have found, in Ursula von der Leyen, the ideal spokeswoman for her party's family policy modernization project. Owing to her unassailable conservative lineage and her own image as a *Supermutter*, von der Leyen was deftly able to sell a radical package of Nordic-style family policy reforms while, at the same time, embodying a traditional conservative iconography of maternalism. It is unlikely that anybody else would have been able to put together such a broad consensus in favor of the reforms. Following the lead of her predecessor, SPD-affiliated family minister Renate Schmidt, von der Leyen effectively constructed Germany's anemic domestic birth rate as a potential threat to the country's long-run economic vitality and, therein, built a compelling case for unprecedented public investments in dual earner supporting family

policies. This would have been a difficult narrative for any male politician to construct, especially given Germany's unique historical baggage with pronatalism. Given her personal popularity and the overwhelming level of support she obtained for her family policy agenda, von der Leyen could claim substantial credit for the Christian Democrats regaining their historical edge among female voters (Wiliarty 2013, p. 175).

While Merkel found the perfect surrogate in von der Leyen, the change in direction on family policy reflected years of groundwork put in by Merkel herself in an effort to make the CDU's agenda more palatable to a new generation of voters. It was also significant that the reforms took place under a Grand Coalition government, which limited the sway of the socially conservative CSU, and were largely consistent with a preestablished policy blueprint developed within an SPD-controlled family ministry. The longer-term political ascension of women is also an important part of the story as, with three of Germany's major political parties having established formal targets for women's representation in the 1980s and 1990s,¹⁹⁵ a critical mass of female legislators and backroom players has since materialized. This bloc, which spans the political spectrum, has collectively ensured that matters which disproportionately affect women—such as child care and parental leave—receive the appropriate amount of political attention.

Finally, the heated discourse surrounding the *Betreuungsgeld* reveals just how far away Germany has moved from the male breadwinner paradigm during the Merkel years. In the not too distant past, the monthly allowance for stay-at-home mothers would have been a no-brainer for the CDU—in keeping with the well-established Christian-democratic practice of

¹⁹⁵ The Greens, SPD, and CDU respectively.

recognizing the (monetary) value of household work. The fact that the allowance drew such a strong backlash, and was even divisive within the CDU's own caucus, is a striking testament to the decline of traditional German familialism.

However, it would be a mistake to attribute this shift entirely to evolving gender relations as it is clear (from both my review of the relevant literature and the results of my statistical model reported in chapter 5) that several criticisms of the *Betreuungsgeld* invoked its potentially detrimental effects on children from less well-educated households, and especially children from migrant backgrounds. Interestingly, these concerns were most commonly articulated by well-intentioned moderate and left-of-center actors who generally embraced the view of Germany as a modern, multi-ethnic society. As such, we see in the *Betreuungsgeld* debate an important example of a migrant-centered social policy discourse that differs considerably from the selectivist rhetoric associated with welfare chauvinism—and in fact favors more comprehensive social programs. This indicates a more complicated interplay between migration and the welfare state than is commonly presented by scholars.

Theoretical Contribution, External Validity, and Avenues for Further Research

This study makes a palpable contribution to scholarship on the recent and ongoing family policy reforms observed across the OECD (Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser 2015; Mätzke and Ostner 2010a; Thévenon 2011) and the role of partisanship therein. While periods of left party rule continue to present the most favorable conditions for reform (Huber and Stephens 2001; Mahon 2012; O'Connor 2015), a cross-partisan consensus in favor of more 'modern' family policies is undeniably beginning to take shape. Here, I show that the prevailing cross-

national political climate presents right-of-center parties in particular with new opportunities to expand their respective electoral bases through the strategic priming of family policies. This reflects a longer-term secular transformation of political contestation wherein contemporary parties now rely less on traditional partisan cleavages and actively seek out novel issues that will appeal to strategically valuable segments of the electorate (Green-Pedersen 2007; Hobolt and De Vries 2015; Carmines and Stimson 1989). I make a more modest contribution to the heretofore “remarkably silent” scholarly discourse on the intersection between migration and family policy (Grødem 2016) by documenting, in my discussion of Germany, an instance where migrant-centered arguments were used to advocate more comprehensive and inclusive welfare state policies.

If the dynamics observed here extend beyond my two chosen cases, we should expect parties from across the ideological spectrum to continue to pitch new family policies as a tactic for building viable electoral coalitions. Following Morgan (2013) I envision that family policy will continue to be a fecund terrain for issue competition between parties of the right, left, and center. This should bode well for the continued expansion of family policy across the rich OECD countries, at least in terms of aggregate spending.

