Who You Gonna Call? Gender Inequality in External Demands for Parental Involvement*

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Abstract

Gender imbalance in time spent on child rearing causes gender inequalities in labor market outcomes, human capital accumulation, and economic mobility. We conduct a large-scale field experiment with a near-universe of US schools to investigate a potential source of this inequality: external demands for parental involvement. Schools receive an email from a fictitious two-parent household with a general inquiry and are asked to call one of the parents back. Mothers are 1.4 times more likely than fathers to be contacted. We decompose this inequality into discrimination stemming from differential beliefs about parents' responsiveness versus other factors and demonstrate that the gender gap in external demands is associated with various measures of gender norms. We also show that signaling a father's availability substantially changes the gender pattern of callbacks. Our findings underscore a process through which agents outside the household contribute to within-household gender inequalities.

JEL Classification: J16, J71, C93, J22
Keywords: Discrimination, Gender Gap, Field Experiment

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1 Introduction

Despite the convergence of men's and women's roles in the labor market, a substantial and persistent gender earnings gap of nearly 18% remains (US Census Bureau, 2020). Prior studies have documented many factors contributing to this gap. Of recent focus is women's tendency to concentrate in occupations with more temporal flexibility, which is especially true for women with children (Price and Wasserman, 2022; Duchini and Van Effenterre, 2022; Wasserman, 2022; Gallen et al., 2019; Goldin, 2014).

The need for greater workplace flexibility is consistent with the robust finding that women—even those who work outside the home—engage in a disproportionate share of child- and household-related tasks.[1] US Time Use Survey data reveal that married mothers employed full-time spend significantly more time caring for children and engaging in housework and food preparation than analogous fathers (see panel (a) of Figure 1). Similarly, Cubas et al. (2021) find that 35% of mothers experience a household interruption during their workday, compared to only 20% of fathers. These gender imbalances may contribute to economic disadvantages for women, potentially affecting labor market outcomes, human capital accumulation, and economic growth, as documented extensively in the motherhood wage gap literature.[2]

In this paper, we investigate one potential source of this inequality, which we refer to as "external demands for parental involvement." In short, institutions beyond the household and beyond the place of employment put demands on families, which may fall disproportionately on mothers. These demands come from outside forces, such as schools, doctors' offices, extracurricular activities, or grandparents. It is possible that small, optimizing decisions by these external agents contribute to the gender gap.[3] Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to document the exact magnitude of external forces alone in explaining gender inequality, this paper offers a proof of concept that these external forces might lead to worse outcomes for society as a whole by reinforcing social biases and perpetuating the cycle of gender inequality.

The social biases inherent in the external demands placed on parents can take many forms. For example, women may get called on more often than men for child-related tasks, such as

[1] See, for example, Aguiar and Hurst (2007); Craig and Mullan (2011); Schoonbroodt (2018).

[2] Many prior studies have documented the motherhood wage gap in a wide range of contexts, including work by Adams-Prassl et al. (2023); Ciasullo and Uccioli (2023); Kleven (2023); Gallen et al. (2024); Andresen and Nix (2022); Jack et al. (n.d.); Erosa et al. (2022); Albanese et al. (2022); Cubas et al. (2021); Duchini and Van Effenterre (2022); Cubas et al. (2022); Kleven et al. (2019); Kuziemko et al. (2018) and Angelov et al. (2016).

[3] A recent nationally representative survey finds that men want to be contacted by their child's school 46% of the time (American Family Survey, 2022).

school-related requests. Schools, therefore, provide an ideal setting to investigate external demands for parental involvement by gender. To do this, we conduct a field experiment in a K-12 school setting. Specifically, we send emails with phone numbers for both parents in a fictitious two-parent household to the near-universe of US school principals (N = 80,071), asking the principal to contact a parent by phone about a general school-related inquiry. Motivated by our theoretical model, we randomly vary which parent sends the email and the information about their availability to disentangle whether discrimination stems from decision-makers' beliefs about parents' responsiveness or other deterrents. Beliefs about responsiveness might include the perception that women are more available because they are stay-at-home mothers or that women naturally want to be more involved in a school-related decision and will, therefore, be more responsive than men. Other deterrents might include distaste for calling a specific parent, systemic factors, social norms, or beliefs not related to the value of a parent's response.

While observational data shows that mothers interact with external child-related decision-makers more than fathers, it is impossible to distinguish whether this is a result of specialization within the household or a function of social constraints. An experiment allows us to measure the presence of bias and to investigate its origins. Furthermore, randomly varying the information about parents' availability and desire for equal decision-making enables us to examine whether the gender gap can be mitigated by households changing the signals they send. Our experiment shows that combining verbal signals about parents' responsiveness with non-verbal signals of who sends the email can substantially change (and even reverse) the gender pattern of calls. Our model allows us to further explore other attributes, such as the prevailing gender norms of schools and geographic locations. We show that such attributes impact the inequality in demands on parents' time, implying that the gender gap might be mitigated through policies targeting behavioral change in specific sub-groups.[4]

We find substantial gender and treatment differences. Principals are significantly more likely to call mothers first in response to our simplest message which contains no information about parents' availability. On average, conditional on a call being made, mothers are called first 1.4 times more than fathers (59% versus 41% for the 20% of principals who make any call, providing direct evidence of greater external demands on mothers relative to fathers. Our findings underscore a significant gender inequality in external demands, which are plentiful within the school setting (e.g., picking up a sick child, volunteering for school events) and beyond (e.g., which parent schedules doctor visits and registers for summer

[4]The scope of this paper is two-parent heterosexual households, but we acknowledge that there are many types of households and exploring the effect of external demands in other settings is an important question for future work. We discuss this further in Appendix I.

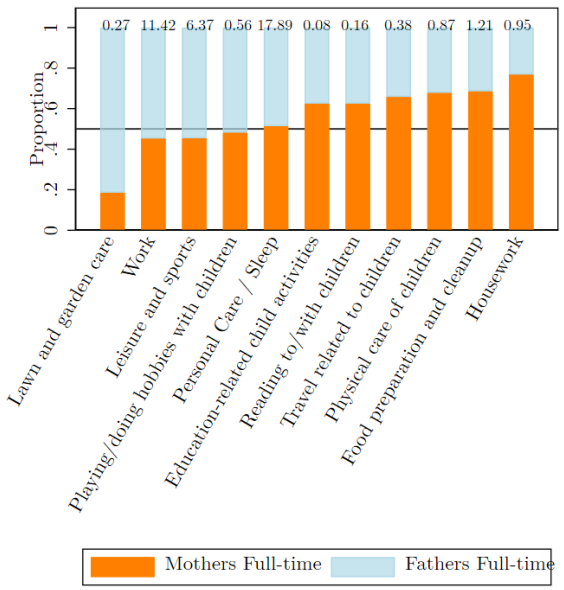
camps, who coordinates extracurricular activities, and who grandparents expect to take care of a child's needs) and point to potential impacts on mothers' time and labor market outcomes. While this paper cannot measure the direct link between external demands and the gender earnings gap, using the American Time Use survey (ATUS) data and a survey of parents, we provide suggestive evidence of greater impacts on mothers relative to fathers. Furthermore, we document that even when households exert substantial efforts to achieve a more balanced split of child-related tasks (eg., by repeatedly reminding the school who to contact or by outsourcing the task), they incur disruption costs which may exacerbate existing gender gaps in the labor market.

Finally, in addition to documenting a gender gap in external demands for parents' time, we explore the reasons why it exists and test potential mechanisms. We show that explicitly signaling that the father is more available mitigates the inequality and reverses the gender pattern in callbacks. It is notable, however, that even when fathers state that they are more available, mothers still get 26% of the calls. In contrast, signals that reinforce stereotypes that mothers are more available cause them to receive 90% of the calls. Sending the email from the father significantly raises the share of calls to fathers. However, even when the email comes from the father *and* contains a positive signal about the father's availability, 12% of the calls are still directed to mothers. This highlights an important asymmetry in the effectiveness of informational interventions in closing the observed gender gap in external demands for parents' time. Yet, our findings indicate that the combination of explicit and implicit signals from the parents can be an effective tool in mitigating the gender inequality in external demands.

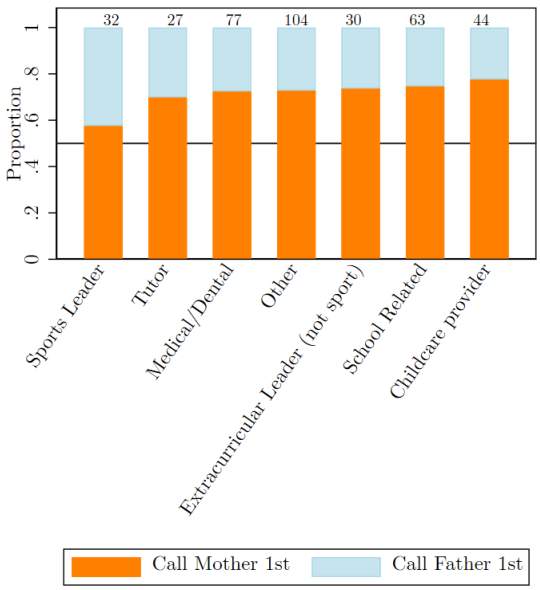
To identify the mechanisms underlying any differential demand for parental involvement, we pair a novel theoretical model of decision makers' choices of which parent to call with our field experiment as well as multiple surveys of parents and individuals whose jobs involve interacting with parents and children. The model allows us to attribute any differences we find to statistical discrimination based on beliefs about parents' responsiveness, norms about calling the person who made contact first, or other factors, which we identify through a separate survey with school administrators.[5] We find that differential beliefs about parents' responsiveness and differences in other deterrents account for roughly equal shares of the excess calls to mothers.

[5]Our randomized signals about parents' availability and desire for equal decision-making only impact a decision-maker's beliefs about the benefit of a call due to changes in responsiveness. Thus, the differences in the proportions of calls across signals tell us what happens when those beliefs change. Any residual differences in the proportions of calls to mothers versus fathers are attributable to other deterrents. The model also accounts for the impact of which parent sends the email, but this impact is neutralized in our results because our intervention is balanced with respect to which parent sends the email.

Figure 1: Gender Inequality in Household Time Use and External Contacts



(a) Proportion of Time Full-time Employed Mothers vs. Fathers in Two Parent Households Spent in Day (48 Hours Per Household)



(b) Proportion of Time Mother vs. Father in Two Parent Households are Contacted First By Type of External Decision-Maker

Notes:
Panel (a) shows the proportion of time male versus female respondents spend on different activities. Respondents are married adults working full-time with children under 18, according to the American Time Use Survey from the BLS years 2015-19 combined. There is a line for the equal time spent on an activity between mothers and fathers. The number at the top of each bar is the total hours spent on this activity by male and female respondents collectively (sums close to 48 hours). For brevity, we exclude some categories (e.g., purchasing goods/services, caring for non-children, non-child related travel, and other activities). Full-time working mothers tend to spend equal or more time on these excluded categories relative to the full-time working fathers.
Panel (b) shows the proportion of time mothers and fathers are contacted by adult leaders who interact with parents. There is a line at the equal amounts of contact to mothers versus fathers. The self-reported proportion of calling mothers was statistically significantly greater than 50% at the 10 percent level using a one-way t-test for all types of decision-makers. Respondents were 377 adults who interacted with parents and self-identified as doing so mainly within a specific role (e.g., Teacher, Nurse, Sports Leader). The number at the top of each bar is the number of decision-makers of each type. See Appendix M.2 for details. We told respondents to imagine "a family that consists of one mother and one father living together jointly raising at least one child." We then asked respondents the following question about a mother or a father: What proportion of the time do you contact the [father][mother] first if only contacting one parent first? With 50% being randomized to be asked about the [father], and 50% randomized to be asked about the [mother].

This paper extends the existing literature in four important ways. First, we experimentally document a previously unexplored gender gap in external demands for parental involvement. While prior research has found that women spend significantly more time on child-related tasks than men in two-parent households, our study is the first to show that external demands for parental involvement partly drive this inequality. This gender inequality can have substantial economic and social costs for women and men, who both report a desire for a more equal distribution of child-related tasks (Pew Research Center, 2015). A nationally representative survey of parents of school-age children finds that women report

being contacted by the school more often than men, yet wish they were contacted less often. In contrast, men wish to be contacted about half the time (American Family Survey, 2022). We find that women are significantly more likely to be the point of contact for external decision-makers across a wide range of child-related domains, from doctors' offices to extracurricular sports coaches to religious leaders (see panel (b) of Figure 1).[6] Perhaps most importantly, in our survey (Appendix M.3), mothers were significantly more likely than fathers to report that child-related external interruptions negatively impacted their careers and earnings. And even though in principle women can 'outsource' the task to their partner, we find that outsourcing imposes a non-trivial cost.

Related prior research has documented the effects of childcare and other care-giving disruptions on women's labor market outcomes. Price and Wasserman (2022), for example, show that summer childcare constraints contribute to career choices and earnings for women with school-aged children, in line with findings from Duchini and Van Effenterre (2022) and Cowan et al. (2023). Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated school and daycare closures led to significantly larger declines in women's employment and labor force participation relative to men. The negative effects have been especially large for mothers of school-aged children, leading to significant declines in their mental and physical health.[7] Understanding whether external demands for parental involvement contribute to gender inequalities in child-related tasks can shed light on the drivers of the persistent gender earnings gap and inform policies aimed at mitigating these inequalities.

Second, we contribute to the growing literature on the role of information in reducing discrimination. Prior work in economics and social psychology has considered the role of individual-specific information in reducing reliance on group statistics for evaluations (also known as statistical or belief-based discrimination). This literature has produced mixed evidence. While some studies show that providing accurate information can reduce statistical discrimination (Laouénan and Rathelot, 2022; Bohren et al., 2019; Gallen and Wasserman, 2021), others find no discernible effects (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004; Oreopoulos, 2011). Our paper advances this literature by documenting an interesting asymmetry in the effects of information on reducing discrimination. In our field experiment, we test whether providing information about parents' availability mitigates the gender gap in external de-

[6] Prior studies suggest that women anticipate child-related disruptions long before having children which may push them toward more flexible jobs, leading to substantial labor market penalties, including reduced labor force participation (D'Angelis, 2023; Kleven et al., 2021; Mas and Pallais, 2020; Bursztyn et al., 2017; Mas and Pallais, 2017; Pertold-Gebicka et al., 2016; Anderson et al., 2002) and curbed earnings (Cortes and Pan, 2021; Goldin, 2014; Gicheva, 2013).

[7] Adams-Prassl et al. (2023); Couch et al. (2022); Garcia and Cowan (2022); Heggeness and Leon (2024); Amuedo-Dorantes et al. (2020); Zamarro and Prados (2021); Sevilla and Smith (2020); Montes et al. (2021); Heggeness (2020); Russell and Sun (2020); APA (2021).

mands for parental involvement. While we find that signaling fathers' availability moves calls away from mothers, we also document the limits of this informational intervention. Specifically, in our baseline variation, we find that signaling mothers' high availability leads to mothers being contacted 90% of the time, while signaling fathers' high availability increases calls to fathers only up to 74%.

A related literature investigates the underlying sources of discrimination. While field experiments lend themselves to identifying the existence of discrimination and its incidence, few experiments can identify the mechanisms that lead to discriminatory behavior (Bertrand and Duflo, 2017). The two most-studied mechanisms for discrimination in economics are tastes/preferences (Becker, 1957) and beliefs (Phelps, 1972; Arrow, 1973; Aigner and Cain, 1977; Bohren et al., forthcoming), with recent work emphasizing the importance of indirect discrimination stemming from systemic factors (Bohren et al., 2022). We advance this literature by pairing a simple, static theoretical model with a field experiment to identify separate parameters that capture beliefs about availability versus other deterrents that lead to discriminatory behavior in our setting. While we cannot distinguish between accurate and inaccurate beliefs, using the structural model to identify beliefs allows us to avoid the identification problem present in many studies attempting to isolate the source of discrimination (Bohren et al., forthcoming).

Finally, this paper contributes to the literature on institutional and systemic discrimination. Prior work in sociology and economics has explored the idea that discrimination may be perpetuated by organizations or structures in addition to individuals (for discussions, see Small and Pager, 2020; Bohren et al., 2022; Karpowitz et al., 2023; Kline et al., 2022; Babcock et al., 2017; Scott, 2013; Council, 2004; Powell and DiMaggio, 2012). We provide novel evidence of systemic discrimination by showing that school principals' optimizing behavior creates worse outcomes for some individuals in society and arguably for society as a whole. As Small and Pager (2020) argue, institutional discrimination deserves particular attention, given the deeply ingrained nature of systemic practices and their long-lasting consequences.

2 Field Experiment

Our theoretical model (discussed in Appendix Section H) and our survey of educators inform the design of a large-scale field experiment, which consists of sending email messages to a near-universe of US school principals. The emails are sent from a set of fictitious par-

ents, one male and one female.[8] Email is a common way for parents to contact schools; in our survey, 75% of educators report being contacted by parents via email at least once a month (See Appendix M.1 for details about the survey). Our specific inquiry is meant to mimic a message a household might send when relocating to a new area and exploring new school options. Additionally, several recent studies have used emailing schools as part of their methodology to document discrimination against students with disabilities, of certain races, or with homosexual parents (see, for example, Diaz-Serrano and Meix-Llop, 2016; Bergman and McFarlin Jr, 2018; Ahmed et al., 2020; Oberfield and Incantalupo, 2021; Cantet et al., 2022; and Hermes et al., 2023).

In the study most like our own, Hermes et al. (2023) emailed childcare centers in Germany from either the mother or the father and found that response rates are similar, but responses to mothers are shorter and less positive than responses to fathers. Importantly, Hermes et al. (2023) do not offer decision-makers the choice between contacting a mother or a father, as we do in the current study, so our outcome variables are not directly comparable. Furthermore, they explore responses from parents about optional childcare for young children while we look at questions about mandatory schooling for older children. Arguably, early childcare is a setting where a woman contacting a childcare center might be viewed as shirking her maternal responsibilities. In contrast, a woman contacting a school might be viewed as an involved parent in our setting. Consistent with our results, they find that gender norms may be a major driver of the observed inequality. We discuss this further in Section 4.1.

2.1 Setting

Our experiment takes place in a K-12 school setting. A large portion of the general population, about 40% of households in the US, have school-aged children, and 97% of parents send their children to school outside the home (NCES, 2021). Schools are an ideal setting to explore external demands on parents' time because of its' near-universal relevance and because the gender gap in time spent on children in school-related activities closely mirrors the overall tendency for mothers to engage in more child-related tasks than fathers (BLS, 2021).

For several reasons, we believe that any gender gaps we document in our specific task will generalize to other tasks in the school setting, such as picking up a sick child, volunteering for the book fair, or joining the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). First, educators in our survey said that they would contact the mother first in many of these

[8] We describe our data collection process in detail in Appendix L as well as ethical considerations in Appendix J.

scenarios (we discuss the survey in Appendix M.1). Second, the gender distribution of these tasks is significantly skewed; mothers comprise almost 90% of PTA members, and only 13% of fathers report high levels of involvement in their child's school activities, compared to 53% of mothers (see Daly and Groes (2017); Belkin (2009); Scottland (2020)). While it is likely that a significant part of the overall gender disparity in child-related tasks results from optimizing decisions made within the household, our results indicate that biased external demands for parental involvement is one potential driver of the gap.

Furthermore, although the gender gap in external demands for parental involvement is established for our test case of outreach from a school administrator, we expect that it indicates a dynamic likely present in a wide range of social situations that require parental involvement[9]. As shown in Figure 1, mothers spend more time than fathers on many child-related tasks, and decision-makers from various organizations beyond schools report contacting mothers more than fathers.

2.2 Messages

In our experiment, school principals receive emails from a fictitious two-parent, heterosexual household. The email states that the parents are searching for a school for their child and would like to have a phone discussion about it. We provide separate phone numbers for each parent. The email sender's phone number is always listed first, and we randomize whether the primary sender is the father or mother. We call this the "No Signal" message.[10] We developed the specific message in consultation with school administrators from various schools (public, private, and charter). Our conversations and survey evidence (Appendix M.1) confirmed parents frequently make general email inquiries to schools before enrolling and that it is common for one parent to email and copy the other parent.

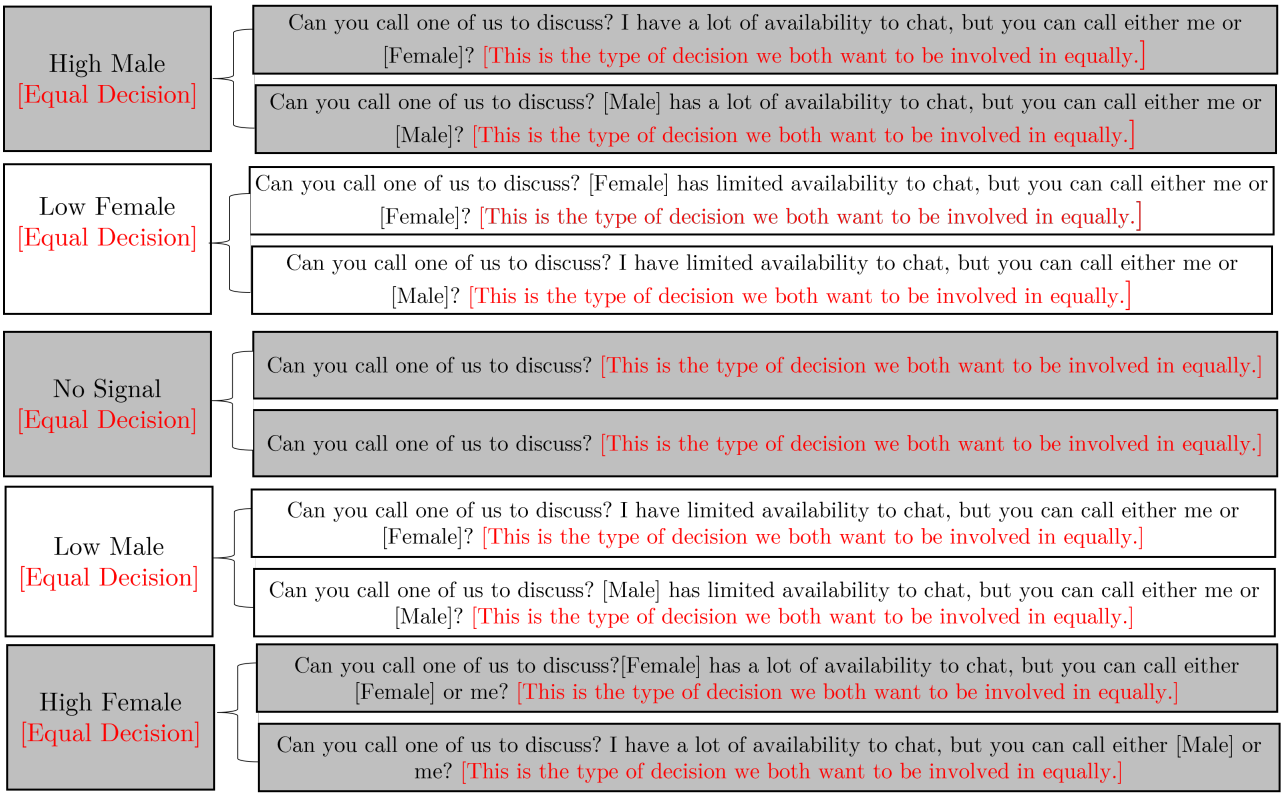
We then augment our No Signal message in two ways. First, we add a baseline sentence indicating the availability of a specific parent in the two-parent household. Figure 2 shows the exact variation in wording. Details of the exact names and email addresses used in the experiment are in Appendix L, and the full text of the Baseline variation messages is in Appendix G.[11] This leaves us with five Baseline messages.

