The Child Care Connection: Popular Media Representations of Care and Women's Support of Potential Care Policies

---

**Research Questions**

- **RQ1** Which modes of child care provision are reflected in popular media representations, and to what extent?
- **RQ2** To what extent are women’s child care policy preferences reflected in the popular media environment?
- **RQ3** Does more frequent popular media consumption indicate that one holds child care policy preferences more aligned with the representations prevalent in the popular media environment?

---

**Results (RQ1 + RQ2)**

- **RQ1** 80% of the time any child care is represented in pop. media, it is familial care.
- **RQ2** Government policy support by the survey respondents, but it is the most represented

---

**Methodology**

Sample: 7 most watched seasons of broadcast TV and 6 most watched seasons of streaming TV in 2021
- 3 episodes from each
- 6 most popular movies in 2021
- 6 most popular Youtube channels
- 5 most recent videos from each
- 7 most popular Instagram and 7 most popular Facebook accounts
- 20 most recent posts from each

**Survey**

Sample: 200 women with at least one child under 18 and household income below $70k in the US

**Measures:**
- Demographic and personal experience variables
- Time consuming each of the types of popular media from content analysis per week
- Level of support (1-6) for each of 5 potential child care policies at the national level, each written to fund one of the modes of child care provision

---

**Background**

- Audience studies (Zenor, 2014)
- Feminist theory (Himmelweit, 2014)
- Welfare state theory (Esping-Andersen, 1990)
- Social construction (Rigby, 2007)
- Modes of child care provision: (Taylor-Gooby, 2020)
  1. Government
  2. Familial
  3. Charity/Community
  4. Market
  5. Employer

---

**Results (RQ3)**

- More frequent popular media consumption does not indicate that one holds child care policy preferences more aligned with the representations in the popular media environment.

---

**Implications**

- For policy-makers
  - Biden’s proposed policies (shifting child care toward government and market) are supported by low- and middle-income mothers in the US
  - A good sign for democracy

- For popular media creators
  - The many representations of familial care across all 6 popular media types may not be reflective of many mothers’ ideal care behaviors
  - Consider reflecting government or market care in new content

---

**References**