An intensification of partisan contestation with respect to family policy can already be observed across multiple jurisdictions. For instance, Donald Trump emphasized the unmet needs of working American mothers at several points during his unorthodox presidential campaign. Work/family reconciliation was an especially common theme in campaign-related statements made by Trump’s daughter Ivanka, who notably gave a prime-time televised address focused on women’s issues at the 2016 Republican National Convention. A Republican-

sponsored paid parental leave plan, championed by Ivanka herself,¹⁹⁶ has since materialized in the United States Senate, with draft legislation expected for the fall of 2018 (Jagoda et al. 2018). Similarly, the United Kingdom's governing Conservative Party has made a consistent effort to match, and in some respects exceed, the commitments to subsidized child care made by the predecessor Labour government. The Conservatives have, in fact, doubled the preexisting number of free child care hours available for three and four year olds, extending the period to thirty hours per week in the fall of 2017 (Weale 2017).

However, in both cases, a continued ideational primacy of neoliberalism promises to dampen any substantive contribution that conservative actors make to the modernization of family policy. The Republican advocates of paid parental leave insist that their plan will be "budget neutral" (Shapiro 2018) and, while Britain's Conservatives have sustained (and even expanded) formal commitments to subsidizing child care, they have more clandestinely sought to reduce the financial burden of such commitments by relaxing caregiver qualifications and expanding the role of large private chains in the delivery of services (Lewis and West 2017). The residual pull of neoliberal considerations on these otherwise reorienting conservative entities is cause for concern, as the experience of Québec shows that a myopic focus on cost containment may result in ineffective—or even counterproductive—family policies.

This study has, of course, raised (at least) as many questions as it has answered, which leaves open several avenues for further research. The most underexplored (and potentially most fruitful) of such pathways is more systematic research at the intersection of family policy and migration. As observed by Grødem (2016), family policies embody cultural norms that

¹⁹⁶ Ivanka Trump now serves as an unpaid senior advisor to the president.

other social policies do not and, as such, will likely come under increasing pressure as advanced democracies continue to grapple with multiculturalism. The German case, along with the Scandinavian family policy narratives documented by Grødem, demonstrates that the effects of continued migration on family policies are likely to be contingent upon framing strategies utilized by opinion leaders. The evolution of such frames is worth tracking as migration and multiculturalism promise to remain salient issues across affluent countries in the years to come.

Canada's experience with child care, and particularly the divergence between Québec and the other provinces, provokes several interesting questions with respect to federalism and the (non-)diffusion of social policies. It is indeed curious that a single province can sustain a popular standalone daycare program for over two decades with no spillover to its neighbors. What's even more peculiar is that critics have (with some success) cherry-picked shortcomings of Québec's system in a concerted effort to sour the rest of the Canadian public on the idea of universal child care. The state of affairs clashes dramatically with prior scholarly accounts of the province-to-province diffusion of major social policies (see, e.g., Maioni 1998). Perhaps Québec's anomalous identity as a 'culturally distinct society' has limited the appeal of its signature family policy to the other provinces. In any event, my findings suggest that Canada's child care legacy presents an intriguing case of 'negative policy diffusion'—a possibility that warrants more systematic investigation.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Date	Interviewee	Position	Format	Medium	Length
6/17/2016	No. 1	MP (federal), Fmr. Cabinet Minister	Semi-Structured	Telephone	25 min
11/8/2016	No. 2	Pollster (private), Fmr. Conservative staffer	Semi-Structured	Telephone	45 min
11/15/2016	No. 3	CPC Director of Comms, Party Spokesperson	Semi-Structured	Telephone	45 min
8/24/2017	No. 4	Fmr. Chief of Staff to Cabinet Minister (Liberal)	Semi-Structured	Telephone	90 min
11/17/2017	No. 5	Executive with provincial child care advocacy group (Manitoba)	Semi-Structured	Telephone	60 min
11/22/2017	No. 6	Senior civil servant (retired) Prov. of Manitoba	Semi-Structured	Telephone	60 min
11/23/2017	No. 7	Spokesperson for provincial child care advocacy group (British Columbia), Fmr. School Board Trustee	Semi-Structured	Telephone	45 min
1/3/2018	No. 8	Economics Professor at Univ. of British Columbia	Semi-Structured	In-person (Vancouver, B.C.)	90 min
3/8/2018	No. 9	Population Health researcher at Univ. of British Columbia, affordability advocate	Semi-Structured	Telephone	45 min
3/15/2018	No. 10	Labor union rep. for non-profit child care workers	Semi-Structured	Telephone	60 min
3/15/2018	No. 11	B.C.-based independent social policy consultant	Semi-Structured	Telephone	60 min
3/26/2018	No. 12	Researcher, R.E.A.L. Women of Canada	Semi-Structured	Telephone	30 min
3/27/2018	No. 13	B.C.-based child care policy researcher	Semi-Structured	Telephone	30 min
3/29/2018	No. 14	Professor, Early Childhood Development researcher at Univ. de Québec à Montreal	Semi-Structured	Skype	60 min
3/29/2018	No. 15	Sociology Professor at Univ. of Manitoba, expert on history of child care policy in Canada	Semi-Structured	Telephone	60 min