[9]See for example, Heffernan et al. (2024) who find that mothers are significantly more likely than fathers to report scheduling doctors' appointments and taking children to well-child visits.

[10]To be precise, it is a "No Verbal Signal" message, and there is a non-verbal signal inherent in which parent sends the email. We will address this issue later.

[11]One might wonder specifically about the realism of messages which are from Parent A but then state that Parent A is not very available (e.g., Low Female sent from mother or Low Male sent from father). However, as seen in Table 2, response rates for these emails are quite similar to those of the other emails sent, which seems

Figure 2: Field Experiment Variation in Messages



Notes: In this figure, we show a pertinent portion of differences in the messages we sent to schools in both our Baseline and Equal Decision variations. Each variation has five treatment messages: High Male, Low Female, No Signal, Low Male, and High Female. The parent who sent the email always had their phone number listed first. Above, we show the message sent from the male parent (cc'ing the female parent) and then the message from the female parent (cc'ing the male parent). The full text of example email messages in the Baseline variation is available in Appendix Section G.

Second, because messages about availability might also signal a desire for equal decision-making, we send five additional messages that add on a sentence meant to fix beliefs about the household's preferences for equal decision-making. Specifically, we add the following sentence, "This is the type of decision we both want to be involved in equally." In Appendix I, we discuss variations of these messages (e.g., longer and more detailed) that we sent to a sub-sample of principals. Our findings are robust to these variations.

We designed these messages based on our theoretical model discussed in Section H as well as a survey we conducted with educators detailed in Appendix M.1. Our survey findings reveal that a key dimension on which educators could be statistically discriminating is

in line with the fact that there is no difference in realism for these email messages versus our other messages. Furthermore, during a pilot with N=767 principals, we sent emails from a joint family account (rather than Parent A and CCing Parent B). We only piloted the Male High, No Signal and Male Low messages from a joint account but the patterns of calls to mothers versus fathers are very similar to those presented in our main text.

differential beliefs about mothers' relative responsiveness. Specifically, educators' common reasons for calling mothers first were, "I expect this person to be more likely to respond quickly" and "This person is more interested/willing." One of the model's key results is that, by varying the strength (low/high) of the signals about each of our parents' availability, as well as their desire for equal decision-making, we can disentangle the extent to which differential beliefs about parents' responsiveness drive the gender inequality.[12]

Our emails also contain a key nonverbal signal: which parent sends the email. Many survey respondents stated that they would call the parent who is listed first or who reaches out to them. Our analysis will, therefore, consider which parent sends the email. We will allow this effect to vary by treatment since the content of the message may influence decision-makers' likelihood to respond to the email sender.

2.3 Sample Frames and Data Collection

During the summer of 2022,[13] we sent emails to 80,071 school principals across the US. We begin by describing the Baseline and Equal Decision variations of our experiment, which were sent to over 60,000 school principals. We observe whether any call is made to any of the phone numbers we list, including phone calls where no voicemail was left. We also know the precise time, date, content, and length of any voicemail left for our parents. We use this information to match each phone callback to the original decision-maker who received one of our treatment emails. Appendix L details the experimental design, data collection, and matching process. Two weeks after we sent the initial email, we sent a second email telling the decision-maker we no longer needed to speak with them, thus releasing them from any obligation to continue trying to reach us. The vast majority of calls from principals are made within the first week of the original email being sent.

Our primary outcome of interest is whether a decision-maker calls the female parent, the male parent, or neither parent. Decision-makers can also email or text our parents; however, we set up an auto-response to emails and texts and found that fewer than 0.2% of our principals responded via a text message. To test whether our treatments have any effect on the relative proportions of no call, calling the female parent first, or calling the male

[12] In an early draft of this paper, we presented a preliminary version of our theoretical model that did not account for the effect of which parent sends the email. We have since added this to the model in response to feedback. Failing to account for the return-to-sender effect obscured the importance of beliefs about responsiveness in driving gender inequality in external demands for parents' time. We now also focus on the version of the model with messages that fix beliefs about preferences for equal decision-making.

[13] Throughout 2021, we conducted a series of pilot experiments with a total of 3,267 observations to iron out implementation logistics. Some pilot emails were sent out during the school year, while others were sent during the summer. Notably, we did not observe significant differences in response rates by time of year.

parent first, we run the following multinomial logit regression:

$$p_{ij}(x) = \frac{e^{\beta_j^{l\boldsymbol{M}}(LowMale)+\beta_j^{h\boldsymbol{M}}(HighMale)+\beta_j^{l\boldsymbol{F}}(LowFemale)+\beta_j^{h\boldsymbol{F}}(HighFemale)+\boldsymbol{\alpha}X_i}}{\sum_{k\in n,f,m} e^{\beta_k^{l\boldsymbol{M}}(LowMale)+\beta_k^{h\boldsymbol{M}}(HighMale)+\beta_k^{l\boldsymbol{F}}(LowFemale)+\beta_k^{h\boldsymbol{F}}(HighFemale)+\boldsymbol{\alpha}X_i}}. \quad (1)$$

In this regression model, p_{ij} is the probability that individual i calls neither parent ($j = n$), the female parent ($j = f$), or the male parent ($j = m$). Next, we have treatment indicators for each treatment beyond the No Signal treatment: LowMale, HighMale, LowFemale, and HighFemale. We can also include a vector X_i of covariates, including which parent sent the email (cc'ing the other parent) and attributes of the decision-maker and their school.

In subsequent analysis, we let the outcome variable instead be binary, taking the value one when a female parent is called and zero otherwise. We then run a simple linear regression for ease of interpreting the coefficients.

3 Results: Gender Inequality & Signal Impact

We are balanced on observable variables across our treatments as shown in Tables C.1 and C.2. Although we had intended to send an equal number of emails from fathers and mothers, as well as an equal number of emails in each of our treatments, these design choices were not attained due to some computing errors.[14] Our results are based on re-weighted data such that there is balance in the number of messages sent in each of our five messages (Figure 2), and there is balance between the number of messages sent from fathers versus mothers within a treatment arm. However, our results are quantitatively and qualitatively the same when we randomly exclude observations to achieve balance (available from authors upon request).

Overall, we observe a 20% response rate from the principals, which aligns with previous work. In studies with a similar subject pool of school principals, in line with our expectations, the response rate by phone is lower than the response rate via email.[15]

[14]The issue arose due to the use of the "set seed" command in Stata but was not detected until after our experiment had been entirely run. We have no reason to believe that this computing error has introduced any systematic bias into our results.

[15]We expected the callback response rate to be lower than the email response rate in previous studies for several reasons. First, making a phone call in response to an email is more time-consuming and takes more effort than hitting "reply." Furthermore, most of the previous studies over-sampled specific types of schools (e.g. charter schools, pre-schools), which makes direct comparisons even more difficult. Bergman and McFarlin Jr (2018) emailed about 6,000 schools with an emphasis on charter schools in 29 states and Washington DC in 2014 and 2018 and find 53% of schools receiving their baseline email respond back via *email*, although 3%

Another related outcome is whether principals take a survey in response to an email request, where recent work finds only 14% of principals take this action (Neal et al., 2020). Although not as closely related, recent studies where job applicants submit applications with a phone number and email to employers find that response rates range from 8%- 11% (Agan and Starr, 2018) to 24% (Kline et al., 2022).

We compare the observable characteristics of the principals who call back with those who do not and find some small but statistically significant differences. As reported in Appendix Table A.2, we are less likely to get a callback from elementary schools and public/charter schools. While this suggests selection into calling, we believe much of this selection is driven by the relatively fewer resources at public schools versus private schools. One might expect that elementary schools are more likely to call mothers than other types of schools; however, we do not see strong evidence of that when we separate outcomes by grade level (See Figure E.1).

3.1 Gender Inequality with No Signal

Table 1 and Figure 3 report the proportion of actions taken by decision-makers in all of our conditions, including the No Signal conditions (column (3) of Table 1 or center bars of Figure 3), which contain no verbal information about parents' availability. If there was no gender inequality and decision-makers randomly chose which parent to call, we would expect the same number of calls to male and female parents. In our No Signal Baseline variation message, we observe that about 12% of school principals call mothers first, while only 8% call fathers first. The remaining decision-makers do not call either parent. The difference in calls to male and female parents is large and statistically significant ($Pr(T > t) = 0.00$). Thus, we observe a clear gender gap in callbacks, with mothers being significantly more likely than fathers to be called first.

Another way to see this bias toward calling female parents is in the ratio of female-to-male calls in the No Signal messages, which is about 1.4. This is well above the ratio of 1 that we would expect if decision-makers were randomizing which parent to call, indicating that mothers are 1.4 times more likely than fathers to receive a call. Conditional on receiving a

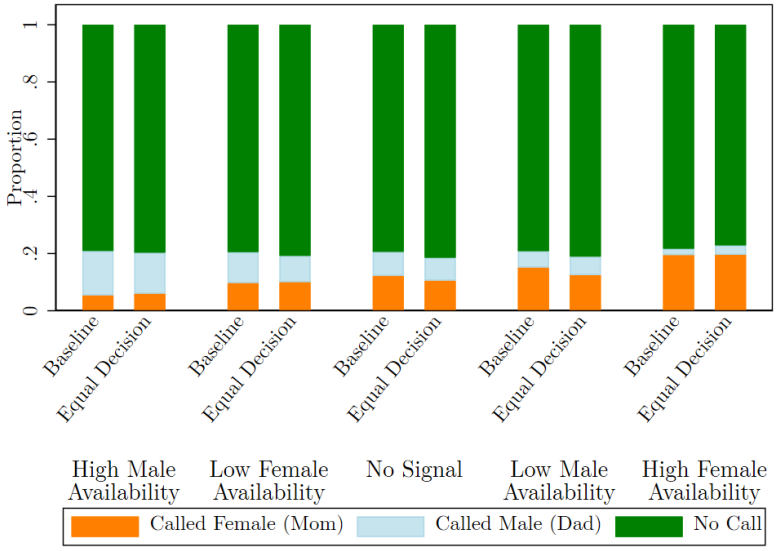
of those are automated email responses. Oberfield and Incantalupo (2021) also over-sample charter schools and sent emails to about 3,500 schools in 2018 with an *email* response rate of about 58%. Note that our sample is only about 6% of charter schools. Diaz-Serrano and Meix-Llop (2016) sent emails in Catalonia Spain in 2013 and found about a 60% *email* reply rate. Ahmed et al. (2020) emailed Swedish pre-schools in late 2019 and early 2020 and found their baseline response rate to their emails was 49%. Note, our sample is less than 1% pre-schools. Hermes et al. (2023) emailed about 9,000 childcare centers in Germany in 2021 with about a 71% email response rate. Cantet et al. (2022) emailed about 450 private schools in Columbia in 2022, with 53% receiving an email response. In our study only about 16% of our sample are private schools.

Table 1: **Summary Statistics by Treatment in Baseline & Equal Decision Variation**

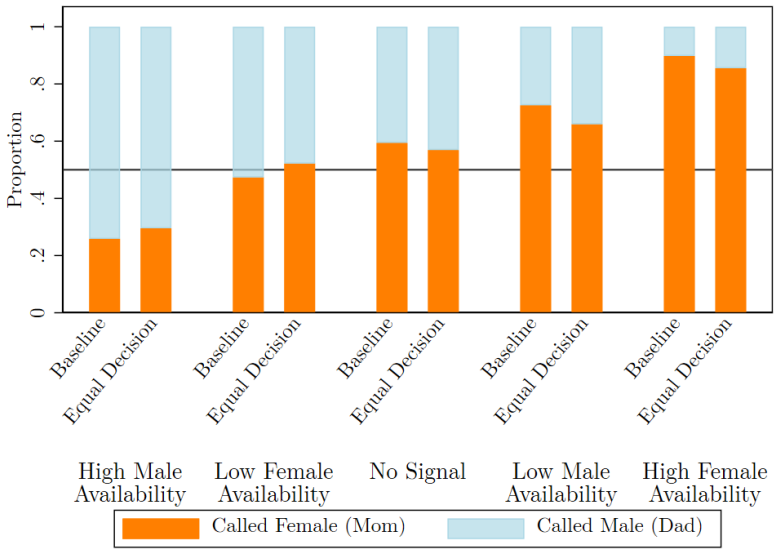
	(1) High Male	(2) Low Female	(3) No Signal	(4) Low Male	(5) High Female
			Panel A.i: Baseline All Outcomes		
Called Female	0.05	0.10	0.12	0.15	0.19
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Called Male	0.15	0.11	0.08	0.06	0.02
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
No Call	0.79	0.80	0.80	0.79	0.79
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	7075	5931	5612	5700	6153
			Panel A.ii: Baseline Conditional on Calling		
Called Female | Call	0.26	0.47	0.59	0.73	0.90
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Called Male | Call	0.74	0.53	0.41	0.27	0.10
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	1470	1204	1147	1178	1320
			Panel B.i: Equal Decision All Outcomes		
Called Female	0.06	0.10	0.10	0.12	0.19
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Called Male	0.14	0.09	0.08	0.06	0.03
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
No Call	0.80	0.81	0.82	0.81	0.77
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Observations	5170	5558	6569	6755	6268
			Panel B.ii: Equal Decision Conditional on Calling		
Called Female | Call	0.29	0.52	0.57	0.66	0.86
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Called Male | Call	0.71	0.48	0.43	0.34	0.14
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	1041	1062	1210	1249	1418

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Observations are weighted so that there are 50% of emails from a female parent and 50% from a male parent and so that all message types have equal weighting.

Figure 3: Outcomes by Treatment



(a) All Outcomes



(b) Outcomes Conditional On Calling

Notes: In this figure, we show the proportion of decision-makers choosing to make no call, call the female parent (mom) or the male parent (dad) by the message sent to the decision-maker in our Baseline and Equal Decision variations. Panel (a) represents three outcomes from 60,791 decision-makers, while panel (b) shows only the choices of those who made a phone call to at least one parent ($N = 11,713$). Observations are weighted so that 50% of emails come from a female parent and 50% from a male parent (always CCing the other parent) within each Variation-Treatment cell (e.g., each bar). See Table 1 for sample size by message and standard errors. See Figures B.2 and B.3 for the total number of no calls, calls to female parents, or calls to male parents by message.

callback, mothers are called first about 60% of the time in No Signal treatment (both with and without the addition of the sentence about making decisions equally).

We argue that the gender gap that we document is a lower-bound estimate of the gender inequality in external demands from schools for several reasons. First, our experiment essentially sends an equal number of requests from mothers and fathers, neutralizing any gender imbalances from existing relationships. Second, the type of inquiry in our messages is not a stereotypical male or female question. Our survey evidence suggests that external decision-makers would exhibit an even stronger bias toward calling female parents if they needed to call a parent to pick up a sick child, discuss allergies, or help with a bake sale.

In Section 4.3, we explore how the gender gap in external demands may vary across different domains. Specifically, we test whether our results are affected by whether our email inquiry is gender-neutral (searching for a new school) or more stereotypically male-domains (asking specifically about school fees). However, joining an extracurricular team or paying additional fees (especially at a public school) is not as universal as the experience of being called to pick up a sick child. Furthermore, picking up a sick child is usually an unexpected event that causes a significant interruption to a person's day, in contrast to less time-intensive and more flexible requests about an extracurricular team or school fees. As such, we believe that the inequality we document—where the domain is neutral, there are no pre-existing relationships, there is no verbal signal about which parent to contact, and there is no imbalance in the non-verbal signals inherent in who sends the email—is a lower bound on the inequality in external demands from schools on mothers versus fathers.

It is important to note that parents face external demands from many sources, not only from schools. We survey workers in various jobs who interact with children and their parents and find a mother preference in each of the nine domains (see panel (b) of Figure 1 and Appendix M.2 for details). Thus, the inequality in external demands from schools that we document likely compounds across many domains, further exacerbating the impact on mothers.

While our primary analysis focuses on the first call, we find similar patterns when investigating multiple calls made by the same principals (Figures B.2 and B.3).[16] Conditional on calling, about half of the principals in our sample make more than one call, with an average principal making 1.7 calls. Principals who make only one call are far more likely to call the mother than the father (about two-thirds to mothers versus one-third to fathers). For those who make a call, only about 40% of those who call the mother first then

[16]Relatedly, we also find no systematic differences in the timing of the call by parent's gender.

try the father, while over 50% of those who call the father first then try the mother. The rate of two calls to the mother in a row is double the rate of two calls to the father in a row. Overall, this strongly supports our finding that women are disproportionately more likely to field child-related external demands when no information is provided about parents' relative availability.

3.2 Impact of Signals on Gender Inequality

Next, we discuss the nature of the messages we send about parental availability and involvement—both the explicit, verbal messages as well as the implicit, non-verbal messages. We then evaluate the effectiveness of both types of signals as well as the implications for households.

3.2.1 Explicit Signals about Availability

In this section we investigate whether explicit signals about parent's availability affect the gender pattern of callbacks. Figure 3 shows the proportion of calls made to female and male parents alongside no calls in panel (a) and conditional on a call being made in panel (b). It is clear from the figure that the high and low availability signals substantially impact the distribution of calls between parents and can either increase or decrease the bias toward calling female parents.

To rigorously assess how the verbal signals affect bias toward calling mothers compared to the No Signal message, Figure B.1 visually represents the outcomes from a multinomial logit model like that in Equation 1 (see Table A.1 for more details). We can apply an appropriate transformation to the estimates from this model to decompose the mechanisms for gender inequality into discrimination based on beliefs about availability versus other deterrents, which we discuss in Section 4.

Recall that we randomly vary signals about availability across four messages: High Male, Low Male, High Female, and Low Female. Two of these messages (High Male and Low Female) go against pre-existing gender norms by stating that the father has a lot of availability, or the mother has limited availability. Figure 3 shows that these messages cause calls to move away from mothers and toward fathers, which mitigates the gender gap in external demands. The High Male message reverses the inequality so that mothers are now called 26-30% of the time, while the Low Female message moves mothers and fathers close to parity, with mothers getting 47-48% of the calls and fathers the remaining

52-53% (Table 1). In contrast, the remaining two messages, Low Male and High Female, affirm the gender norm that mothers are more available than fathers. We find that they exacerbate the existing inequality by increasing the share of calls to mothers.[17]

Our results also highlight an interesting asymmetry in the effect of informational interventions. Notably, the High Female message results in mothers being called between 85-90% of the time in contrast to fathers getting 70-74% of the calls under the High Male message. Finally, it is possible that our messages, especially the signals about low availability, could be impacting principals' response rates. We check whether there is any variation in the no-call rate across our treatments and find that all of them result in a similar no-call rate between 77% and 81% (Table 1 and Figure B.1).

3.2.2 Nonverbal Signals

In our experiment, we randomly vary verbal cues about which parent is more or less available. These signals have significant effects, with the High Female message resulting in about 20% of principals calling the mother versus only about 5% of principals calling the mother in the High Male message. This is a 15 percentage point difference, which reverses the gender inequality in favor of men (Table 1). However, there are also nonverbal cues that households can send to signal which parent is the primary point of contact. In our study, we randomly assign whether an email comes from the female parent with the male parent cc'd or vice versa. The person sending the email is a nonverbal signal of which parent to contact first.

Pooling across our treatment messages in the Baseline and Equal Decision variations, we find that the no-call rate is similar for both male and female senders, suggesting that principals are equally likely to respond to emails from mothers and fathers (see Table 2 panel AF.i vs. AM.i and panel BF.i vs. BM.i). However, whether the mother or the father sends the email significantly impacts the gender gap in response. Specifically, sending an email from the mother results in the principal calling her 17-18% of the time and calling the father only 3-4% of the time, a 14 percentage point difference. This is similar to the difference we see between our High Female messages, where the mother is called 19% of the time, and High Male messages, where the mother is called 5% of the time. In contrast, sending the email from the father results in the principal calling him 13-14% of the time and calling the mother 6-7% of the time, a 6 percentage point difference (smaller than the

[17] Generally, our messages about low availability have smaller effects than those about high availability. It is plausible, however, that "I have limited availability" might be interpreted differently for male and female senders, and this ambiguity might introduce potential confounding effects.

difference between our High Female and High Male messages). It is clear that while the sender's identity has a significant positive effect on who gets the first call, and that effect is not symmetric for mothers and fathers.

Conditional on a call being made, sending the email from the father results in him being called 65-68% of the time (Table 2, Panels AM.ii and BM.ii, Column 1), meaning that external decision-makers are still calling the mother one-third of the time even when she did not send the message. However, when the mother sends the message, 83-86% of the responding principals call her first (Table 2, Panel AF.ii and BF.ii, Column 1), resulting in the father being called less than one-fifth of the time. This highlights a ceiling on fathers' ability to be the primary contact for child-related tasks.

Examining the differences across treatment messages in more detail, we see that three of our messages, No Signal, Low Male, and High Female, result in the mother being called over 95% of the time when she sends the email (Table 2, Panel AF.ii and BF.ii). Similarly, the High Male and Low Female messages sent by fathers result in 88% and 92% of the calls directed to fathers. This finding underscores that combining explicit and implicit signals about father's availability is an effective tool for mitigating (and even reversing) the gender inequality in external demands.

Since we randomize which parent is the primary sender of the email, we can quantify the effect of an email being sent from a parent and listing that parent first on the likelihood of a reply to that sender. One way to do this is to regress whether a call was made to the female parent on whether the email was sent from the female parent (or analogously regress whether a call was made to the male parent on whether the email was sent from the male parent). Both these regressions give us the same estimates of the effect of the email sender as shown in Table A.4. We discuss the breakdown for the No Signal treatment within our Baseline Variation shown in Table 2 Panel AF.ii (Column 4): we see that the mother receives 98% of the calls. On the one hand, some of this 98% is due to the email being sent from the mother/listing her first. On the other hand, some is due to decision-makers wanting to call mothers even if they do not send the email/are not listed first. Because we randomize the email sender, we break that 98 percentage points down in Appendix Table A.4 into 77 percentage points from the email being sent by the mother (and listing her first) and 21 percentage points being driven by other reasons beyond the reply-to-sender effect. The size of the reply-to-sender effect varies by the availability message between 14 to 77 percentage points, indicating that it can be a useful tool for pushing calls from one parent to another.

However, something notable about Table 2 is that almost none of our email treatment pairs result in a 50-50 split in calls to mothers and fathers despite many households reporting

Table 2: **Summary Statistics by Primary Email Sender**

	(1) All Msgs.	(2) High Male	(3) Low Female	(4) No Signal	(5) Low Male	(6) High Female
	Panel AF.i: Baseline Emails Sent by Mother cc'ing Father For All Outcomes					
Called Female	0.17	0.08	0.18	0.20	0.21	0.20
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Called Male	0.04	0.13	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
No Call	0.79	0.79	0.79	0.79	0.79	0.79
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	15560	3712	2726	3108	2895	3119
	Panel AF.ii: Baseline Emails Sent by Mother cc'ing Father Conditional On Calling					
Called Female | Call	0.83	0.39	0.86	0.98	0.96	0.97
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Called Male | Call	0.17	0.61	0.14	0.02	0.04	0.03
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	3273	795	560	641	622	655
	Panel AM.i: Baseline Emails Sent by Father cc'ing Mother For All Outcomes					
Called Female	0.07	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.09	0.18
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Called Male	0.13	0.18	0.19	0.16	0.10	0.04
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
No Call	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.78
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	14911	3363	3205	2504	2805	3034
	Panel AM.ii: Baseline Emails Sent by Father cc'ing Mother Conditional On Calling					
Called Female | Call	0.35	0.12	0.08	0.20	0.48	0.83
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Called Male | Call	0.65	0.88	0.92	0.80	0.52	0.17
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Observations	3046	675	644	506	556	665
	Panel BF.i: Equal Decision Emails Sent by Mother cc'ing Father For All Outcomes					
Called Female	0.17	0.10	0.18	0.18	0.17	0.23
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Called Male	0.03	0.10	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
No Call	0.80	0.81	0.81	0.81	0.83	0.76
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	15599	2524	3097	3203	3697	3078
	Panel BF.ii: Equal Decision Emails Sent by Mother cc'ing Father Conditional On Calling					
Called Female | Call	0.86	0.49	0.90	0.95	0.96	0.97
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Called Male | Call	0.14	0.51	0.10	0.05	0.04	0.03
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	3048	485	603	595	639	726
	Panel BM.i: Equal Decision Emails Sent by Father cc'ing Mother For All Outcomes					
Called Female	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.08	0.16
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Called Male	0.14	0.19	0.16	0.15	0.12	0.06
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
No Call	0.80	0.79	0.81	0.82	0.80	0.78
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Observations	14721	2646	2461	3366	3058	3190
	Panel BM.ii: Equal Decision Emails Sent by Father cc'ing Mother Conditional On Calling					
Called Female | Call	0.32	0.11	0.13	0.18	0.40	0.73
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Called Male | Call	0.68	0.89	0.87	0.82	0.60	0.27
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Observations	2932	556	459	615	610	692

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Observations do not have to be weighted in this table by whether the email sender is the mother or father because the panels only show responses to emails from the mother or father. Observations are weighted so that all message types have equal weighting. In columns (1) and (2), the proportions do not always sum to 100% due to rounding, as we have left the output exactly as it came from Stata.

they would prefer an equal division of parenting responsibilities. Only two combinations come close (Panel AM.ii Column 5 and Panel BF.ii Column 2). This may be because principals are used to the administrative systems employed by most schools and other child-related organizations, which only allow two-parent households to designate a single "Primary Contact." Such a system is likely an artifact of traditional gender norms where one parent focuses on housework while the other focuses on work outside the home. It essentially pushes the household toward a corner solution of always calling mom or always calling dad. Thus, it is not a viable solution for the ever-increasing share of households desiring a more equitable distribution of child-related tasks.[18]

3.2.3 Signal Effectiveness and Implications for Households

Our results indicate that the combination of verbal signals about parents' availability and non-verbal signals stemming from who sends the email can be an effective tool for increasing the share of calls to fathers. When the father sends the email and indicates that he has high availability or that the mother has low availability, between 88 and 92% of the calls are directed to the father. In principle, the remaining 8-12% of cases where the school still calls the mother first could be resolved by having the households re-state their preferences. However, our survey evidence suggests that parents find it difficult to get external organizations to comply with requests about who to contact. Specifically, the parents in our survey report that they need to remind the organizations (including schools) of their preferences an average of 3.2 times per year, and over 30% of parents report that no amount of reminders can ensure that their stated preferences are followed by the organization consistently.

Still, given the effectiveness of verbal and non-verbal signals in mitigating the gender inequality in external demands, one might wonder why households are not already utilizing these levers to shift more external demands towards fathers. Two possible explanations include lack of information about signals' effectiveness and deliberate household choice. We attempt to disentangle these mechanisms by conducting a hypothetical choice experiment (N = 353), embedded in our survey of parents (see Appendix M.3.1 for details). As part of this experiment, we randomized parents into one of two conditions. Our Treatment condition informed participants of our study's findings,

[18] We find that about half of the respondents in our survey of households (Appendix M.3) report wanting a close to egalitarian split of contact across all the entities their household interacts with (e.g. School, Sports, Medical/Dental, etc). Furthermore, Figures M.1 and M.2 show that across all respondents in our survey—including those in non-egalitarian households—a large proportion of respondents report wanting some non-0/100% split of contact to each parent for every type of entity.

and specifically that "if the child's father emails the school and indicates that he has a lot of availability, about 90% of responses from the school will be directed to the father," in addition to information from another study about parental involvement. The Control message did not provide any information about our study's findings and instead included information about a study which finds that "when parents become more involved in their children's school lives by receiving regular information about their child's academic progress, their children develop more positive behavior in school." We then asked respondents whether the information they saw would change the proportion of contact with the school initiated by the father (versus the mother) in their household. We also asked respondents whether they were aware of the information from the studies beforehand.

We find that about 80% of respondents report having had no prior knowledge of our study's findings. This suggests that lack of information about the effectiveness of verbal and non verbal signals may in fact be one reason why some households are not having fathers initiate contact with the schools. This points to informational interventions as a potential instrument to mitigate the existing inequality in external demands. Furthermore, we find support for the idea that people would increase contact from the father if they knew the findings from our study. Specifically, we find that 41% of parents in our survey say that they will increase the proportion of contact from the father when told about our study as compared to only 30% of those seeing the Control message ($p = 0.023$). If we limit our analysis to those for whom our study findings provided new information, we find that the gap widens with only 26% in the control saying they will increase contact from the father as compared to 41% in the Treatment group ($p = 0.008$). When we control for whether the respondent knew the information about either study beforehand, whether they saw a minor variation of our treatment or control messages, and whether the experiment was at the beginning or end of the survey, we find that showing information about our findings leads to a 13.3 percentage point increase in the likelihood of increasing the proportion of contact from the father (results available from authors upon request).

For those who saw our Treatment message and said they did not know about our study already, 57% reported making no change to their proportion of contact from the father. The most common reason stated for no change was because their household already decided that one person should handle all contact with the school. Of those who said a single parent was in charge of all contact with the school, 77% reported it to be the mother while the remaining 23% reported it was the father. This suggests that the reason that some parents make no change is a deliberate choice by households to have one parent (most commonly the mother) specialize in these types of child-related tasks.

4 Drivers of the Gender Inequality

Appendix H describes the theoretical model that motivates our experimental treatments and allows us to investigate the drivers of the gender inequality that we have documented in Section 3. We use a random utility framework to model how a decision maker who interacts with a two-parent heterosexual household decides which person to call. In our specific field experiment, the decision-maker is a school principal, and the task is a discussion about enrolling a child at the school.[19] In particular, Appendix H.3 describes how our experimental variation integrates with the random utility model and Appendix H.4 shows how we use the model to identify and estimate key structural parameters.

We use these structural parameters to investigate the drivers of the gender inequality that is evident in the Baseline No Signal message. Candidate drivers are the decision-maker's beliefs about the value of a response from parents, following the norm of calling the person who sends the message, or other deterrents. In the US, mothers are more likely to be stay-at-home parents than fathers (US Census Bureau, 2022). This general statistical information could lead decision-makers to believe that responses from mothers will provide higher expected value and, as such, will bias decision-makers toward making more external demands of women. In Appendix M.1, we show that these types of decision-makers indeed report that they prefer to contact mothers because they believe mothers are more responsive and are more likely to be the primary contact about child-related topics.

Beyond responsiveness, other deterrents may affect decision-makers' choice to call a parent of a certain type. For example, they may prefer talking to mothers because mothers are more pleasant or prefer talking to fathers because they can better make decisions for the whole household. Alternatively, they may decide which parent to call based on the prevailing gender norms. There may also be other belief-based factors unrelated to responsiveness. For example, in our specific setting, principals may believe that mothers are easier to convince to enroll in their school, which may explain why they are more likely to call mothers than fathers. Finally, entrenched systemic discrimination may also lead to

[19] However, the model is flexible enough to be applied to different types of decision-makers (e.g., doctors, school teachers, sports coaches, organized religion leaders) and different kinds of tasks (e.g., picking up a sick child, communicating about health concerns, taking the team on an overnight trip). Furthermore, our model could apply outside of parenting tasks to study many types of demands on a two-person household (e.g., for elder care, home renovations, retirement planning) as long as the central elements are present: one decision-maker, a set of differentiated individuals to contact, and messages that inform key beliefs about the individuals to be contacted.

the gender gaps we observe. While we cannot disentangle the role of each possible factor in our experiment, we can shed light on the relative role of beliefs about responsiveness vis-a-vis other deterrents.

We begin by addressing the importance of controlling for the reply-to-sender motive. Because roughly half of our emails are sent from the female parent and half are sent from the male parent, this effect *cannot* drive the gender inequalities in our data. That is, who sends the email impacts this inequality in observational data, but we have experimentally controlled for that by creating balance in which parent sends the email. Another way to think about this is if there were a natural way to send the email from a neutral third party, our results below would not change.

However, when investigating the underlying mechanisms, we may want to consider the potential impact of who sends the emails. The effect of the reply-to-sender motive varies across treatments;we focus here on the effect in the No Signal treatment both because it is an upper bound and because it is most straightforward to think about the effect when it does not interact with signals about the value of a response. In the No Signal treatment, we estimate the utility gain from calling the parent who sends the email to be 2.51. For the case when the female parent sends the email, there is a gain of 0.791 from calling the mother and a penalty of 1.722 from calling the father relative to calling neither parent. The result is symmetric when the male parent sends the email. The utility difference is both economically and statistically significantly different from zero ($Prob > chi2 = 0.000$ derived from results in Table A.3). We thus conclude that which parent sends the email is an important potential driver of who will be contacted. Since this channel is neutralized in our experiment and controlled for in our estimates, we focus on the role of beliefs and other deterrents in driving the inequalities we observe in our data.

Our parameter estimate for the expected value of a response from female parents is $\overline{q}_f\overline{r}_f = -0.341$, which is higher than the analogous parameter for male parents $\overline{q}_m\overline{r}_m = -0.968$. This difference is statistically significant ($Prob > chi2 = 0.013$ derived from results in Table A.3), suggesting that principals believe that mothers are more responsive than fathers. We thus find strong support for our hypothesis that beliefs about responsiveness are an important driver of gender inequality in external demands for parents' time.

Next, we test if other deterrents can also explain the gender inequality we document. We find that our parameter estimate for the residual term for male parents is greater than that for female parents; that is, $\overline{\delta}_m - \overline{\delta}_f = 0.536$ ($Prob > chi2 = 0.002$). This is direct evidence that some gender inequality in demand for parental involvement is driven by factors other

than beliefs about responsiveness. Since the difference between the belief parameters is roughly equal to the difference between the other deterrent parameters, we can say that the magnitude of the effect of these other deterrents is about the same as the magnitude of the effect of beliefs about parents' responsiveness. Below, we investigate some of the factors that contribute to both the differential beliefs about the value of response from mothers versus fathers as well as to other deterrents.

4.1 Gender Norms

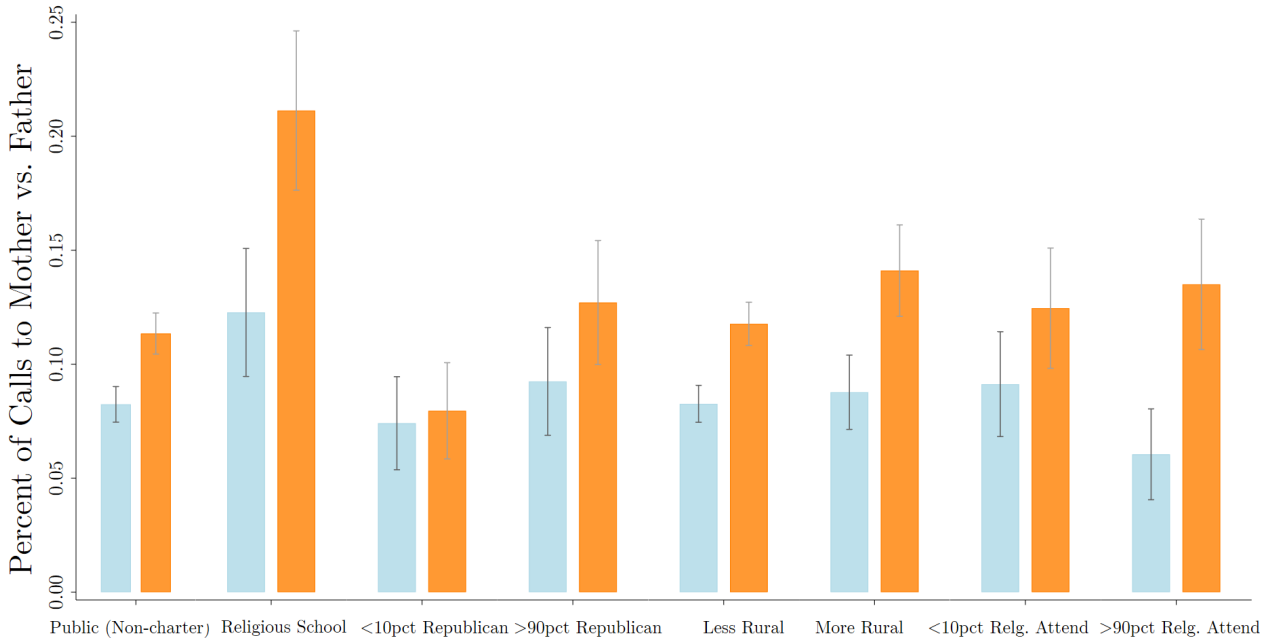
One mechanism that could explain the gender gap in external demands for parental involvement that we document in our experiment is a strong gender norm governing interactions between decision-makers and parents. As prior studies have shown, despite women's considerable gains in education and labor market outcomes in recent years, social norms about gender identity have persisted and still impact a wide range of economic and social outcomes for women, from labor force participation and earnings to marriage formation, fertility, and the division of home production (Bertrand et al., 2015; Kerwin et al., 2022; Jayachandran, 2021; Ashraf et al., 2023; Andresen and Nix, 2022). While we do not have a precise measure of the gender norms of the principals or schools in our sample, we use multiple related measures to investigate whether gender norms may be driving some of the gender inequality in our setting.

Figure 4 shows that several variables associated with more traditional gender norms are also associated with a higher proportion of decision-makers calling the female parent in response to the No Signal message in the Baseline variation. At the most specific level - the school - we observe whether a school is a religious school, which might suggest that it has more traditional prevailing gender norms. If these gender norms partly drive our results, we would expect greater gender inequality in calls from religious than non-religious schools.[20] This is exactly what we find, especially in the unconditional call proportions. In

[20]Principals' gender is another dimension where we might see variation in gender norms. Here, we find little difference in the patterns by the gender of the principal looking at the unconditional calls to mothers by principal's gender. In panel (a) of Figures D.1 and D.2 female and male principals call mothers around 12% of the time ($p = 0.272$ for the Baseline variation and $p = 0.381$ for the Equal Decision Variation). However, if we look at the results conditional on a call being made in panel B of these Figures there is a slightly higher tendency for female principals to call mothers (60% vs. 57% $p = 0.001$ for the Baseline Variation and 62% vs. 60% for the Equal Decision Variation $p = 0.03$). While it is theoretically possible that decision-makers forward the email to another person of a different gender, such that we would not capture differences by decision-maker gender, as explained in section L, fewer than 4% of the voicemails left were from someone other than the principal. Furthermore, if we look at the gender of the decision-makers in our survey of school and other types of decision-makers (e.g. Childcare providers, Sports Leaders) we see a positive relationship between the proportion of female in a decision-maker type and reporting calling mom more often which is consistent with

particular, in the Baseline variation with No Signal, the unconditional call-back rates for religious schools are 21% to mothers and 11% to fathers, versus 12% and 8% for mothers and fathers respectively for non-religious private and public schools (see Table A.5 and a similar pattern in the Equal Decision variation in Table A.6). This difference-in-differences is statistically significant ($p = 0.08$).

Figure 4: Differences in Gender Gap by Gender Norm Proxies With No Signal Message in Baseline



Notes: In this figure we show the mean calls to male versus female parents split over proxies for more traditional gender norms (religious school, Republican county, more rural, more religious). These are from decision-makers who received our No Signal Message in our Baseline Variation. The details of how these proxies are defined and more details are available in Tables A.5 and A.6. Observations are weighted so that 50% of emails come from a female parent and 50% from a male parent (always CCing the other parent).

We also link our schools to other indicators of gender norms in the county in which the school is located. Specifically, we look at the proportion of Republican voters in the 2016 presidential election, whether the county is more rural, and whether the county has a higher rate of religious attendance. We find that the proportion of calls to moms is significantly higher in counties with a higher Republican share and counties that are more rural (see Figure 4 and Tables A.5 and A.6).[21] Note that the number of observations

our suggestive results on principal gender (see Appendix M.2 for details).

[21] Additionally, we can measure gender norms directly using a sexism index based on data from the General Social Survey (GSS) but these data are only available at the state level. Matching at the state level for an individual school/principal decision makes this measure quite noisy. For example, New York State has a very centrist sexism index, but this masks that New York City is likely relatively non-sexist, while upstate New York may be more sexist. Here, we do not observe the same pattern of greater inequality in calls in more sexist states (Tables A.5 and A.6). We believe this is because measuring norms at the state level is too inexact.

decreases significantly when we compare the gender gap in calls in counties with more traditional versus less traditional gender norms (see Table A.5), resulting in most difference-in-difference estimates being statistically insignificant. However, on net these findings provide suggestive evidence of the important role that gender norms play in perpetuating gender inequality in external demands for parents' time.

It is important to note that most of the measures we rely on in this analysis are positively correlated with each other. For example, counties with a higher Republican vote share are also more likely to be rural and have higher religious adherence. This suggests that these social norm measures likely reflect not only the preferences of school principals but the social preferences of households as well. As such, the deeply entrenched gender norms likely influence schools' expectations about parents' responsiveness as well as other deterrents.

4.2 Beliefs about Stay-at-Home Mothers

In the US, mothers are significantly more likely to be stay-at-home parents than fathers (US Census Bureau, 2022).[22] To better understand if our findings are partially driven by beliefs about stay-at-home parents being more likely to be female, we added the following sentence to all our messages in what we call the full-time variation: "We both work full time." This sentence is meant to shut down the mechanism that the mother is a stay-at-home parent. We sent emails with this message to an additional 9,472 principals (see Appendix F for details by message variations).

We would expect fewer calls to mothers in our Full-Time variation if beliefs that mothers were more likely to be stay-at-home parents were driving the gender inequality. We do not find evidence of this as shown in Table 3. The rates of calls to mothers and fathers are quite similar in the Full-Time variation and the Baseline variation. Also, as shown in Appendix Figure F.1, the pattern of calls by message is very similar with the addition of information about both parents working. In the Full-Time variation, mothers receive 11.3% of the calls, and fathers receive 7.7% of the calls, which is almost identical to the Baseline variation. Conditional on a call being made, the mother is called 59.4% of the time. In fact, the ratio of calls to mothers versus fathers rises very slightly from 59.3% in the Baseline variation when we include information that shuts down the idea that the mother is a stay-at-home parent.

[22] Parental full-time work status is negatively correlated with school interactions for mothers but not for fathers (Gee, 2011).

Table 3: **Summary Statistics by Variation (All Treatments Combined)**

	(1) Baseline	(2) Equal Decision	(3) Full Time	(4) Payments
		Panel A: All Outcomes		
Called Female	0.123	0.116	0.112	0.099
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Called Male	0.084	0.082	0.077	0.066
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)
No Call	0.793	0.802	0.811	0.835
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Observations	30471	30320	9472	9808
		Panel B: Conditional on Calling		
Called Female | Call	0.592	0.586	0.594	0.599
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Called Male | Call	0.408	0.414	0.406	0.401
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Observations	6319	5980	1799	1620

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Observations are weighted so that there are 50% of emails from a female parent and 50% from a male parent and so that all message types have equal weighting. Outcomes by the exact message sent within these variations are available in Appendix F.

4.3 Gender Inequality in More Male-Stereotyped Domains

Finally, another factor that could be contributing to the inequality we document is a gender norm about what constitutes a male versus a female domain. In principle, it is possible that both male and female parents are fielding a similar volume of external requests but certain types of requests are associated with either the female or male domain. Our survey (Appendix M.1) found that, within the school setting, educators stated they most heavily favored calling the mother for a child being sick, for volunteering at a book fair, and when dealing with allergies. While the educators still favored the mother for all other questions, they did so to a lesser degree for requests to volunteer for a career day and to discuss school payments.[23]

To test if fathers are contacted more often in more male-stereotyped domains, we fielded an additional variation of our email messages that stated, "We are searching for schools for our child and are especially interested in discussing school fees and other expenses." In this variation, we observe fewer calls to parents of either gender, and the differences in call-back rate are driven by emails sent to non-private schools, where perhaps discussion of fees is less common.[24] However, the actual rate of calling mothers versus fathers

[23]Prior studies have also found that finances tend to be a more stereotypical male domain (Lin et al., 2022).