4/5/2018	No. 16	P.E.I.-based child care researcher, fmr. Provincial civil servant	Semi-Structured	Telephone	60 min
4/5/2018	No. 17	Professor of Public Policy at Univ. of Toronto	Semi-Structured	Skype	45 min
4/17/2018	No. 18	Director of national child care research institute	Semi-Structured	Telephone	80 min
4/17/2018	No. 19	Ottawa-based journalist and political correspondent	Semi-Structured	Telephone	30 min
4/19/2018	No. 20	Professor of Political Science at Univ. of Toronto	Semi-Structured	Skype	45 min
4/20/2018	No. 21	Professor of Public Finance, Simon Fraser University	Semi-Structured	Telephone	30 min
4/24/2018	No. 22	President of national child care advocacy group	Semi-Structured	Telephone	60 min
5/4/2018	No. 23	Fmr. senior policy advisor to Prime Minister Harper	Semi-Structured	Telephone	45 min
5/14/2018	No. 24	Fmr. policy director at Canadian chapter of major global humanitarian org.	Semi-Structured	Telephone	40 min
5/28/2018	No. 25	Fmr. Provincial Director (Ontario) with Canadian Taxpayer's Federation	Semi-Structured	Telephone	45 min
Total					1285 min

Individuals who declined or did not reply to my interview request (in alphabetical order):

Rona Ambrose, Morna Ballantyne, Ken Battle, Candice Bergen, Ian Brodie, Gordon Cleveland, Susan Delacourt, Carolyn Ferns Stephen Harper, Anita Khanna, Rachel Langford, Kellie Leitch, Wendy McKeen, Patrick Muttart, Scott Reid

APPENDIX 2: TOPICS, KEYWORDS AND EXEMPLAR DOCUMENTS (Chap. 5)

GERMANY

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>Keywords</u>	<u>Exemplar docs</u>
INFIGHTING	coalit, fdp, csu, cdu, union, group, bundestag, seehof, parliamentary, critic	Coalition crisis due care allowance Hasselfeldt sees "no solo" of the Union Vote postponed again in the Bundestag Vote on care allowance after the summer break The coalition never dies
CHILDREN	children, educ, child, place, benefit, home, expans, schröder, center, german, daycare	"Integration begins in early childhood education" New education report warns of care money Money instead of early childhood education Education report strengthens opponents of allowance Scientists correct details of care allowance
PARENTS	women, work, polici, mother, state, need, life, freedom, birthrate, Father	Compatibility lie The care allowance gives parents freedom A golden apron for the stove premium Stove premium Holding what parents from raising allowance
CONSTITUTION	feder, govern state, law, constitute spd, country, court applic, question	The counterweight from the north Why the federal care allowance is not paid What families need to know now Constitutional Court has overturned care benefit What happens if the care allowance falls
BARGAINING	Parti, minist, cdu spd, green, elect chancellor merkel issu, talk	Coalition talks unlikely Waiting for the big bang Black and green, the unlive dream The SPD will require six key ministries control of the dance SPD
FISCAL	euro, benefit, billion, money, plan, cost, financ, pension, govern, budget	The federal government is about to balance budgets Tell me where the scratch lists are "Bankruptcy for the Merkel Government" Election gifts exacerbate rigor Money begets no children

CANADA

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>Keywords</u>	<u>Exemplar docs</u>
ADMIN	benefit, plan, program, govern, money, cost, children, parent, payment, feder	Government leery of providing cost details on child-care plan Not all child-care cheques in mail Provinces challenge Ottawa on child care Liberals rethinking child care: Party denies it will kill Tory program if in power Couples plan to invest child-care allowance: Education savings plan
TAXATION	tax, income, family, benefit, credit, cutsplit, increase, pay, less	Coming Tax Relief 'Oversold': Watchdog Tax package corrects inequity; Ottawa's changes net out on progressive side Want a federal tax break? Settle down Different approach to child benefits; Tories opt for tax credit instead of payment Child care benefit comes with a catch; Cheques not as attractive once taxes factored in
STRATEGY	conserv, liber, parti, harper, elect, ndp, voter, polit, cheq, support	Childcare cheques give Tories big boost; Lead in new poll If the election can be bought, the Tories will win easily Liberals can't win on Tories' turf Stephen Harper's slow-mo summer Canada finds its 'inner Conservative'
DAYCARE	parent, daycar, work, famili, children, polic, home, Quebec, singl, kid	No greater investment Meet the new daycare-poor The forgotten moms The case for publicly funded child care The daycare trade-off
SCANDAL	govern, minist, polievr, hous, public, video, social, applic, Ottawa, depart	More than 300 people linked to suspected case of citizenship fraud Poilievre film raises fresh concerns over Tories' use of public funds Minister promises crackdown on consultants who counsel fraud Opposition seeks clarity regarding MP's 'vanity video' Two more ministers blasted for videos

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