[24]In private schools, there is no economically significant change in the No Call rate between our Baseline variation and the one which mentions payments (71% in Baseline vs. 73% in Payments). However, for non-private schools, the No Call rate is 80% in our Baseline variation but 85% when our messages mention payments. All these comparisons are statistically significant.

conditional on a call being made is not statistically significantly different from the Baseline variation at 59.3% (versus 60.0%). Thus, even in the most stereotypical male domain within the school setting, we do not see a shifting of the calls from mothers to fathers.

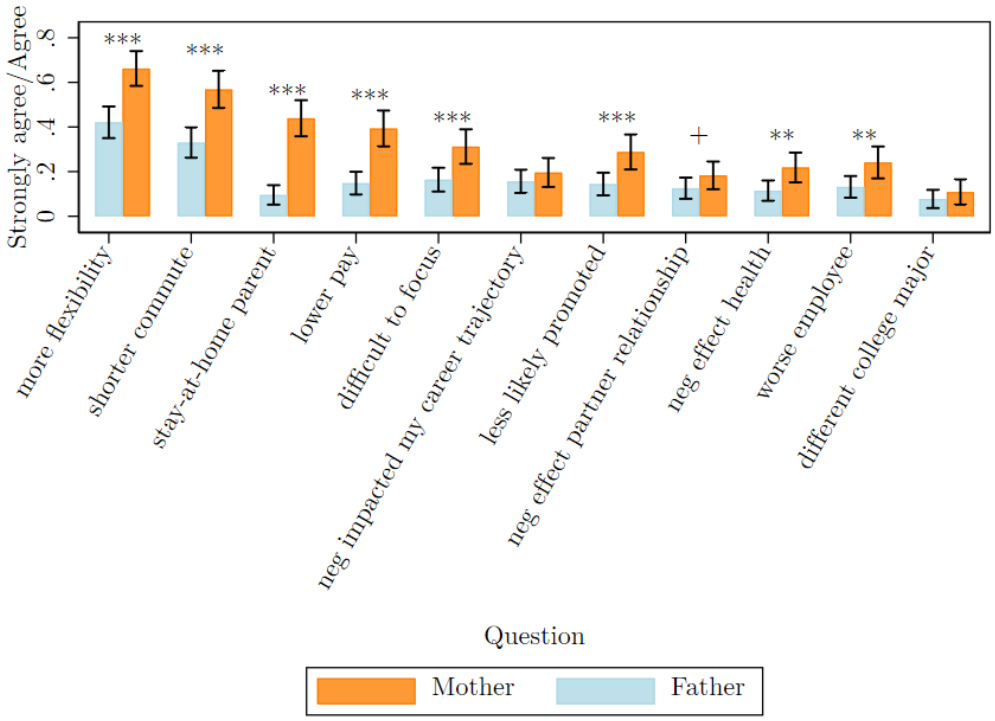
5 Potential Consequences of the Gender Gap in External Demand for Parents' Time

In this section, we investigate the extent to which gendered external demands for parents' time may have long-term consequences for the persistent gender gaps in labor market outcomes. We argue that the link between external demands and gender gaps is complicated. One can imagine, for example, a number of indirect links including anticipation effects (e.g. choosing more flexible jobs or switching to part-time employment, not taking on certain roles or promotion opportunities, etc.), deeply entrenched social norms, or effects on household bargaining. There may also be direct effects resulting from women being interrupted by external demands more frequently than men. Disentangling these effects is beyond the scope of this paper, but we discuss some suggestive evidence for the potential links between external demands and labor market outcomes.

We conduct two distinct analyses. First, we administer a survey to individuals who identify as either a mother or father in a two-parent household (N = 353, 45% female; see Appendix M.3 for details, including how our respondents compare to the US population), asking about specific ways in which non-routine/unexpected child-related external interruptions have impacted their decisions. As reported in Figure 5, our survey suggests that mothers may experience a greater impact of child-related interruptions on their careers compared to fathers. For example, women are more likely than men to say that unexpected child-related interruptions have made it difficult to focus and led them to choose a job that offers lower pay and promotion prospects and allows for more flexibility and shorter commute (all these gender differences are economically and statistically significant, $p < 0.001$). These results provide suggestive evidence that women may experience higher career penalties as a result of child-related interruptions and that these interruptions may contribute to the persistent gender earnings gap, though further research is needed to establish causality.

Notably, we also find that child-related interruptions impact women's labor market participation decisions. Specifically, 44% of women agree or strongly agree with the statement that child-related interruptions in part led them to become a stay-at-home parent

Figure 5: Changes to Labor Market Choices Associated With Child Interruptions



Notes: In this figure, we show the results from a survey of 353 persons who identify as either a mother (45%) or father (55%) in two parent households with children in the United States. Each person was asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each of the statements about whether "child-related interruptions have led me to choose..." or "have led to..." Respondents were told to think of non-routine/unexpected child-related interruptions to their job(s) by external organizations when their children were living at home with you and that were initiated by the external organization (for example, a call about a sick child, an email/text to schedule a doctor/dentist appointment, a reminder to register for camp/practice/extracurricular activities). There were five choices: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree. In this figure we show the proportion who stated they either Strongly Agree or Agree by gender. We perform one-way t-tests comparing the mean for mothers versus fathers with + $p < 0.10$ * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

for some period of time while their children were young as compared to only 10% of men ($p < 0.001$).[25] These findings are consistent with prior work documenting that women anticipate labor market effects of motherhood (Kuziemko et al., 2018) and change their employment choices in response to childcare needs (Anstreicher and Venator, 2024).[26]

The second analysis we conduct to quantify potential labor market consequences of child-related external demands follows the methodology of Cubas et al. (2021). Using ATUS data and restricting responses to full-time working adults with children in two-parent households, we reproduce their finding that 35% of women experience any incidence of household care on a typical workday versus 20% of men as shown in Table 4 columns 1 and 2 mean "Ext: Any HH care 8 to 5" which is the mean of a dummy variable which takes the value one if a person reports household care between the hours of 8am and 5pm on a weekday while at work.[27] The ATUS data allows us to observe the average number of hours per workday parents spend on these occurrences, which are 0.123 for fathers and 0.169 for mothers (Table 4 columns 1 and 2 mean "Int: Hours HH care 8 to 5"). That is, in total, there are about 0.28 hours of household care in a workday for full-time working parents who live with a spouse, and those are split with mothers supplying 57% of those hours, and fathers the remaining 43%. This is quite similar to the 57-59% of calls we see going to mothers in our No Signal treatment (Table 1). The ATUS data show that in a larger sample and a broader setting than our experiment, women spend more time on household tasks than men during the work day.

[25] We ask respondents who indicated that they chose to be stay-at-home parents at some point while their children were young to rank several factors in how they contributed to their decision to be a stay-at-home parent. On average, parents ranked "Desire to spend more time with child(ren)" as most important, followed closely by "Cost of childcare"/"Reduction in the amount of planning/stress in the household"/"Availability of childcare." Neither mothers nor fathers in our sample rank "Non-routine/unexpected child-related interruptions from outside organizations (e.g. calls from school/doctor/dentist)" as one of the top factors (it was 6th for mothers and 4th for fathers). As such, we believe that unexpected child-related interruptions in part lead to choices to become a stay-at-home parent, but are likely not the leading reason for this choice.

[26] We also find that women are more likely than men to report that child-related interruptions make them worse employees (one-way t-test $p = 0.005$) and negatively impact their mental and physical health (one-way t-test $p = 0.005$), their partner relationships (one-way t-test $p = 0.07$), their career trajectory (one-way t-test $p = 0.17$), and their choice of college major (one-way t-test $p = 0.18$), although these last differences do not reach statistical significance at traditional levels.

[27] We restrict the data to 2003-2018 to avoid COVID-related issues with coding workdays and to closely match the work of Cubas et al. (2021). We report on hourly wages while Cubas et al. (2021) report on log hourly wages in their paper so we include the same table with log wages in Appendix Table N.1. It is important to note that the ATUS data allow one to observe how many minutes of household care a person reports engaging in while at the workplace during the hours of 8am to 5pm. While this might include the type of non-routine/unexpected child-related interruptions we have described in this paper, it may also include routine interruptions and cannot be broken out by whether the interruption came from an external organization or was initiated by the parent. In looking at the ATUS data we do not see a method for only restricting to unexpected/non-routine incidence of household care. As such, we use the measure used by Cubas et al. (2021) but realize it is likely an overstatement of the non-routine/unexpected child-related interruptions from external decision-makers we focus on in the rest of our paper.

Next, we extend the Cubas et al. (2021) calculations to explore how engaging in any household task as well as the hours of household tasks are correlated with the male-female earnings gap. In column 1 of Table 4 we show that being female is associated with an hourly wage which is \$6.462 less than male respondents. In column 2 we add in a dummy variable for if a person experiences any incidence of household care and a continuous variable for the hours of care. We see that having any incidence of household care 8am to 5pm, the extensive margin, is associated with a \$1.336 decline in hourly wages; while the coefficient on number of hours of care, the intensive margin, is also negative but is statistically insignificant. We also note that the coefficient capturing the male-female earnings gap in column 2 is smaller, with being female associated with a drop of \$6.307 compared to male respondents (versus \$6.462 in column 1, $p = 0.001$). This is suggestive evidence that part of the earnings gap is correlated with more household care for women than men and that it is the extensive margin of any interruption which is driving these associations.

Table 4: **Correlations Between Hourly Wages and Household Care**

	(1) Without Household Care	(2) With Household Care	(3) Low-Powered Jobs Without Household Care	(4) Low-Powered Jobs With Household Care	(5) High-Powered Jobs Without Household Care	(6) High-Powered Jobs With Household Care
Ext: Incidence of HH care 8 to 5		-1.336***		-0.876***		-2.030**
		(0.300)		(0.303)		(0.808)
Int: Hours of HH care 8 to 5		-0.172		-0.051		-0.151
		(0.286)		(0.274)		(1.098)
Female	-6.462***	-6.307***	-5.414***	-5.325***	-5.540***	-5.256***
	(0.233)	(0.235)	(0.238)	(0.239)	(0.612)	(0.618)
R^2	0.354	0.356	0.280	0.281	0.269	0.271
Mean hourly wages						
Male & Female	24.325	24.325	21.064	21.064	36.662	36.662
Male	25.799	25.799	21.996	21.996	37.833	37.833
Female	21.517	21.517	19.478	19.478	33.086	33.086
Ext: Any HH care 8 to 5						
Male	0.197	0.197	0.206	0.206	0.170	0.170
Female	0.347	0.347	0.350	0.350	0.333	0.333
Int: Hours HH care 8 to 5						
Male	0.123	0.123	0.137	0.137	0.080	0.080
Female	0.169	0.169	0.173	0.173	0.144	0.144
Observations	12668	12668	9715	9715	2953	2953

Notes: The table is based on the work of Cubas et al. (2021). Respondents are 18–65 years old, who report usual weekly hours ≥ 35 in the CPS between 2003-2018, who are married with at least one child in the household, and whose diary day is a weekday. We also restrict the sample to those who report nonzero time spent on work-related activities at the work site during the diary day. Hourly wage is constructed by dividing weekly earnings reported in the CPS by usual (total) hours worked last week. Weekly earnings that are top coded are recoded as 1.5 times the top-code value. The hourly earnings measure we use is reported only for wage and salary workers, so this table excludes self-employed workers. The regression also includes fixed effects for single, years of age, detailed education categories, detailed race categories, and years. All regressions are weighted using ATUS weights.

Finally, we argue that household interruptions (stemming either from external demands or internal household arrangement) that fall disproportionately on mothers can be especially costly for those in "greedy" careers, (Bertrand et al., 2010; Goldin and Katz, 2011; Goldin, 2021) since such jobs are both particularly lucrative and inflexible. The early work of Becker (1985) pointed to what the more recent literature might call the "bandwidth tax" (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013) or "cognitive labor" demands (Daminger, 2019). These can be especially pernicious for mothers in demanding high-paying jobs, who may pay large labor market costs as a result of shifting to more flexible work. Goldin (2021) emphasizes that these individual incentives and the resulting labor market penalties have important gender equity consequences.

We thus categorize the occupations of the workers in the ATUS data into those which are more likely to be in greedy or high-powered jobs.[28] We see that the coefficient on the extensive margin of incidence of household care is still negative and significant for both low-powered and high-powered jobs. We also see that within both types of jobs, some of the association between women having lower wages is correlated with the higher incidence of household care as the coefficient on Female declines when we add controls for household care (column 3 versus 4, $p = 0.006$, and column 5 versus 6, $p = 0.008$). Although the point estimates for the wage loss from the incidence of household care are larger for high-powered jobs, \$2.030, than for low-powered jobs with a loss of \$0.876, this difference is not statistically significant at traditional levels (column 4 versus column 6, $p = 0.173$). However, the direction and ordering of these coefficients is in line with the findings from the literature about greedy jobs imposing larger penalties on women.

6 Conclusion

This paper investigates gender differences in external demands for parental involvement. In a large-scale field experiment, we email over 80,000 US school principals with a general inquiry about the school and a request to call one of the parents back. We randomly vary signals about each parent's availability as well as which parent sends the email.

[28]The ATUS data include occupation. We categorized these occupations as high-powered or not using ChatGPT and then enlisted the help of an RA to manually check and amend the categorization consistent with previous work on greedy or high-powered jobs (Bertrand et al., 2010; Goldin and Katz, 2011; Goldin, 2021). For example, occupations that were categorized as high-powered are: Managers and administrators, Computer systems analysts, Computer software developers, Chief executives and public administrators, Managers and specialists in marketing, Physicians and Lawyers. Examples of the non-high-powered occupations include Supervisors and proprietors of sales jobs, Primary school teachers, Truck, delivery, and tractor drivers, Secretaries, Registered nurses.

We document a prominent gender gap in responses. Conditional on receiving a call, mothers are called first 1.4 times more than fathers. To our knowledge, this provides the first empirical evidence of a significant gender inequality in external demands for parental involvement. We show that signaling the availability of fathers mitigates this inequality and causes mothers to be called less than half the time. In fact, when fathers signal that they are available and they are the ones who initiate contact, they receive upwards of 90% of responses. This suggests that the combination of explicit and implicit signals of availability is an effective tool for increasing the share of calls to fathers. However, we also note an interesting asymmetry in the effects of our informational interventions. Specifically, even when fathers explicitly signal their availability, mothers are still called 26% of the time. In contrast, signals that reinforce stereotypes about mothers being more available cause them to receive 90% of the calls. Notably, even when the email comes from the father *and* he signals his availability, 12% of the calls are still directed to mothers. In contrast, fathers receive only 3% of the calls when mothers send the email and signal that they are available. This underscores a ceiling on the degree to which informational signals can mitigate gender inequality in external demands for parental involvement.

The gender inequality in external demands for parents' time persists even when we account for the non-verbal signal of parents' availability, that is, the identity of the email sender. While sending the email from the father significantly raises the share of calls to fathers, such a system does not offer a solution for the increasing number of households trying to attain a 50-50 allocation, as it effectively pushes the calls to one parent.

Our theoretical model allows us to disentangle the mechanisms underlying any differential demand for parental involvement into beliefs about responsiveness versus other deterrents. We measure the impact of beliefs about responsiveness by randomizing the signals we send to decision-makers about each parent's availability and/or desire for equality, while the other factors are measured as a residual term in our model. We find that both beliefs about mothers being more responsive than fathers and differences in the residuals drive the gender inequality in our setting. We test several potential explanations and find evidence that gender norms are, in part, responsible for the gender gap in external demands for parental involvement.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a direct link between external demands and the gender wage gap, we provide suggestive evidence that women may incur substantial economic and personal costs as a result of being the default parent. Investigating the source of these inequalities and documenting that external demands partly drive them informs policies aimed at mitigating the gaps. As our findings indicate,

both households' and external decision-makers' actions can affect the size of the inequality. To mitigate this gap, it is essential for parents to signal the availability of fathers and their desire for equality *and* for organizations outside the household to foster more equitable parental involvement.

Notably, the patterns we document likely represent only a small share of the overall gender inequality in external demands for parental involvement. While the gender gap in school-related interruptions closely mirrors gender gaps in other child-related and household domains, this is only one of many settings where women are disproportionately more likely to experience interruptions on a daily basis.[29] The gender inequality in physical housework, for example, has remained largely unchanged since the mid-1990s, with men spending about half as much time on housework as women in similar households (Bianchi et al., 2012). Furthermore, men's housework hours tend to be disproportionately allocated toward relatively infrequent and flexible tasks (e.g., home repairs or yard work), while women shoulder many of the recurring daily tasks (e.g., cooking and childcare) that cannot be put off to a convenient time (Bianchi et al., 2006). Moreover, research across social sciences has increasingly drawn attention to "invisible" forms of labor, including emotional and cognitive labor, being disproportionately shouldered by women.[30] While these inequalities are more difficult to measure directly, our findings shed light on potential policies to mitigate these gender gaps.

Since the interaction that we investigate involves multiple parties, there are many trade-offs to consider in assessing the welfare implications of the gender gap in external demands. For example, external decision-makers may have multiple competing objectives, including getting the most useful response and involving the most diverse set of parents. Disproportionately calling mothers may, thus, be inefficient depending on the specific objectives being maximized. From the perspective of the parents, survey evidence suggests that they prefer a more equal distribution of child-related external demands, and the existing skew towards mothers may contribute to both intra-household and labor market inefficiencies. Even if we assume that men and women *on average* have different comparative advantages, there is a distribution of skills within each gender. This implies that households differ from the population average, resulting in a dead-weight loss of one-size-fits-all policies due to household inefficiencies. Reducing the restrictions placed on

[29] In our survey, we find that women are significantly more likely to be contacted by external decision-makers across a wide range of child-related domains, from doctors' offices to extracurricular sports coaches to religious leaders (see panel (b) of Figure 1). Other studies have documented gender inequality in taking on caretaking in larger samples (Wikle and Cullen, 2023; Bianchi et al., 2006; Boye, 2015; Daly and Groes, 2017; Daminger, 2019; Bertrand et al., 2015; Charmes, 2019).

[30] Daminger (2019); Offer (2014); Lee and Waite (2005).

households by institutions would, therefore, lead to a more optimal outcome. Moreover, the skew towards mothers may be welfare-harming for children, given the evidence that children benefit from having both fathers and mothers involved (Pleck, 2007; Nakata, 2023). In Appendix K, we discusses efficiency considerations in more detail.

Finally, while we have documented that mothers are significantly more likely to field external demands than fathers, we do not observe who actually completes the task after being contacted. In principle, it is possible for mothers to outsource the task to their partners. In our survey of parents we find that respondents report doing so quite often, albeit mothers significantly less than fathers (47% vs. 64% respectively when asked about organizations their children attend). Mothers are also 1.3 times as likely as fathers to say that outsourcing the task to their partner is disruptive to their day and that they still have to be involved in the task even after asking their partner for help (67% of the time for women vs. 45% for men). This demonstrates that parents exert effort and incur the associated communication and disruption costs in order to achieve the balance of child-related labor they seek for their households, and these costs are higher for women. An approach that creates the balance that parents desire in the first instance would be far superior, as it would avoid significant extra costs to households and help institutions outside the households resolve issues faster.

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Appendix: For Online Publication Only

A Appendix Tables

Table A.1: **Multinomial Logit Models of Effect of Treatments**

	(1) Baseline	(2) Equal Decision
Outcome: Female Call		
High Male	-0.81***	-0.54***
	(0.07)	(0.07)
Low Female	-0.23***	-0.04
	(0.06)	(0.06)
Low Male	0.22***	0.17**
	(0.05)	(0.05)
High Female	0.48***	0.67***
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Outcome: Male Call		
High Male	0.62***	0.60***
	(0.06)	(0.06)
Low Female	0.26***	0.15*
	(0.07)	(0.07)
Low Male	-0.38***	-0.21**
	(0.08)	(0.07)
High Female	-1.31***	-0.83***
	(0.10)	(0.08)
Observations	30,471	30,320

Notes: This table presents the results of a multinomial logit model using a model like the one in Equation 1. The outcome variable takes three values: no call, call female, or call male. In this table we present the results with a base case of no call. Observations are weighted so that 50% of emails come from a female parent and 50% from a male parent. The outcomes from this table are represented visually in Figure B.1. + $p < 0.10$ * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.010$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table A.2: **Selection Into NoCall by Observable Variables of Schools By Variation**

	(1) Baseline	(2) Equal Decision	(3) Full-Time	(4) Pay
Other Schools	-0.02	-0.06*	-0.05	0.06
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.06)
Middle	-0.03+	-0.02	-0.04	-0.03
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.02)
High	0.03+	-0.01	0.02	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Decison-Maker Female	0.01	0.02+	0.01	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Public (non-Charter)	0.09***	0.07***	0.04+	0.14***
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Public (Charter)	0.11***	0.07**	0.01	0.04
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.05)
High Male (Hm)	0.03	-0.03	-0.14+	0.14+
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Low Female (Lf)	0.02	-0.05	0.02	0.08
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Low Male (Lm)	0.03	0.04	-0.01	0.08
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.08)
High Female (Hf)	0.02	-0.05	-0.16*	-0.03
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.10)
Other Schools * MaleHigh	-0.03	0.00	0.05	-0.14*
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Other Schools * FemaleLow	0.00	0.04	-0.08	-0.04
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.08)
Other Schools * MaleLow	-0.02	-0.03	-0.05	-0.06
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.08)
Other Schools * FemaleHigh	-0.05	0.01	0.05	-0.05
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Middle * MaleHigh	-0.01	-0.01	0.06	0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Middle * FemaleLow	0.01	0.02	0.06+	-0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Middle * MaleLow	0.03	-0.01	0.03	-0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Middle * FemaleHigh	0.03	-0.01	-0.02	-0.00
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)
High * MaleHigh	-0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
High * FemaleLow	-0.02	0.02	0.02	-0.03
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
High * MaleLow	-0.02	0.02	0.01	-0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
High * FemaleHigh	-0.02	-0.00	-0.01	-0.00
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Decison-Maker Female * MaleHigh	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.03
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Decison-Maker Female * FemaleLow	-0.01	-0.03+	-0.01	0.04
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Decison-Maker Female * MaleLow	-0.01	-0.01	-0.03	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Decison-Maker Female * FemaleHigh	0.01	-0.01	0.02	0.03
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Public (non-Charter) * MaleHigh	-0.01	-0.00	0.07+	-0.04
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Public (non-Charter) * FemaleLow	-0.00	0.01	0.03	-0.06
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Public (non-Charter) * MaleLow	-0.01	-0.01	0.06	-0.04
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Public (non-Charter) * FemaleHigh	0.01	0.00	0.08*	0.06
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.05)
Public (Charter) * MaleHigh	-0.03	0.01	0.09	0.08
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Public (Charter) * FemaleLow	-0.08+	0.04	-0.00	-0.04
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Public (Charter) * MaleLow	-0.03	0.02	0.09	0.07
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Public (Charter) * FemaleHigh	-0.01	0.03	0.11+	0.13+
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.08)
Constant	0.72***	0.80***	0.84***	0.68***
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.07)
Control Variables				
R^2	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02
Observations	30471	30320	9472	9808

Notes: "Other schools" are K-12 or pre-schools. Decision-Maker Female is whether the decision-maker (the principal) has a first name that is female. Observations are weighted so that 50% of emails come from a female parent and 50% from a male parent (always CCing the other parent).

Table A.3: **Multinomial Logit Models For Theory Model**

	(1) No Call Base	(2) No Call Base
Panel A: Outcome Female Call (vs. No Call)		
Any Signal About Male	-0.22***	
	(0.07)	
x_M (Male Signal Pos/Neg)	-0.43***	
	(0.04)	
Any Signal About Female	0.19**	
	(0.06)	
x_F (Female Signal Pos/Neg)	0.57***	
	(0.04)	
reply-to-sender*HighMale	0.68***	0.68***
	(0.07)	(0.07)
reply-to-sender*LowMale	0.36***	0.36***
	(0.04)	(0.04)
reply-to-sender*HighFemale	0.20***	0.20***
	(0.03)	(0.03)
reply-to-sender*LowFemale	1.01***	1.01***
	(0.07)	(0.07)
reply-to-sender*NoSignal	0.79***	0.79***
	(0.05)	(0.05)
High Male		-0.65***
		(0.09)
High Female		0.76***
		(0.06)
Low Male		0.21**
		(0.07)
Low Female		-0.37***
		(0.08)
Constant	-2.15***	-2.15***
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Panel B: Outcome Male Call (vs. No Call)		
Any Signal About Male	0.76***	
	(0.14)	
x_M (Male Signal Pos/Neg)	0.78***	
	(0.06)	
Any Signal About Female	0.15	
	(0.15)	
x_F (Female Signal Pos/Neg)	-0.52***	
	(0.07)	
reply-to-sender*HighMale	-0.34***	-0.34***
	(0.04)	(0.04)
reply-to-sender*LowMale	-1.46***	-1.46***
	(0.12)	(0.12)
reply-to-sender*HighFemale	-1.13***	-1.13***
	(0.12)	(0.12)
reply-to-sender*LowFemale	-1.04***	-1.04***
	(0.07)	(0.07)
reply-to-sender*NoSignal	-1.72***	-1.72***
	(0.13)	(0.13)
High Male		1.54***
		(0.14)
High Female		-0.38*
		(0.18)
Low Male		-0.03
		(0.18)
Low Female		0.67***
		(0.15)
Constant	-3.31***	-3.31***
	(0.13)	(0.13)
Observations	29363	29363

Notes: Column 1 of this table presents the results of a multinomial logit model using a model like the one in Equation 1. The outcome variable takes three values: no call, call female, or call male. The right-hand side variables are "Any Signal About Male" which takes the value 1 if a message was sent with a signal about the male parent (MaleHigh, MaleLow) and zero otherwise. "Any Signal About Female" takes the value 1 if a message with a signal about the female parent was sent (FemaleHigh, FemaleLow) and zero otherwise. The variable *x_M* (Male Signal Pos/Neg) takes the value 1 if the MaleHigh message was sent, and -1 if the MaleLow message, 0 otherwise; *x_F* is defined analogously for messages about female parents. Column 2 of this table presents results that are discussed in Appendix Section H.6. In both modelts there are a series of variables that control for the gender of the sender of the email (male vs. female parent) interacted with the signals about each parent's availability. The variable "reply-to-sender" takes the value 1 if the sender of the email is female, and -1 if the sender of the email is male (recall we always send an email from one parent and CC the other parent). The variables which capture which of our five messages were sent (MaleHigh, MaleLow, FemaleHigh, FemaleLow and NoSignal) are interacted with "reply-to-sender." The right-hand side variables are discussed in Section H. In this table we present the results with a base case of no call. Observations are weighted so that 50% of emails come from a female parent and 50% from a male parent (always CCing the other parent). + $p < 0.10$ * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.010$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table A.4: **Reply-to-Sender: Likelihood of Call To Mother By Whether Mother Sent The Email**

	(1) Baseline Called Female | Call	(2) Equal Decision Called Female | Call	(3) Baseline Called Male | Call	(4) Equal Decision Called Male | Call
FemEmailMaleHigh	0.27***	0.38***		
	(0.02)	(0.03)		
FemEmailFemaleLow	0.79***	0.77***		
	(0.02)	(0.02)		
FemEmailBaseline	0.77***	0.77***		
	(0.02)	(0.02)		
FemEmailMaleLow	0.48***	0.56***		
	(0.02)	(0.02)		
FemEmailFemaleHigh	0.14***	0.25***		
	(0.02)	(0.02)		
MalEmailMaleHigh			0.27***	0.38***
			(0.02)	(0.03)
MalEmailFemaleLow			0.79***	0.77***
			(0.02)	(0.02)
MalEmailBaseline			0.77***	0.77***
			(0.02)	(0.02)
MalEmailMaleLow			0.48***	0.56***
			(0.02)	(0.02)
MalEmailFemaleHigh			0.14***	0.25***
			(0.02)	(0.02)
High Male (Hm)	0.12***	0.11***	0.61***	0.50***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Low Female (Lf)	0.08***	0.13***	0.14***	0.10***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Baseline	0.21***	0.18***	0.02***	0.05***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Low Male (Lm)	0.48***	0.40***	0.04***	0.04***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
High Female (Hf)	0.83***	0.72***	0.03***	0.03***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
R^2				
Observations	6382	6046	6382	6046

Notes: In this table we regress the likelihood the mother was called (conditional on a call being made) on availability message sent (HighMale, LowMale, NoSignal, HighFemale, LowFemale) and the interaction of the message with whether the email was sent from the mother's email (CCing the father) and listing the mother's name and phone number first. We would obtain the same estimates of the interaction terms were we to run a regression of likelihood the father was called (conditional on a call being made) on the same set of right-hand-side variables. This allows us to break down the total calls to mothers into those made because she sent the email and residual reasons.

Table A.5: **More vs. Less Traditional Gender Norms Summary Statistics No Signal Message in Baseline Variation**

	(1) Non Religious School	(2) Religious School	(3) Low Repub. County	(4) High Repub. County	(5) Small Wage Gap County	(6) Large Wage Gap County	(7) Less Rural County	(8) More Rural County	(9) Less Religious County	(10) More Religious County	(11) Less Sexist State	(12) More Sexist State
Called Female	0.11	0.21	0.08	0.13	0.09	0.15	0.12	0.14	0.12	0.14	0.13	0.12
Called Male	0.08	0.12	0.07	0.09	0.04	0.12	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.06	0.08	0.07
No Call	0.80	0.67	0.85	0.78	0.87	0.74	0.80	0.77	0.78	0.80	0.79	0.81
Called Female | Call	0.58	0.63	0.52	0.58	0.69	0.56	0.59	0.62	0.58	0.69	0.63	0.61
Called Male | Call	0.42	0.37	0.48	0.42	0.31	0.44	0.41	0.38	0.42	0.31	0.37	0.39
Observations	4755	528	635	580	529	593	4439	1161	606	553	485	607

Notes: Religious school means the school is identified by our schools database as a religious school, while Non-Religious schools include public schools (non-charter) and private schools (non-religious). Low Republican means the school is located in a county at the 10th percentile or below of Republican vote share in the 2016 presidential election, while High Republican is at the 90th percentile or above. Small Wage Gap means the school is located in a county at the 10th percentile or below of the ratio between male-female median wages, while Large Wage Gap is at the 90th percentile or above. More Rural county means fewer than 250,000 population, while Less Rural is above that. Less Religious county is a county at the 10th percentile or lower for religious adherence, while More Religious county is above the 90th percentile as measure by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (https://www.thearda.com/us-religion/sources-for-religious-congregations-membership-data#QR). Less Sexist State means the school is located in a state at the 10th percentile or below of the sexism index created by questions from the General Social Survey, while High Sexist State is at the 90th percentile or above (Kerwin et al., 2022). Observations are weighted so that 50% of emails come from a female parent and 50% from a male parent (always CCing the other parent).

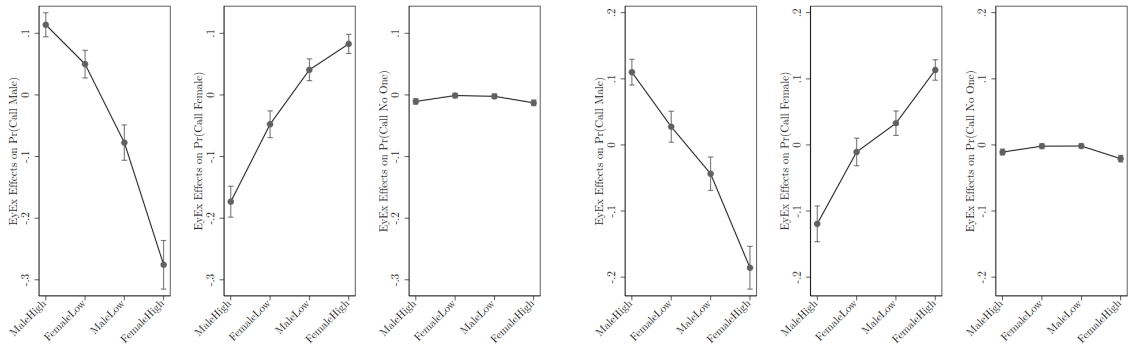
Table A.6: **More vs. Less Traditional Gender Norms Summary Statistics No Signal Message in Equal Variation**

	(1) Non Religious School	(2) Religious School	(3) Low Repub. County	(4) High Repub. County	(5) Small Wage Gap County	(6) Large Wage Gap County	(7) Less Rural County	(8) More Rural County	(9) Less Religious County	(10) More Religious County	(11) Less Sexist State	(12) More Sexist State
Called Female	0.09	0.17	0.08	0.11	0.08	0.12	0.10	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.09	0.09
Called Male	0.08	0.12	0.04	0.09	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.10	0.09	0.09	0.07	0.08
No Call	0.83	0.71	0.88	0.79	0.87	0.80	0.82	0.79	0.80	0.80	0.84	0.83
Called Female | Call	0.55	0.59	0.64	0.55	0.64	0.58	0.58	0.54	0.55	0.54	0.54	0.55
Called Male | Call	0.45	0.41	0.36	0.45	0.36	0.42	0.42	0.46	0.45	0.46	0.46	0.45
Observations	5367	825	853	655	715	630	5209	1345	630	654	607	697

Notes: Variables are defined as in Table A.5.

B Appendix Figures

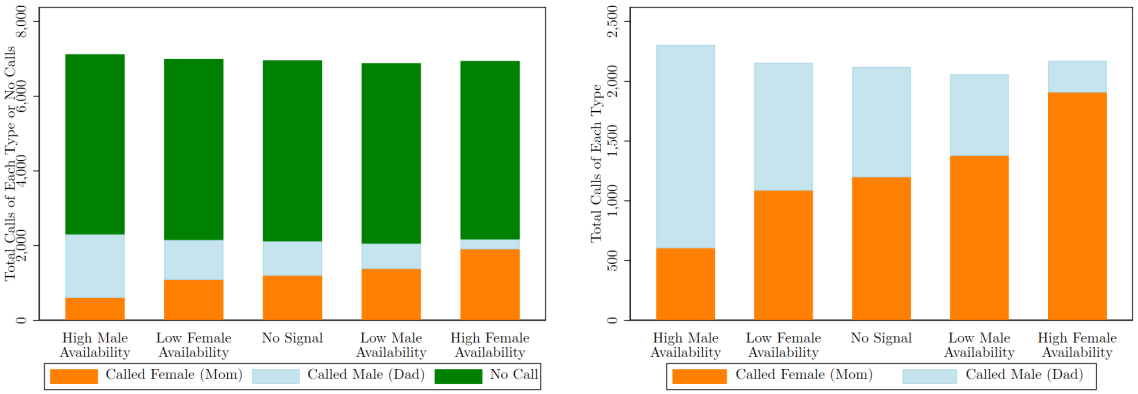
Figure B.1: Effects by Treatment



(a) Baseline Variation (b) Equal Decision Variation

Notes: In this figure we show the results from a mutltinomial logit model using a model like Equation 1 which is detailed fully in Table A.1. This figure shows the marginal effects elasticities. Observations are weighted so that 50% of emails come from a female parent and 50% from a male parent (always CCing the other parent).

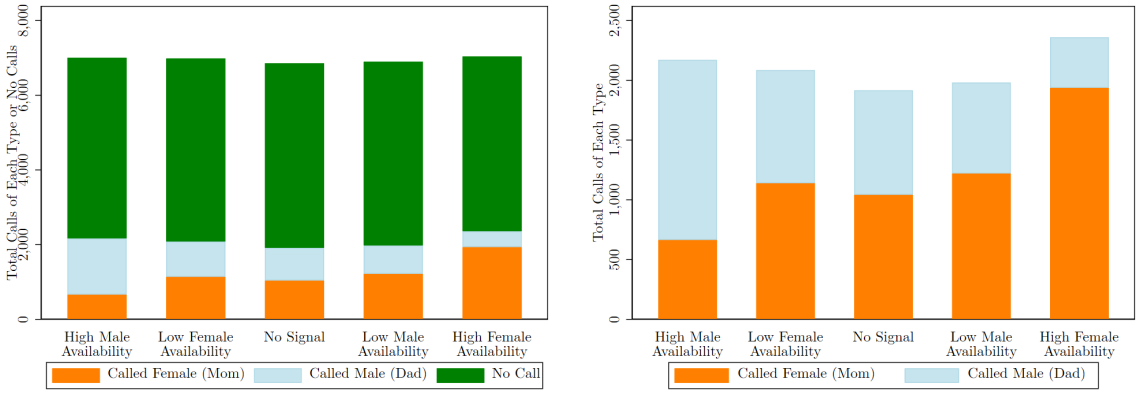
Figure B.2: Outcomes by Treatment in Baseline Variation for Multiple Calls



(a) All Outcomes (b) Outcomes Conditional on Calling

Notes: In this figure we show the total number of no calls, calls the female parent (mom) or calls to the male parent (dad) by the message sent to the decision-maker in our Baseline variation (see Figure 3 for proportions by only the first call or no call). Panel (a) represents three outcomes from 30,471 decision-makers, while panel (b) shows only the choices of those who made a phone call to at least one parent ($N = 6,382$). If decision-makers were randomizing which parent they called we would expect the same proportion of calls to male and female parents. Two-way t-tests comparing No Call, Call Female, and Call Male are all statistically significant at the 5% level or below. Observations are weighted so that 50% of emails come from a female parent and 50% from a male parent (always CCing the other parent).

Figure B.3: Outcomes by Treatment in Equal Decision Variation for Multiple Calls



(a) All Outcomes

(b) Outcomes Conditional on Calling

Notes: In this figure we show the total number of no calls, calls the female parent (mom) or calls to the male parent (dad) by the message sent to the decision-maker in our Baseline variation (see Figure 3 for proportions by only the first call or no call). Panel (a) represents three outcomes from 30,320 decision-makers, while panel (b) shows only the choices of those who made a phone call to at least one parent ($N = 6,046$). If decision-makers were randomizing which parent they called we would expect the same proportion of calls to male and female parents. Two-way t-tests comparing No Call, Call Female, and Call Male are all statistically significant at the 5% level or below. Observations are weighted so that 50% of emails come from a female parent and 50% from a male parent (always CCing the other parent).

C Balance Tables

See Tables F.1, and F.2 for balance in the other Variations of our experiment.

Table C.1: **Balance on Observable Attributes of Schools/Decision-makers by Treatment in Baseline Variation**

	(1) High Male	(2) Low Female	(3) Baseline	(4) Low Male	(5) High Female
Elementary	0.50	0.51	0.53	0.52	0.52
Middle	0.21	0.21	0.19	0.21	0.20
High	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.24	0.24
Decison-Maker Female	0.57	0.58	0.59	0.59	0.58
Public (Charter)	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.06
Public (non-Charter)	0.76	0.79	0.81	0.79	0.80
Private	0.18	0.16	0.13	0.15	0.14
Free Lunch	0.55	0.56	0.54	0.55	0.52
White	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.53	0.52
Black	0.14	0.15	0.14	0.14	0.15
Hispanic	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23
FemaleEmail	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Observations	7075	5931	5612	5700	6153

Notes: There is a small proportion of schools which are not elementary, middle or high schools (e.g. K–12 or preschools). The following variables are known only for non-private schools: FreeLunch, White, Black, Hispanic. DMFemale is whether the decision-maker (the principal) has a first name that is female. Observations are weighted so that 50% of emails are from a female parent and 50% from a male parent.

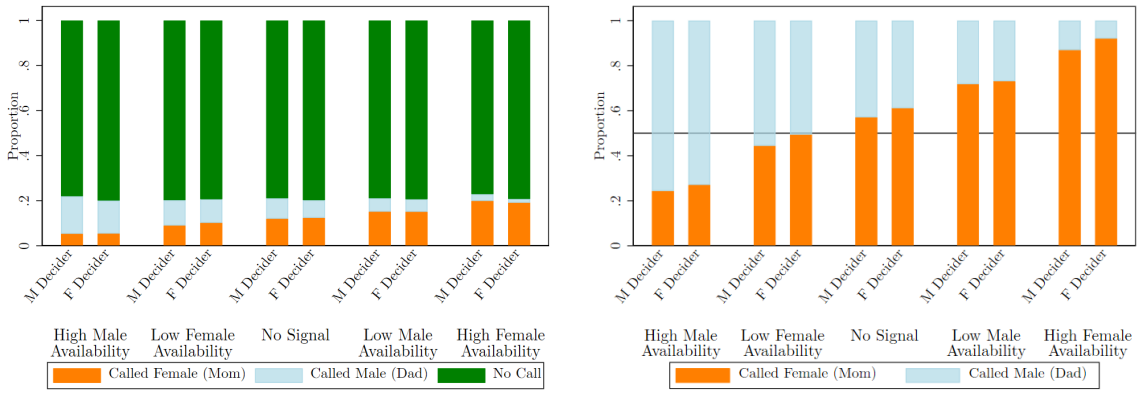
Table C.2: **Balance on Observable Attributes of Schools/Decision-Makers By Treatment In Equal Decision Variation**

	(1) High Male	(2) Low Female	(3) Baseline	(4) Low Male	(5) High Female
Elementary	0.52	0.52	0.51	0.50	0.50
Middle	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.22	0.22
High	0.25	0.24	0.24	0.25	0.25
Decison-Maker Female	0.58	0.58	0.57	0.58	0.57
Public (Charter)	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.05
Public (non-Charter)	0.80	0.80	0.77	0.76	0.76
Private	0.14	0.14	0.18	0.18	0.18
Free Lunch	0.55	0.52	0.55	0.55	0.57
White	0.52	0.53	0.52	0.52	0.52
Black	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15
Hispanic	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23
FemaleEmail	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Observations	5170	5558	6569	6755	6268

Notes: Notes are the same as those in Table C.1.

D Decision-Maker Gender

Figure D.1: Outcomes By Principal Gender in Baseline Variation

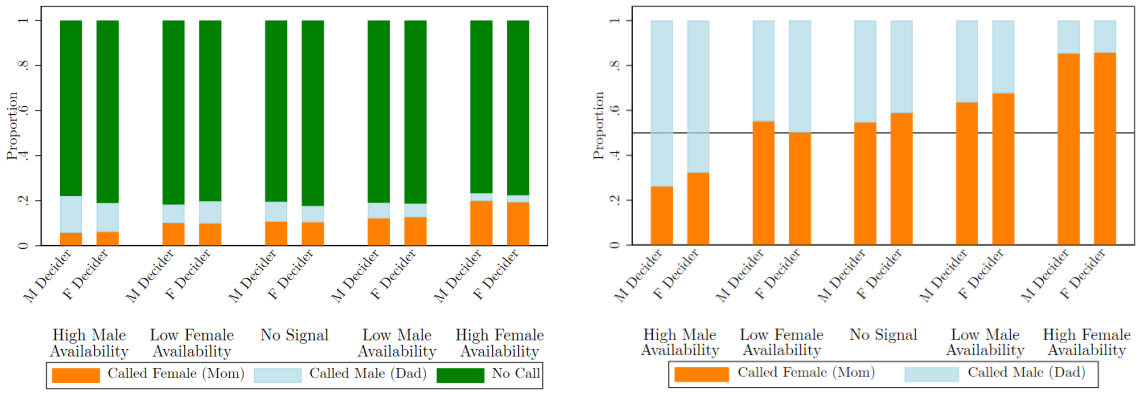


(a) All Outcomes

(b) Outcomes Conditional On Calling

Notes: In this figure we show the differences between Female and Male principals. We predict principal gender based on their name. In panel (a) we show the proportion of decision-makers choosing to make no call, call the female parent (mom) or the male parent (dad) by the message sent to the decision-maker in our Baseline Variation. "M Decider" denotes a male principal and "F Decider" denotes a female principal. Panel (a) represents three outcomes from 30,471 decision-makers in Main, while panel (b) shows only the choices of those who made a phone call to at least one parent. In Panel B we show the breakdown for only those who called back.

Figure D.2: Outcomes By Principal Gender in Equal Decision Variation



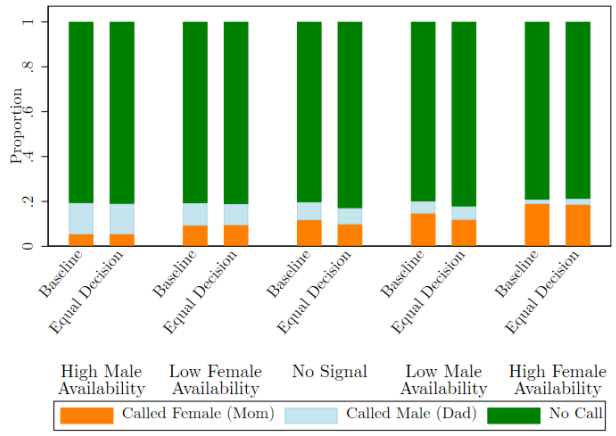
(a) All Outcomes

(b) Outcomes Conditional On Calling

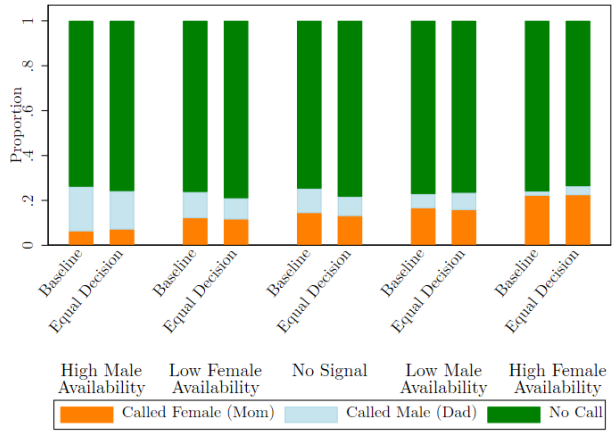
Notes: Notes are the same as in Figure D.1.

E By Grade-Level

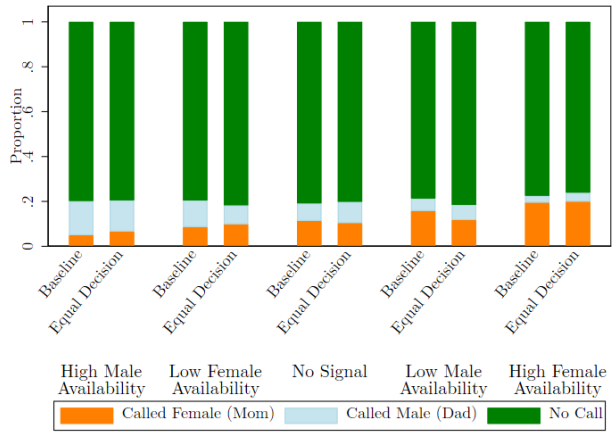
Figure E.1: Outcomes By Grade-Level



(a) Elementary



(b) Middle School



(c) High School

Notes: In this figure, we show the proportion of decision-makers choosing to make no call, call the female parent (mom) or the male parent (dad) by the message sent to the decision-maker in our Baseline and Equal Decision variations.

F Variations On Baseline Messages

Table F.1: **Balance on Observable Attributes of Schools/Decision-Makers By Treatment In Full Time Variation**

	(1) High Male	(2) Low Female	(3) Baseline	(4) Low Male	(5) High Female
Elementary	0.50	0.52	0.50	0.53	0.52
Middle	0.23	0.21	0.21	0.20	0.21
High	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.24	0.25
Decison-Maker Female	0.56	0.59	0.57	0.60	0.59
Public (Charter)	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.05
Public (non-Charter)	0.80	0.82	0.73	0.81	0.77
Private	0.14	0.12	0.22	0.13	0.18
Free Lunch	0.55	0.56	0.53	0.55	0.54
White	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.53	0.52
Black	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.15	0.14
Hispanic	0.23	0.23	0.24	0.22	0.24
FemaleEmail	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Observations	1785	1478	1943	1776	2490

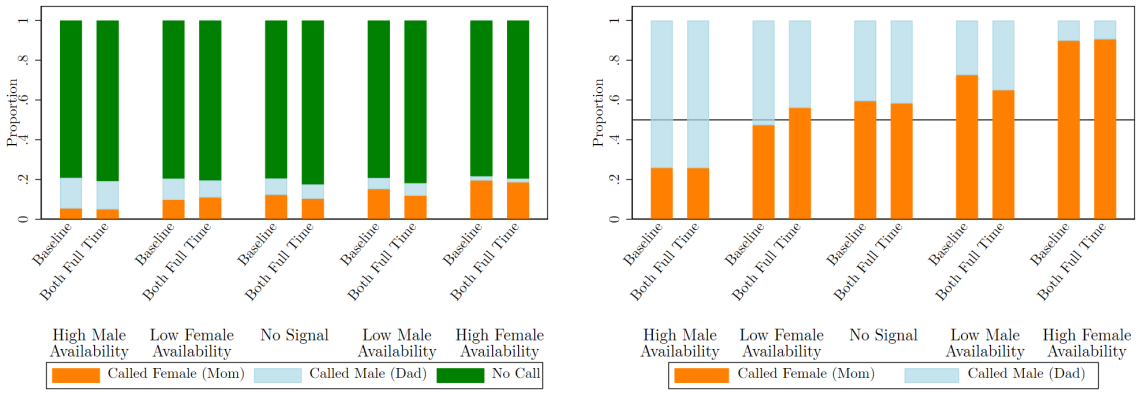
Notes: There is a small proportion of schools which are not Elementary, Middle or High Schools (e.g. K-12 or pre-schools). The following variables are only known for non-private schools: FreeLunch, White, Black, Hispanic. DMFemale is whether the decision-maker (the principal) has a first name that is female. Observations are weighted so that there is 50% of emails from a female parent and 50% from a male parent.

Table F.2: **Balance on Observable Attributes of Schools/Decision-Makers By Treatment In Payments Variation**

	(1) High Male	(2) Low Female	(3) Baseline	(4) Low Male	(5) High Female
Elementary	0.51	0.52	0.52	0.50	0.53
Middle	0.21	0.21	0.20	0.21	0.20
High	0.24	0.24	0.26	0.25	0.24
Decison-Maker Female	0.58	0.60	0.58	0.58	0.58
Public (Charter)	0.06	0.07	0.05	0.06	0.06
Public (non-Charter)	0.78	0.75	0.81	0.78	0.81
Private	0.17	0.18	0.14	0.16	0.12
Free Lunch	0.54	0.58	0.56	0.55	0.53
White	0.52	0.51	0.51	0.50	0.53
Black	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15
Hispanic	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.25	0.22
FemaleEmail	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Observations	2101	2153	1795	2333	1426

Notes: Notes are the same as Table F.1.

Figure F.1: Outcomes By Treatment "Baseline" vs. "Full Time" Variations

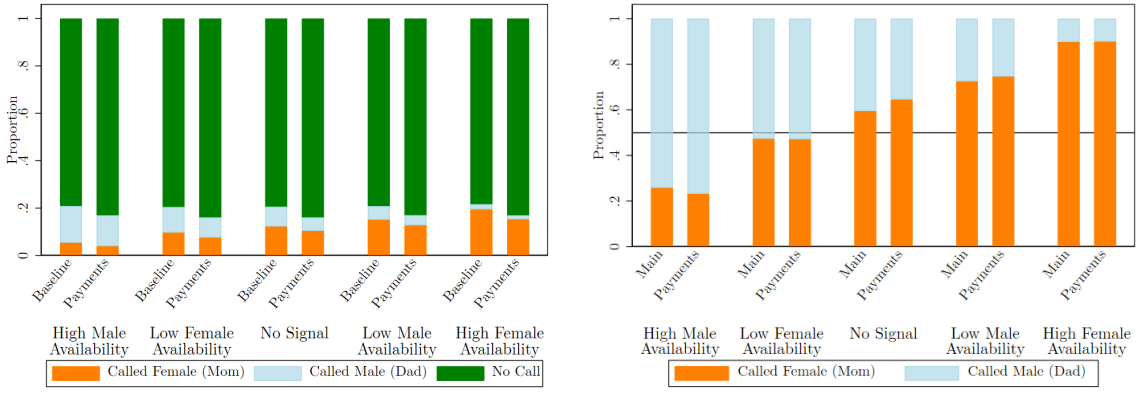


(a) All Outcomes

(b) Outcomes Conditional On Calling

Notes: In this figure we show the differences between our "Main" version of our emails and ones that have the addition of a sentence that states "We both work full-time." In panel (a) we show the proportion of decision-makers choosing to make no call, call the female parent (mom) or the male parent (dad) by the message sent to the decision-maker in our Baseline Variation. Panel (a) represents three outcomes from 30,471 decision-makers in Baseline and 9,472 in Full Time, while panel (b) shows only the choices of those who made a phone call to at least one parent ($N = 6382$ in Baseline and 1817 in Full Time).

Figure F.2: Outcomes By Treatment "Baseline" vs. "Payments" Variations



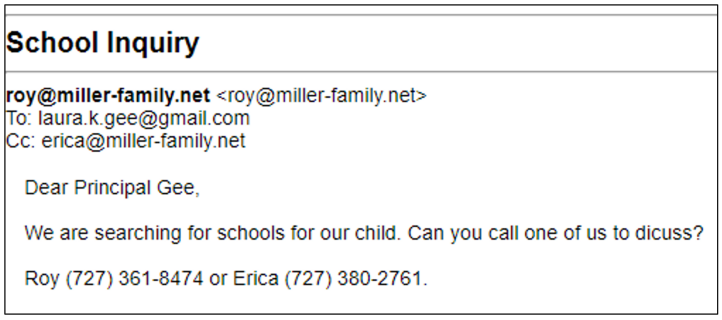
(a) All Outcomes

(b) Outcomes Conditional On Calling

Notes: In this figure we show the differences between our "Main" version of our emails and ones that have the addition of a clauses that states they are "especially interested in discussing school fees and other expenses." In panel (a) we show the proportion of decision-makers choosing to make no call, call the female parent (mom) or the male parent (dad) by the message sent to the decision-maker in our Baseline Variation. Panel (a) represents three outcomes from 30,471 decision-makers in Baseline and 9,808 in Full Time, while panel (b) shows only the choices of those who made a phone call to at least one parent ($N = 6382$ in Baseline and 1817 in Full Time). The patterns look similar if we restrict to private schools only.

G Example Emails Full Text

Figure G.1: Baseline: No Signal



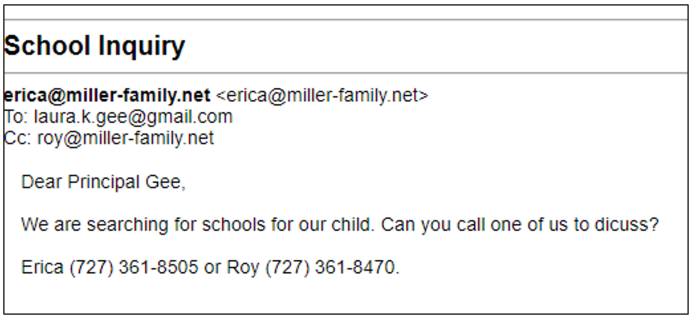
School Inquiry

roy@miller-family.net <roy@miller-family.net>
To: laura.k.gee@gmail.com
Cc: erica@miller-family.net

Dear Principal Gee,

We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to dicuss?

Roy (727) 361-8474 or Erica (727) 380-2761.



School Inquiry

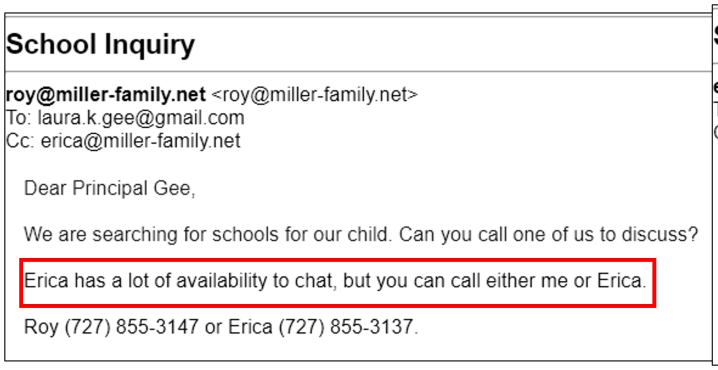
erica@miller-family.net <erica@miller-family.net>
To: laura.k.gee@gmail.com
Cc: roy@miller-family.net

Dear Principal Gee,

We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to dicuss?

Erica (727) 361-8505 or Roy (727) 361-8470.

Figure G.2: Baseline: High Female and Low Female Signal



School Inquiry

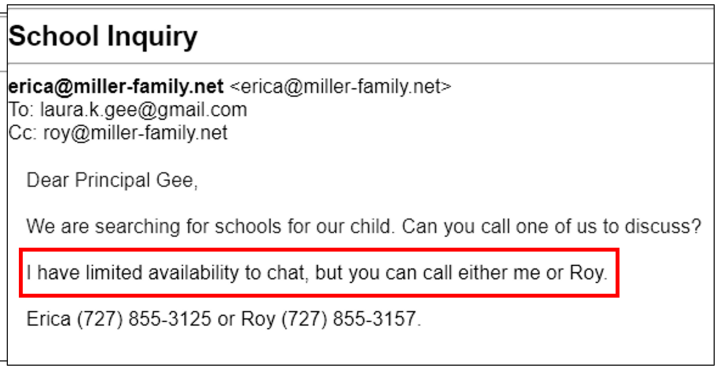
roy@miller-family.net <roy@miller-family.net>
To: laura.k.gee@gmail.com
Cc: erica@miller-family.net

Dear Principal Gee,

We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?

Erica has a lot of availability to chat, but you can call either me or Erica.

Roy (727) 855-3147 or Erica (727) 855-3137.



School Inquiry

erica@miller-family.net <erica@miller-family.net>
To: laura.k.gee@gmail.com
Cc: roy@miller-family.net

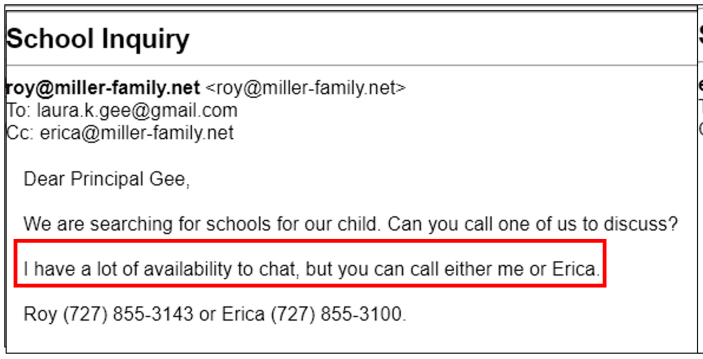
Dear Principal Gee,

We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?

I have limited availability to chat, but you can call either me or Roy.

Erica (727) 855-3125 or Roy (727) 855-3157.

Figure G.3: Baseline: High Male and Low Male Signal



School Inquiry

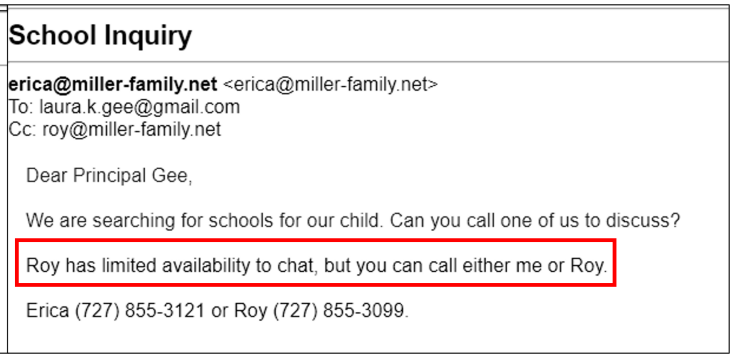
roy@miller-family.net <roy@miller-family.net>
To: laura.k.gee@gmail.com
Cc: erica@miller-family.net

Dear Principal Gee,

We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?

I have a lot of availability to chat, but you can call either me or Erica.

Roy (727) 855-3143 or Erica (727) 855-3100.



School Inquiry

erica@miller-family.net <erica@miller-family.net>
To: laura.k.gee@gmail.com
Cc: roy@miller-family.net

Dear Principal Gee,

We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?

Roy has limited availability to chat, but you can call either me or Roy.

Erica (727) 855-3121 or Roy (727) 855-3099.

H Theoretical Model

Our theoretical framework models how a decision-maker who interacts with a two-parent heterosexual household decides which person to call upon for a task. We built this model to inform the design of the experiment so that we can untangle the mechanisms that underlie any differential treatment of male versus female parents.

In our specific field experiment, the decision-maker is a school principal, and the task is a discussion about enrolling at the school. However, the model is flexible enough to be applied to different types of decision-makers (e.g., doctors, school teachers, sports coaches, organized religion leaders) and different kinds of tasks (e.g., picking up a sick child, communicating about health concerns, taking the team on an overnight trip). Furthermore, our model could apply outside of parenting tasks to study many types of demands on a two-person household (e.g., for elder care, home renovations, retirement planning) as long as the central elements are present: one decision-maker, a set of differentiated individuals to contact, and messages that inform key beliefs about the individuals to be contacted.

We lay out a simple economic structure in Section H.1 to capture the decision-making behavior of school principals when contacting parents. In Section H.2, we describe the random utility model we have constructed to study this environment. We then explain in Section H.3 how our experimental variation integrates with the random utility model. Section H.4 shows how we use the model to identify and estimate its structural parameters, most notably the parameters for principals' beliefs and the other deterrents they face to calling parents. Section H.5 outlines key testable hypotheses of interest. Appendix H contains additional model details as well as all proofs. It is useful to note here that Appendix H.10 summarizes all model-related notation.

H.1 Economic Structure

School principals are the decision-makers in our model; their alternatives are to call a male parent first (m), call a female parent first (f), or call neither parent (n). We index decision-makers by $i = 1, \ldots, N$. We take the experiment for a given decision-maker to end when they choose an alternative $j \in \{m, f, n\}$. We assign a decision of n to decision-makers who do not make a call by our exogenously-determined experiment end date. The observables in our experiment are then (1) the choice $y_i \in \{m, f, n\}$ for each decision-maker, (2) the characteristics of the alternative that is shown to each decision-maker, and (3) which parent makes the request.[1]

We assume that decision-makers potentially face different costs, c_i, of making a phone call and this cost does not depend on which parent is called. For instance, some may have inferior technology or be busier than others. We also assume that decision-makers potentially perceive different benefits and costs from choosing different alternatives, and that these are made up of three components: the decision-maker's belief about the value of a response from each parent, the decision-maker's value from calling the parent who

[1] In Appendix H.7, we extend the model to incorporate the characteristics of the decision-makers.

initially made contact, and the deterrents they face to calling that alternative.[2] We let $r_{ij}q_{ij}$ denote decision-maker i's subjective valuation of a response from alternative j, where r_{ij} is the belief about responsiveness and q_{ij} is the belief about j's desire for equal decision-making within the household. We let s_{ij} be the value the decision-maker derives from calling the person who reached out to them.[3] Finally, we denote by δ_{ij} any other deterrents to calling alternative j. We assume that each decision-maker i knows c_i, s_{ij} and δ_{ij}, has beliefs over r_{ij} and q_{ij}, and is risk neutral.[4]

H.2 Random Utility Model

We construct a random utility model (McFadden, 1974) of decision-maker behavior in which a decision-maker's utility is the difference between the benefits and costs of calling alternative j. For the expected utility maximizer i, the expected utility of calling alternative j is defined as

$$U_{ij} = \mathbb{E}(r_{ij}q_{ij}) + s_{ij} - \delta_{ij} - c_i, \tag{2}$$

where δ_{ij} is positive if factors other than availability beliefs deter decision-maker i from calling alternative j on average. We think of δ_{ij} as a generalization of a distaste parameter, which includes distaste but also other factors not related to beliefs about availability or desire for equal decision-making, such as social norms. This is our basic random utility formulation.

Because calling no one incurs no cost and provides no benefit, we take the utility of calling neither parent to be zero. This normalization will play an important role in identification because choice in this context is determined by differences in utility, not levels.

Under this normalization and in our context of choice between calling either of two parents or calling neither parent, decision-maker i calls neither parent if both $U_{im} < 0$ and $U_{if} < 0$; calls the female parent if $U_{if} \geq 0$ and $U_{im} \leq U_{if}$; and calls the male parent if $U_{im} \geq 0$ and $U_{if} < U_{im}$.[5]

We can think of a decision-maker's choice between the three alternatives as having two parts: whether to make a call and which parent to call if they are going to make a call. The cost, c_i, does not affect the decision of which parent to call because the decision-maker incurs the same cost regardless of which parent they call. The cost plays a central role in

[2] We frame this as a deterrent term to align with the distaste parameter in much of the literature. Note that if the decision-maker perceives a benefit from calling a particular alternative, then the deterrent term will be negative.

[3] We include this parameter for two reasons. First, decision-makers in our survey indicated that there is a strong norm around responding to the parent who initiates contact and/or who is listed first on a child's information form; this suggests that violating the norm would negatively impact utility. Second, this was borne out in the data: we saw, treatment by treatment, principals were more likely to call the father when the email came from the father and more likely to call the mother when the email came from the mother.

[4] In Appendix H.9, we discuss relaxing the assumption of risk neutrality. Note, in a previous version of the paper, we presented a slightly different version of the model, which we discuss in footnote 12.

[5] We break ties in favor of calling the female parent, but this has no impact in terms of the theory since utility is continuous.

deciding whether to make a call. In contrast, the choice of which parent to call depends only on the differences in beliefs, the value of replying to the person who sends the email, and other deterrents. To cleanly identify the parameters of interest, we need to consider both the decision of whether to make a call and which parent to call, so we need to include the c_i parameter even if it is not of direct interest.

H.3 Experimental Manipulation of Beliefs

Consider an experimental manipulation that sends informative signals to decision-maker i about the availability and desire for equal decision-making of either the female parent ($j = f$) or the male parent ($j = m$). For simplicity, we assume all priors and signals are normally distributed. That is,

$$\bar{r}_j \sim \mathcal{N}(r_j, \omega_j^2), \quad \bar{q}_j \sim \mathcal{N}(q_j, v_j^2), \quad x_{ij} \sim \mathcal{N}(r_j, \sigma_j^2), \quad j \in \{f, m\},$$

where $\bar{r}_j$, $\bar{q}_j$, ω_j^2, and v_j^2 are the prior means and variances common to all i. x_{ij} are signals of the *true* responsiveness r_j of j that we send to i, and the signal variances are σ_j^2.

We assume that the priors for r_f and r_m are independent of the distributions for the equal decision-making, cost, reply-to-sender, and other deterrent parameters. This implies that signals about the availability of a parent (female or male) do not impact the δ_{ij}, s_{ij}, c_i, or q_{ij}. Our assumption that decision-makers are risk-neutral implies that only the marginal means of this distribution are relevant for the expected utility and, therefore, decisions.

Notice that we allow the distributions of the availability signals about the two parents to have different means and variances. We also allow for the possibility that signals about one parent may shift the mean beliefs about both parents. This could happen, for instance, if the decision-maker's beliefs about the parents are correlated or if the decision-maker directly infers information about both parents from a signal about just one parent. The impact of a signal about parent j on the decision-maker's belief about the other parent is captured by a correlation parameter ρ_j.

We next describe how decision-makers i update their beliefs after receiving a parental availability signals. To keep the notation simple, we focus without loss of generality on how the belief about the female parent is updated, and the case where the prior belief $\bar{q}_j$ equals one.[6] We then have decision-maker i's posterior means for the responsiveness of parent j as

$$\widetilde{rq}_{if}^F = \lambda_f^F \bar{r}_f + (1 - \lambda_f^F) x_{if}, \quad \lambda_f^F = \frac{1/\omega_f^2}{1/\omega_f^2 + 1/\sigma_f^2} \tag{3}$$

$$\widetilde{rq}_{if}^M = \lambda_f^M \bar{r}_f + (1 - \lambda_f^M) \rho_f x_{im}, \quad \lambda_f^M = \frac{1/\omega_m^2}{1/\omega_m^2 + 1/\sigma_f^2}. \tag{4}$$

$\widetilde{rq}_{if}^F$ is the updated belief about the female parent after a signal about the female parent,

[6] We will discuss signals about desired equal decision making below.

while $\widetilde{rq}_{if}^{M}$ is the updated belief about the female parent after a signal about the male parent. That is, there are two reasons that decision-maker i's belief about the female parent would be updated: directly via a signal about the female parent or indirectly via a signal about the male parent.[7]

Substituting the updated beliefs into Equation 2 gives us the full model equations, which we rearrange into a reduced form that can be estimated directly from our data on which parent sends the email, which availability message is sent, and who the principal calls.

We complete the model by assuming that the errors in each equation are distributed according to the standard Gumbel distribution. This implies that the error differences are distributed according to the standard logistic distribution, helping to simplify the identification argument. Importantly, the random assignment of availability messages to decision-makers implies that the regressors are independent of the errors, so that we can recover the structural parameters—in particular, for prior beliefs, the reply-to-sender motive, and other deterrents—from the reduced-form regression results.

H.4 Identification

If we only send signals about parents' availability as discussed above,[8] we will be able to cleanly identify $\overline{r}_f$ and $\overline{r}_m$ as well as the reply-to-sender parameters for each treatment, s_j^t for $t \in \{\boldsymbol{n}o\boldsymbol{S}ignal, \boldsymbol{h}igh\boldsymbol{F}emale, \boldsymbol{l}ow\boldsymbol{F}emale, \boldsymbol{h}igh\boldsymbol{M}ale, \boldsymbol{l}ow\boldsymbol{M}ale\}$. We will not, however, be able to identify the other deterrent parameters or the updating parameters. The problem is that the effects of beliefs about parents' desire for equal decision-making will be absorbed into these parameters.

To address this concern, we set aside our four signal treatments from the Baseline variation, which contain information only about availability (that is, all treatments except No Signal). Instead, we use the four signal treatments from the Equal Decision variation, adding the statement, "This is the type of decision we both want to be involved in equally" to fix the decision-maker's belief about parents' desire for equality.

If we assume that the value of this signal about parents' desire for equality has a given cardinal value that scales the availability belief and signal, we can cleanly identify the reply-to-sender motive, the joint beliefs $\overline{r}_j\overline{q}_j$ about each parent, the difference between the other deterrents parameters for male versus female parents, the correlation parameters ρ_j, and the weights decision-makers place on their prior beliefs versus the signals, λ_j^J.

Identifying these structural parameters is straightforward, given the four elements of our setting and our model. First, the random utility model provides the structure for the

[7] This formulation can be generalized for the case where one sends signals about both parents to the same decision-maker.

[8] We continue to assume that signals about availability do not impact the belief about desired equality so that the prior belief about desired equality is simply carried along with the signal. This is plausible if we conceptually include the ways in which beliefs about desired equality of decision-making impact parental availability in the q_j's.

relationship between benefits, costs, and outcomes. Second, calling neither parent provides a clear normalization because it provides no benefits and incurs no costs. Third, experimental randomization establishes that the regressors are not dependent on the outcome variable. Fourth, the assumption that errors are drawn from the logistic distribution leads to closed-form equations for the outcome probabilities.

This would be a standard random utility model if our reduced-form parameters did not vary across the j choices. However, having intercepts and slopes that vary across alternatives is crucial to learning about how experimental manipulation impacts decision-makers choices. Fortunately, the model's structure allows us to identify these intercepts and slopes. Appendix H.4.1 provides intuition for, and proof of, the identification of the reduced-form parameters. We achieve identification by (1) using the proportions of signal-outcome-sender triplets in the data where there are two distinct signals about each alternative $j \in \{f, m\}$ and (2) imposing known cardinal values for each signal. Specifically, we send both positive and negative signals about each parent's availability and assume the values are 1 and -1.[9] We assume the value of the signal about the desire for equal decision-making is 1 to match the value for the high availability treatment. Appendix H.4.2 shows that, with these assumptions, the identification of the structural parameters follows directly from the identification of the reduced-form parameters.

H.4.1 Identification of Reduced Form Parameters

We first combine the economic structure in Section H.1 with the random utility model in Section H.2 and our experimental manipulation in Section H.3 to derived the reduced form of our model. A summary of the crucial assumptions of those sections follows.

1. decision-maker i chooses from among three alternatives: $j \in \{n, f, m\}$.
2. decision-maker i holds probabilistic beliefs about the probability that alternative j will respond to a phone call, $r_{ij} \sim \mathcal{N}(r_j, \omega_j^2)$.
3. decision-maker i holds probabilistic beliefs about the probability that alternative j will desire to be equally involved in the decision, $q_{ij} \sim \mathcal{N}(\overline{q}_j, v_j^2)$.
4. Each decision-maker faces a cost c_i for making a call that is the same for alternatives f and m. c is the population mean of c_i.
5. Each decision-maker has a deterrent parameter for calling that varies by alternative.
6. Each decision-maker has a preference for responding to the parent who sends the message. This preference may depend on the message. We define the variable s_{ij} to be equal to 1 when the female parent sends the message and -1 when the male parent sends the message and we allow for interactions with each treatment, which we denote of s_{ij}^t.

[9] Appendix H.8 discusses the robustness of the results to changes in the assigned values of the signals and/or their symmetry.

7. Each decision-maker i knows c_i, s_{ij}^t, and δ_{ij}.

8. Decision-makers are risk neutral.[10]

9. Expected utility for decision-maker i is $\mathbb{E}(U_{ij}) = \mathbb{E}(q_{ij}r_{ij}) + s_{ij} - (\delta_{ij} + c_i)$ for $j \in \{n, f, m\}$ with $\mathbb{E}(U_{in}) = 0$.

10. The experimenters choose signal values x_{ij}^r about availability at random to show each decision-maker and send a signal $x_{ij} \in \{-1, 1\}$ about the availability of at most one alternative to each decision-maker. The decision-makers believe that $x_{ij} \sim \mathcal{N}(r_j, \sigma_j^2)$, $j \in \{f, m\}$, where r_j is the true responsiveness of j.

11. A signal x_{ij} can shift the belief $\tilde{rq}_{ij}$ but does not affect c_i, s_{ij}, or δ_{ij}.

12. The experimenters vary whether a positive signal about parents' desire for equal decision making is also sent to a decision-maker. The cardinal value of this signal is the same as the positive signal about availability, that is, 1.

13. ε_{ij} are each distributed according to the standard Gumbel distribution.

We must take a stand on how decision-makers will interpret our signals about availability given that their beliefs also contain the desire-for-equal-decision making component. If the signals about availability and the desire for equal involvement do not interact, the beliefs in Expressions 3 and 4 about females become

$$\widetilde{rq}_{if}^F = \lambda_f^F \bar{q}_f \bar{r}_f + (1 - \lambda_f^F) x_{if}, \quad \lambda_f^F = \frac{1/\omega_f^2}{1/\omega_f^2 + 1/\sigma_f^2} \tag{5}$$

$$\widetilde{rq}_{if}^M = \lambda_f^M \bar{q}_f \bar{r}_f + (1 - \lambda_f^M) \rho_f x_{im}, \quad \lambda_f^M = \frac{1/\omega_m^2}{1/\omega_m^2 + 1/\sigma_m^2} \tag{6}$$

where the superscripts F and M denote the parent about whom the message was sent.

We let w_{ij} be an indicator for sending i a verbal signal of availability (as opposed to the message with no verbal signal) and we substitute these updated beliefs into Equation 2 to get the expected utility from calling the female parent after updating on the signal.

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathbb{E}(U_{if}) &= (1 - w_{if} - w_{im})\bar{q}_f \bar{r}_f + w_{if}\widetilde{rq}_{if}^F(x_{if}) + w_{im}\widetilde{rq}_{if}^M(x_{im}) + s_{if}^t - (\delta_{if} + c_i) && (7)\\
&= (1 - w_{if} - w_{im})\bar{q}_f \bar{r}_f + w_{if}\left[\lambda_f^F \bar{q}_f \bar{r}_f + (1 - \lambda_f^F) x_{if}\right] + && (8)\\
&\quad w_{im}\left[\lambda_f^M \bar{q}_f \bar{r}_f + (1 - \lambda_f^M)\rho_f x_{im}\right] + s_{if}^t - (\delta_{if} + c_i) && (9)\\
&= \bar{q}_f \bar{r}_f - (1 - \lambda_f^F)\bar{q}_f \bar{r}_f w_{if} - (1 - \lambda_f^M)\bar{q}_f \bar{r}_f w_{im} + && (10)\\
&\quad (1 - \lambda_f^F) w_{if} x_{if} + (1 - \lambda_f^M)\rho_f w_{im} x_{im} + s_{if}^t - (\delta_{if} + c_i) && (11)\\
&= \alpha_f + \eta_f^F w_{if} + \eta_f^M w_{im} + \gamma_f^F w_{if} x_{if} + \gamma_f^M w_{im} x_{im} + s_{if}^t + \varepsilon_{if} && (12)
\end{aligned}$$

[10] We have assumed that decision-makers are risk neutral with respect to the decision about whether and whom to call. In Appendix H.9, we discuss relaxing this assumption.

where the last equation follows from the mapping below:

$$\alpha_f = \overline{q}_f \overline{r}_f - \overline{\delta}_f - c \tag{13}$$
$$\eta_f^F = -(1 - \lambda_f^F)\overline{q}_f \overline{r}_f \tag{14}$$
$$\eta_f^M = -(1 - \lambda_f^M)\overline{q}_f \overline{r}_f \tag{15}$$
$$\gamma_f^F = (1 - \lambda_f^F) \tag{16}$$
$$\gamma_f^M = (1 - \lambda_f^M)\rho_f \tag{17}$$
$$\varepsilon_{if} = (c - c_i) + (\overline{\delta}_f - \delta_{if}). \tag{18}$$

The ε_{if} are econometric errors and are mean zero because the average terms $\overline{\delta}_f$ and c are absorbed in the constant α_f. Importantly, the random assignment of x_{if} and w_{if} imply that they are independent of ε_{if}. Analogous expressions hold for calling a male parent. Recall that the utility of calling neither parent (U_{in}) is assumed to be zero.

We assume that the ε_{ij} are each distributed according to the standard Gumbel distribution, which implies that the error differences are distributed according to the standard logistic distribution. We next make the identification argument in terms of these econometric errors.

We identify the reduced-form parameters using ratios of the proportions of signal-sender-outcome triplets (which signal was sent, which parent sent it, and which parent—including neither—is called). We denote the proportions as $p_j^{t,J}$. The subscript indicates which parent was called. The first superscript indicates treatments $t \in \{n\boldsymbol{S}, l\boldsymbol{F}, h\boldsymbol{F}, l\boldsymbol{M}, h\boldsymbol{M}\}$, where $n\boldsymbol{S}$ is the No Signal treatment, treatment $l\boldsymbol{F}$ sends the low signal about the female parent, treatment $h\boldsymbol{F}$ sends the high signal about the female parent, treatment $l\boldsymbol{M}$ sends the low signal about the male parent, and treatment $h\boldsymbol{M}$ sends the high signal about the male parent. The second superscript indicates which parent sent the message. For example, $p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},M}$ is the proportion of decision-makers who receive the low signal about female parent availability from the male parent and then call neither parent.

Given the assumption that $\alpha_n = 0$, the other α_j intercepts are directly identified by comparing the proportions of decision-makers who receive no signal and call parent j and the proportions who receive no signal and call neither parent. To separately identify γ_j^J and η_j^J, we need to create variation in the term $w_{ij}x_{ij}$, that is, the interaction of the indicator variable for whether a signal was sent (w_{ij}) and the value of the signal (x_{ij}). This variation must be distinct from the variation in w_{ij} alone. We achieve this by sending two values of the signal about each alternative j with known cardinal values. Specifically, we send both a positive signal and a negative signal about each parent and assume the values are 1 and -1.[11]

Given the assumptions above and using the no-signal message plus the four availability signal treatments that include the positive signal about parents' desire for equal decision

[11] For a discussion of the impact of the chosen scale of signals, see Section H.8.

making, we can use the observable proportions of decision-makers for each message-outcome-signal triplet to identify the reduced-form parameters.

Lemma 1. *Given the assumptions of Sections H.1–H.4, the reduced-form parameters α_j, γ_j^J, and η_j^J are identified for $j, J \in \{f, m\}$.*

Proof: We begin with the case in which no signal is sent about either alternative, i.e. $w_{ij} = 0 \; \forall j$. Here, the terms involving η_j^J and γ_j^J are zero for all decision-makers, so we have $U_{ij} = \alpha_j \; \forall j$. Because $U_{in} = \alpha_n = 0$ by assumption, the probabilities from the logit model are

$$p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} \equiv \frac{1}{Z^{n\boldsymbol{S}}} \quad p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_f + s_f^{n\boldsymbol{S}}}}{Z^{n\boldsymbol{S}}} \quad p_m^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_m + s_m^{n\boldsymbol{S}}}}{Z^{n\boldsymbol{S}}}$$

$$p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} \equiv \frac{1}{Z^{n\boldsymbol{S}}} \quad p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_f - s_f^{n\boldsymbol{S}}}}{Z^{n\boldsymbol{S}}} \quad p_m^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_m - s_m^{n\boldsymbol{S}}}}{Z^{n\boldsymbol{S}}}$$

where $Z^{n\boldsymbol{S}} = 1 + e^{\alpha_f + s_f^{n\boldsymbol{S}}} + e^{\alpha_m + s_m^{n\boldsymbol{S}}} + 1 + e^{\alpha_f - s_f^{n\boldsymbol{S}}} + e^{\alpha_m - s_m^{n\boldsymbol{S}}}$. Subscripts denote which alternative is chosen, the first superscript $n\boldsymbol{S}$ denotes that no signal is sent about either alternative, and the second superscript denotes which parent sent the message.

Sending a signal ($w_{if} = 1$) with value $x_{if} = 1$ about alternative f and no signal about alternative m makes the deterministic part of utility for alternative f (i.e. Equation 12 without the error) $\alpha_f + \eta_f^F + \gamma_f^F \pm s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}}$. We therefore have the following probabilities:

$$p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} \equiv \frac{1}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{F}}} \quad p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_f + \eta_f^F + \gamma_f^F + s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}}}}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{F}}} \quad p_m^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_m + s_m^{h\boldsymbol{F}}}}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{F}}}$$

$$p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} \equiv \frac{1}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{F}}} \quad p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_f + \eta_f^F + \gamma_f^F - s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}}}}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{F}}} \quad p_m^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_m - s_m^{h\boldsymbol{F}}}}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{F}}}$$

where $Z^{h\boldsymbol{F}} = 1 + e^{\alpha_f + \eta_f^F + \gamma_f^F + s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}}} + e^{\alpha_m + s_m^{h\boldsymbol{F}}} + 1 + e^{\alpha_f + \eta_f^F + \gamma_f^F - s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}}} + e^{\alpha_m - s_m^{h\boldsymbol{F}}}$ and the superscript $h\boldsymbol{F}$ denotes that we send only a high signal (i.e. value of 1) about alternative f.

Similarly, sending a signal with value $x_{if} = -1$ about alternative f and no signal about alternative m makes the deterministic part of utility for alternative f $\alpha_f + \eta_f^F - \gamma_f^F \pm s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}}$. We therefore have the following probabilities:

$$p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} \equiv \frac{1}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{F}}} \quad p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_f + \eta_f^F - \gamma_f^F + s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}}}}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{F}}} \quad p_m^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_m + s_m^{l\boldsymbol{F}}}}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{F}}}$$

$$p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} \equiv \frac{1}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{F}}} \quad p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_f + \eta_f^F - \gamma_f^F - s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}}}}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{F}}} \quad p_m^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_m - s_m^{l\boldsymbol{F}}}}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{F}}}$$

where $Z^{l\boldsymbol{F}} = 1 + e^{\alpha_f + \eta_f^F - \gamma_f^F + s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}}} + e^{\alpha_m + s_m^{l\boldsymbol{F}}} + 1 + e^{\alpha_f + \eta_f^F - \gamma_f^F - s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}}} + e^{\alpha_m - s_m^{l\boldsymbol{F}}}$ and the superscript $l\boldsymbol{F}$ denotes that we send only a low signal (i.e. value of -1) about alternative f.

We repeat each of the last two conditions for alternative m. Sending a signal ($w_{im} = 1$) with

value $x_{im} = 1$ about alternative m and no signal about alternative f leads to the following probabilities:

$$p_n^{h\boldsymbol{M},F} \equiv \frac{1}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{M}}} \quad p_f^{h\boldsymbol{M},F} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_f + s_f^{h\boldsymbol{M}}}}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{M}}} \quad p_m^{h\boldsymbol{M},F} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_m + \eta_m^F + \gamma_m^F + s_m^{h\boldsymbol{M}}}}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{M}}}$$

$$p_n^{h\boldsymbol{M},M} \equiv \frac{1}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{M}}} \quad p_f^{h\boldsymbol{M},M} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_f - s_f^{h\boldsymbol{M}}}}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{M}}} \quad p_m^{h\boldsymbol{M},M} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_m + \eta_m^M + \gamma_m^M - s_m^{h\boldsymbol{M}}}}{Z^{h\boldsymbol{M}}}$$

where $Z^{h\boldsymbol{M}} = 1 + e^{\alpha_f + s_f^{h\boldsymbol{M}}} + e^{\alpha_m + \eta_m^F + \gamma_m^F + s_m^{h\boldsymbol{M}}} + 1 + e^{\alpha_f - s_f^{h\boldsymbol{M}}} + e^{\alpha_m + \eta_m^M + \gamma_m^M - s_m^{h\boldsymbol{M}}}$ and the superscript $h\boldsymbol{M}$ denotes that we send only a high signal (i.e. value of 1) about alternative m.

Sending a signal with value $x_{im} = -1$ about alternative m and no signal about alternative f leads to the following probabilities:

$$p_n^{l\boldsymbol{M},F} \equiv \frac{1}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{M}}} \quad p_f^{l\boldsymbol{M},F} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_f + s_f^{h\boldsymbol{M}}}}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{M}}} \quad p_m^{l\boldsymbol{M},F} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_m + \eta_m^F - \gamma_m^F + s_m^{h\boldsymbol{M}}}}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{M}}}$$

$$p_n^{l\boldsymbol{M},M} \equiv \frac{1}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{M}}} \quad p_f^{l\boldsymbol{M},M} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_f - s_f^{h\boldsymbol{M}}}}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{M}}} \quad p_m^{l\boldsymbol{M},M} \equiv \frac{e^{\alpha_m + \eta_m^M - \gamma_m^M - s_m^{h\boldsymbol{M}}}}{Z^{l\boldsymbol{M}}}$$

where $Z^{l\boldsymbol{M}} = 1 + e^{\alpha_f + s_f^{l\boldsymbol{M}}} + e^{\alpha_m + \eta_m^F - \gamma_m^F + s_m^{l\boldsymbol{M}}} + 1 + e^{\alpha_f - s_f^{l\boldsymbol{M}}} + e^{\alpha_m + \eta_m^M - \gamma_m^M - s_m^{l\boldsymbol{M}}}$ and the superscript $l\boldsymbol{M}$ denotes that we send only a low signal (i.e. value of -1) about alternative m.

Next, we manipulate the logit probabilities to identify reduced-form parameters $\alpha_j, \eta_j^J, \gamma_j^J$ and s_j^t, which are both reduced-form and structural parameters. As above, we focus without loss of generality on the parameters for calling the female parent.

In order to identify α_f, we take ratios of the probabilities for when no signal is sent.

$$\frac{p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},F}}{p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},F}} = e^{\alpha_f + s_f^{n\boldsymbol{S}}} \Leftrightarrow \alpha_f + s_f^{n\boldsymbol{S}} = \ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} - \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} \tag{19}$$

$$\frac{p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},M}}{p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},M}} = e^{\alpha_f - s_f^{n\boldsymbol{S}}} \Leftrightarrow \alpha_f - s_f^{n\boldsymbol{S}} = \ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} - \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} \tag{20}$$

Adding Equation 19 from Equation 20 and then simplifying, we have

$$\boxed{\alpha_f = \tfrac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} - \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} + \ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} - \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},M}\right]} \tag{21}$$

If we instead subtract Equation 20 from Equation 19 and then simplify, we have

$$\boxed{s_f^{n\boldsymbol{S}} = \tfrac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} - \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} - \ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} + \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},M}\right]} \tag{22}$$

To identify γ_f^F, we first need to identify $s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}}$ and $s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}}$. To do so, we need the following four relationships:

$$\frac{p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F}}{p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F}} = e^{\alpha_f+\eta_f^F+\gamma_f^F+s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}}} \Leftrightarrow \alpha_f + \eta_f^F + \gamma_f^F + s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}} = \ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} \tag{23}$$

$$\frac{p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},M}}{p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},M}} = e^{\alpha_f+\eta_f^F+\gamma_f^F-s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}}} \Leftrightarrow \alpha_f + \eta_f^F + \gamma_f^F - s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}} = \ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} \tag{24}$$

$$\frac{p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},F}}{p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},F}} = e^{\alpha_f+\eta_f^F-\gamma_f^F+s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}}} \Leftrightarrow \alpha_f + \eta_f^F - \gamma_f^F + s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}} = \ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} \tag{25}$$

$$\frac{p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},M}}{p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},M}} = e^{\alpha_f+\eta_f^F-\gamma_f^F-s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}}} \Leftrightarrow \alpha_f + \eta_f^F - \gamma_f^F - s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}} = \ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} - \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} \tag{26}$$

Subtracting Equation 24 from Equation 23 and then simplifying, we have

$$\boxed{s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}} = \tfrac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} + \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},M}\right]} \tag{27}$$

Likewise, subtracting Equation 26 from Equation 25 and then simplifying, we have

$$\boxed{s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}} = \tfrac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} + \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},M}\right]} \tag{28}$$

Now, if we subtract Equation (25) from Equation (23), we have

$$2\gamma_f^F + s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}} - s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}} = \ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} + \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},F}$$

Substituting in for the reply to sender terms from (27) and (28), we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\gamma_f^F = s_f^{l\boldsymbol{F}} - s_f^{h\boldsymbol{F}} &+ \frac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} + \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},F}\right] \\
&= \frac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} + \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},M}\right] \\
&- \frac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} + \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},M}\right] \\
&+ \frac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},F} + \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},F}\right]
\end{aligned}$$

Simplifying, we have

$$\boxed{\gamma_f^F = \tfrac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} - \ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} + \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},M}\right]} \tag{29}$$

Combining Equations (21), (23), (27) and (29), we have

$$\frac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} - \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} + \ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} - \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},M}\right] + \eta_f^F$$
$$+\frac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} - \ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} + \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},M}\right] + \frac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},M} + \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},M}\right]$$
$$= \ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F}$$

We get η_f^F by simplifying the above equation and solving for η_f^F.

$$\frac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} - \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} + \ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} - \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},M}\right] + \eta_f^F$$
$$-\frac{1}{2}\left[+\ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} - \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},M}\right] = \frac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F}\right]$$

$$\boxed{\eta_f^F = \tfrac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_f^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{F},F} + \ln p_f^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} - \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{F},M} - \ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} + \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} - \ln p_f^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} + \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},M}\right]} \tag{30}$$

Analogous equations focusing on calls to the male parent identify α_M, γ_m^M and η_m^M as the following:

$$\boxed{\alpha_m = \tfrac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_m^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} - \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} + \ln p_m^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} - \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},F}\right]}$$

$$\boxed{\gamma_m^M = \tfrac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_m^{h\boldsymbol{M},F} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{M},F} - \ln p_m^{l\boldsymbol{M},F} + \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{M},F}\right]}$$

$$\boxed{\eta_m^M = \tfrac{1}{2}\left[\ln p_m^{h\boldsymbol{M},M} - \ln p_n^{h\boldsymbol{M},M} + \ln p_m^{l\boldsymbol{M},F} - \ln p_n^{l\boldsymbol{M},F} - \ln p_m^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} + \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},M} - \ln p_m^{n\boldsymbol{S},F} + \ln p_n^{n\boldsymbol{S},F}\right]}$$

Thus, the six key reduced-form parameters of interest are identified. ■

Similar algebraic combinations of the logit probabilities identify the η_j^{-J} and ρ_j parameters. We omit these because we do not focus on the cross-parent effects in the data analysis.

H.4.2 Identification of Structural Parameters

Recall Equations (13), (14) and (16), which map the key reduced-form parameters for female parents to the key structural parameters for female parents:

$$\alpha_f = \overline{q}_f \overline{r}_f - \overline{\delta}_f - c \tag{13}$$
$$\eta_f^F = -(1-\lambda_f^F)\overline{q}_f \overline{r}_f \tag{14}$$
$$\gamma_f^F = 1 - \lambda_f^F. \tag{16}$$

Lemma 1 shows that these reduced-form parameters are identified by the various call

proportions in our experimental data. We next use the model structure combined with the identified reduced-form parameters to establish the identification of the key structural parameters.

Result 1. *Given the assumptions of Sections H.1–H.4 and Lemma 1, the structural parameters* λ_f^J, λ_m^J, $\bar{q}_f\bar{r}_f$,$\bar{q}_m\bar{r}_m$, *and* $\bar{\delta}_m - \bar{\delta}_f$ *are identified for* $J \in \{f, m\}$.

Proof: γ_f^F directly identifies λ_f^F as $\lambda_f^F = 1 - \gamma_f^F$ in a simple rearrangement of Equation (16). Once we have λ_f^F, we combine it with Equation (14) to get $\bar{q}_f\bar{r}_f = -\frac{\eta_f^F}{\gamma_f^F}$. Finally, from Equation (13), we have $\bar{\delta}_f + c = -\frac{\eta_f^F}{\gamma_f^F} - \alpha_f$. Analogous equations for the male parent give us $\lambda_m^M = 1 - \gamma_m^M$, $\bar{q}_m\bar{r}_m = -\frac{\eta_m^M}{\gamma_m^M}$, and $\bar{\delta}_m + c = -\frac{\eta_m^M}{\gamma_m^M} - \alpha_m$.

We cannot separately identify $\bar{\delta}_f$ and $\bar{\delta}_m$. However, we can subtract the expression for $\bar{\delta}_f + c$ from the equation for $\bar{\delta}_m + c$ to get $\bar{\delta}_m - \bar{\delta}_f = \frac{\eta_f^F}{\gamma_f^F} - \frac{\eta_m^M}{\gamma_m^M} + \alpha_f - \alpha_m$. ■

Recall that λ_j^J is composed of σ_j^2 and ω_j^2, but these can't be separately identified since we do not have experimental variation for either σ_j^2 or ω_j^2.

We can develop intuition about the model by looking at the relationships between the reduced-form and structural parameters. For instance, start with the expression for the difference in other detterents parameters:

$$\bar{\delta}_m - \bar{\delta}_f = \frac{\eta_f}{\gamma_f} - \frac{\eta_m}{\gamma_m} + \alpha_f - \alpha_m$$

Now rearrange and substitute in the beliefs to get

$$\alpha_f - \alpha_m = \bar{\delta}_m - \bar{\delta}_f + \bar{r}_f - \bar{r}_m. \tag{31}$$

We can interpret this as indicating that the magnitude of the gender inequality (if indeed $\alpha_f > \alpha_m$) derives from the excess deterrents decision-makers face for calling male parents plus their excess belief in the availability of female parents.

Careful examination of the proof of Result 1 makes clear that the identification of the key parameters is not disturbed by a correlation in the belief updating process. This is because identification of those parameters only involves the number of calls to parent j versus neither parent after a signal about parent j compared to the No Signal message. Although we do not focus on the cross-parent effects, allowing for correlation between the beliefs allows one to test whether independence is a reasonable assumption. It also allows the size of the correlation and any potential differences in the updating processes after signals about male versus female parents to be quantified.

H.5 Testable Hypotheses

In Section 3.1, we show that there is, indeed, gender inequality in external demands for parental involvement. That is, when there is no signal about availability, the proportion of decision-makers who call the female parent is larger than the proportion who call the male parent.

The structural parameters identified in Section H.4 allow us to learn about the sources of this inequality. It may be that decision-makers believe that the expected value of a response from a female parent is higher than that of a male parent; we find support for this mechanism if $\bar{r}_f \bar{q}_f > \bar{r}_m \bar{q}_m$. It is also possible that decision-makers face larger deterrents to calling male parents than to calling female parents; we find support for this hypothesis if $\bar{\delta}_m - \bar{\delta}_f > 0$. We examine these questions in the following section.

H.6 Mapping Treatment Effects to Reduced-Form and Structural Parameters

If we include the treatment-specific reply-to-sender terms as the covariates in X_i, it is straightforward to map the coefficients from the treatment effects regression in Equation 1 to the reduced-form parameters from Equation 12. Both are displayed in Table A.3, where we use the no-verbal-signal treatment from the Baseline variation and the four signal treatments from the Equal Decision variation.

The reduced-form regression in Column 2 of Table A.3 is the result of running an unordered logit over decision-maker i's choice to call neither parent (n), the female parent (f), or the male parent (m). Taking calling neither parent as the base case, we have the following equation for calling the female parent when the email comes from the female parent:

$$p_f^{t,F}(x) = \frac{e^{\alpha_f + \eta_f^F w_{if} + \eta_f^M w_{im} + \gamma_f^F w_{if} x_{if} + \gamma_f^M w_{im} x_{im} + s_{if}^t}}{1 + \sum_{k \in \{f,m\}} e^{\alpha_k + \eta_k^F w_{if} + \eta_k^M w_{im} + \gamma_k^F w_{if} x_{if} + \gamma_k^M w_{im} x_{im} + s_{if}^t}}.$$

We also have analogous equations for calling the female parent when the male parent sends the email and calling the male parent when either parent sends the email.

Notice that it matters both which parent is called and which parent the message is about. η_f^F captures the impact of a signal about the female parent on the probability of calling the female parent, while η_f^M captures the impact of a signal about the male parent on the probability of calling the female parent.

The mapping from the reduced-form coefficients to the treatment effects coefficients is simple and intuitive. To be concrete, let's look at the impact of signals about the male parent on the probability of calling the female parent. The reduced-form equation separates this effect into the impact of sending any signal and the impact of the signal's value, which we assume to be 1 or -1. The treatment effects equation separates this effect into the impact of the high signal about the male parent and the impact of the low signal about the

male parent. Thus we have $\beta_f^{hM} = \eta_f^M + \gamma_f^M$; that is, the treatment effect from the high signal about the male parent is equivalent to adding together the impact of receiving any signal about the male parent and the impact of the signal value being 1. Similarly, $\beta_f^{lM} = \eta_f^M - \gamma_f^M$; that is, the treatment effect from the low signal about the male parent is equivalent to subtracting the impact of the signal value being -1 from the impact of receiving any signal.

The same relationship holds for each combination of parent called and signal sent: signals about the female parent and the probability of calling the female parent, signals about the female parent and the probability of calling the male parent, and signals about the male parent and the probability of calling the male parent. The two regressions simply decompose the effects of the signals about the male parent in different ways.

H.7 Model with Decision-maker Characteristics

Until now, we have assumed that all decision-makers are identical in terms of their observable characteristics. We can easily allow for decision-makers to differ in their beliefs and tastes according to any observable characteristic that is discrete in nature. We are especially interested in whether the decision-maker works at a religious school as this may correlate with holding more traditional gender normative views. To be clear, we do not change the signals that we send to principals in any way. This model extension simply allows the parameters driving decisions to be different for different types of decision-makers. In particular, the signals we send can impact the beliefs of different types of decision-makers differently.

We let g index the discrete categories that make up the decision-maker characteristic. Here, we focus on the type of school at which the decision-maker works at so that $G = \{R, N\}$, where decision-makers at religious schools are denoted by R and decision-makers at non-religious schools are denoted by N.

With decision-maker characteristics, Equation 2 becomes

$$\mathbb{E}(U_{ij,g}) = \mathbb{E}(r_{ij,g} q_{ij,g}) + s_{ij,g} - \delta_{ij,g} - c_{i,g}$$

Each type g of the decision-maker makes their decision as in Section H.3. The signals about parental responsiveness are not differentiated by type of principal, but the signals may have differential impact on the beliefs of different types. We extend the assumptions of Section H.3 so that beliefs are independent across types of decision-maker, e.g., that all $r_{ij,g} \sim \mathcal{N}(\bar{r}_{j,g}, \omega_j^2)$ are independent across g.

All beliefs can now be updated separately for each type of decision-maker. For example, we have that decision-maker i of type g has the following posterior mean for the value of a

response from the female parent when the female parent sends the message:

$$\widetilde{qr}^F_{if,g} = \lambda^F_{f,g}\bar{q}_{f,g}\bar{r}_{f,g} + (1-\lambda^F_{f,g})x_{if}, \quad \lambda^F_f = \frac{1/\omega^2_f}{1/\omega^2_f + 1/\sigma^2_f}$$

Equation (12) becomes

$$U_{if,g} = \alpha_{f,g} + \eta^F_{f,g}w_{if} + \eta^M_{f,g}w_{im} + \gamma^F_{f,g}w_{if}x_{if} + \gamma^M_{f,g}w_{im}x_{im} + s^t_{if,g} + \varepsilon_{if,g}$$

Similarly, equations (13)-(18) become

$$\begin{aligned}
\alpha_{f,g} &= \bar{q}_{f,g}\bar{r}_{f,g} - \bar{\delta}_{f,g} - c_{f,g} \\
\eta^F_{f,g} &= -(1-\lambda^F_{f,g})\bar{q}_{f,g}\bar{r}_{f,g} \\
\eta^M_{f,g} &= -(1-\lambda^M_{f,g})\bar{q}_{f,g}\bar{r}_{f,g} \\
\gamma^F_{f,g} &= (1-\lambda^F_{f,g}) \\
\gamma^M_{f,g} &= (1-\lambda^M_{f,g})\rho_{f,g} \\
\varepsilon_{if,g} &= (c_g - c_{i,g}) + (\bar{\delta}_{f,g} - \delta_{if,g}).
\end{aligned}$$

where $\bar{\delta}_{f,g}$ denotes the average value of $\delta_{if,g}$. Analogous equations hold for calling the male parent.

We then have the following identification result:

Result 2. *Given the assumptions of Sections H.1–H.4 and this section, the reduced-form parameters $\alpha_{j,g}$, $\gamma^J_{j,g}$, $\eta^J_{j,g}$ and the structural parameters $\lambda^J_{f,g}$, $\lambda^J_{m,g}$, $\bar{q}_{f,g}\bar{r}_{f,g}$, $\bar{q}_{m,g}\bar{r}_{m,g}$, and $\bar{\delta}_{m,g} - \bar{\delta}_{f,g}$ are identified for $j \in \{f,m\}$, $J \in \{f,m\}$ and $g \in G$, G discrete.*

Proof: Repeatedly apply the proofs for Lemma 1 and Result 1 for each $g \in G$. ■

H.8 Signal Values and Scaling

We have so far assumed that decision-makers take the value of any positive signal to be $x_{ij} = 1$ and the value of any negative signal to be $x_{ij} = -1$. If we change the assumed signal values symmetrically (e.g., both change from magnitude 1 to magnitude 2), η_j does not change but γ_j does. The intuition is as follows: we have not changed whether a signal arrives or not, so the impact of receiving any signal (i.e., η_j) does not change. However, although the signal's value is now assumed to be different, the term $(1-\lambda_j)w_{ij}x_{ij}$ in Equation 12 does not vary with our assumption about the value of x_{ij}. Instead, when we change x_{ij}, the value of $\gamma_j = (1-\lambda_j)$ adjusts to compensate since w_{ij} is simply an indicator for whether any signal is sent. Therefore γ_j is scaled in the opposite direction of the signal value. For instance, if the signals go from magnitude 1 to magnitude 2, γ_j is cut in half. The intercepts, α_j, do not change since they are entirely determined by the proportions of calls when there is no signal.

If we change the assumed value of just one of the signals (e.g., to $+2/-1$ or $+1/-2$), the new γ_j falls between the γ_j for the $+1/-1$ and $+2/-2$ cases. η_j also changes, falling when the positive signal is larger and rising when the negative signal is larger. Any of these changes then ripple through to the structural parameters.In short, as long as we are willing to take a stand on the value of the signals, the structural parameters are identified. However, the identified values of the structural parameters depend on the values we posit for the signals.

H.9 Risk Aversion

We have assumed that decision-makers are risk neutral with respect to the decision about whether and whom to call. If decision-makers are instead risk averse with respect to this decision, the prior variance will play a role in the outcome. Importantly, risk-averse decision-makers who are less uncertain about female parents have an additional reason to call female parents beyond their average beliefs.

In terms of the identification of our parameters, what we attribute entirely to the mean of the belief distribution would then be a combination of the mean and the variance if decision-makers are risk averse. In this case, the parameter we estimate for the mean belief about female parents could be larger than the actual mean belief. If, instead, decision-makers are more uncertain about female parents, our estimated belief about the female parent will be smaller than the actual mean belief. The implications for the belief about the male parent mirror these relationships.

To develop intuition for the effect of risk aversion, imagine that a decision-maker holds the same beliefs and has the same reply-to-sender and other deterrents parameters for both parents. This decision-maker will call the parent about whom she is less uncertain; that is, she calls the parent for whom her updated belief variance is smaller. Given a signal variance that is common to both parents, the updated belief variance is lower for the parent about whom the prior belief variance is lower.

H.10 Notation

We provide a summary of our notation as a reference.

Subscripts and superscripts

- $i \in I$: decision-maker subscript
- $j \in \{n, f, m\}$: subscript for which parent to call first
- $J \in \{F, M\}$: superscript for the parent who is the sender of the email
- $g \in \{R, N\}$: additional subscript for principal characteristic

- $t \in \{\boldsymbol{n}o\boldsymbol{S}ignal, \boldsymbol{h}igh\boldsymbol{F}emale, \boldsymbol{l}ow\boldsymbol{F}emale, \boldsymbol{h}igh\boldsymbol{M}ale, \boldsymbol{l}ow\boldsymbol{M}ale\}$: treatment superscript. When it is only relevant that a message was sent about a particular parent (not whether it was low or high), we use $\boldsymbol{M}$ and $\boldsymbol{F}$

Objects of interest

1. Structural parameters: δ, s, r, q, λ
    - e.g. $\delta_{m,R}$ for the deterrents principals of religious schools face to calling male parent
2. Reduced form parameters: α, η, γ
    - e.g. $\gamma_{m,R}^{h\boldsymbol{F},\,M}$ for impact of signal of female high availability ($h\boldsymbol{F}$) on probability that principal from religious school (R) calls male parent (m) when email comes from male parent (M)
3. Reduced-form regressors: w and x do not vary with principal characteristics, so we have $w_{im}^{h\boldsymbol{F}} = 0$ and $x_{im}^{h\boldsymbol{F}} = 0$ for the impact on principal valuation of calling the male parent when they receive a high signal about the female parent
4. Proportions of decision-makers: $p_{m,R}^{h\boldsymbol{F},\,M}$ is proportion of principals from religious schools who call male when male parent sends email saying female parent has high availability
5. Coefficients in treatment effects regression: $\beta^{l\boldsymbol{M}}$, $\beta^{h\boldsymbol{M}}$, $\beta^{l\boldsymbol{F}}$, $\beta^{h\boldsymbol{F}}$
    - e.g. $\beta_{m}^{l\boldsymbol{F},\,R}$ for impact of low signal about female parent on the probability that a religious-school principal will call the male parent

I External Validity

Type of Household The primary goal of our work is to identify gender gaps in households with two parents, one of whom identifies as female and the other as male. We fully acknowledge that gender identity takes more than two values, but we have started this research with the two ends of the gender spectrum (male and female).

About 98% of US persons identify as either male or female (Census, 2021). The plurality of households with children under the age of 18, 84%, live in a home with two parents, with 99% of these being opposite-gender couples (Census, 2022).

We believe the direction of the effects of our high/low-availability messages would be the same for various genders (e.g., two non-binary parents, same-sex couples). However we would expect No Signal inequality to be closer to zero in households with these gender identity sets. Nationally representative data indicates that same-sex households do not

report wishing they were contacted more/less than they actually are by their child's school.[12]

School Setting Our experiment takes place in a K–12 school setting which we chose because over 40% of households in the US, have school-aged children (NCES, 2021). Almost all parents, 97%, of parents send their children to school outside the home (NCES, 2021). Additionally, the gender gap in time spent on children in school-related activities closely mirrors the overall tendency for mothers to engage in more child-related tasks than fathers (BLS, 2021).

We believe that any gender gaps that we document in our specific task in the school setting will generalize to other tasks in the school setting, such as picking up a sick child, or joining the Parent Teacher Association. Educators in our survey report that they would favor contacting the mother first in many of these scenarios (we discuss the survey in Section M.1). The gender distribution of these tasks is significantly skewed with mothers comprising almost 90% of Parent Teacher Association members and many surveys finding fathers self-report lower levels of involvement in their child's school activities, compared to mothers.[13]

J Ethics

There are pre-existing observational data and survey data that shows decision-makers prefer to call mothers more than fathers. However, in this observational data, it is not possible to tell whether mothers have signalled they would like to be called more often. To measure if there is bias without such signals, we need an experiment like the one we have performed. Additionally, in observational data it is difficult to assess the reason that any bias towards calling mothers exists without exogenous variation in the signals being sent by the household about male versus female availability. For both these reasons, an experiment is needed to cleanly identify mother preference without signals, and how much of that bias is driven by signals about availability.

However, experiments come with costs. A common critique of audit studies, which perform outreach from fictitious persons to a third party (often a hiring business), is that the person who receives the message wastes time and effort in evaluating the message. The median time spent leaving our parents a message was less than one minute, with the 99th percentile being a message of less than two minutes. As such, each principal in our dataset is not spending a large amount of time being in our study. Unlike a resume audit study, the principals in our study do not need to evaluate a lengthy fictitious candidate's resume for a

[12] See https://csed.byu.edu/american-family-survey for evidence from 219 respondents who are in a same-sex married couple that is living together and are from a nationally representative sample. The limited survey evidence we have on non-binary parents from this survey does indicate that the four non-binary respondents report being contacted 77% but wishing to be contacted only 60% of the time.

[13] See our own survey in section M.3 and Daly and Groes (2017) https://archive.nytimes.com/parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/06/dads-in-the-pta/, https://education.gov.scot/media/b3cn2mv5/nih327-dads-involvement-in-school.pdf

position; rather, they need only to read our brief email message and return our call (only 20% of principals call us, and only 17% leave a voice mail, further reducing the likelihood of significant harm to our subjects).

Another concern might be the number of individuals who were contacted. Using our pilot data as a guide, we simulated possible outcomes of samples of varying sizes and chose the smallest sample size the simulations indicated was needed to identify the deep parameters of the theoretical model. This was 80,000 principals out of a total of more than 100,000 in the database of principals.

As a first step toward compensating schools for their time we have donated a total of about $5,000 to the following school- related non-profits and projects: Kids in Need, First Book, Generation Teach, and 10 projects on DonorsChoose.org.[14]

Also, our subjects are school officials who aim to improve school quality as part of their position. Our research, in part, informs ways to improve school quality through better serving parents, and as such, participation in our study is arguably part of our subjects' regular job duties.

Subjects were told two weeks after our initial emails that the household no longer needed to talk, thus releasing the subjects from the need to think about the fictitious household. We decided not to debrief our subjects even though debriefing may have the positive aspects of transparency and the ability to withdraw from the study. Here, we followed the logic outlined in Pager (2007):

> The issue of debriefing subjects following the completion of the audit study is a complicated one. Though typically IRB protocol supports the debriefing of subjects whenever possible, in certain cases acknowledging the occurrence or nature of a research study is deemed undesirable. It could be argued, for example, that subjects could be placed at greater risk should their behavior, as a result of the audit study, fall under greater scrutiny by superiors. For human resource personnel or managers who are thought to be discriminating, the consequences maybe more serious than if no attention were brought to the audit whatsoever. While the chances that negative consequences would result from this research in any case are very small, some IRB committees take the view that eliminating the debriefing stage is the most prudent strategy. The purpose of audit research is not to harm individual employers. Rather, the research seeks to improve our understanding of the barriers to employment facing stigmatized groups in their search for employment.

A second concern is that the decision-makers' involvement may harm other non-fictitious persons because of their involvement in the audit study. For example, if a firm decides to

[14]This type of compensation is non-standard for audit studies. We tried to inform our choice of the amount as follows. Let us assume the educators who responded to our message spent about 20 seconds on reading and responding to our messages. The median school principal salary is $113,000 per year that is a per minute wage rate of $0.015 per second assuming a 40 hour work week and working 52 weeks of the year. That would be 20 second * ($0.015 per second)=$0.30 per school. We were contacted by a total of 15,881 schools and at $0.30 each that is $4,764.30.

call back a fictitious applicant in an audit study, this may crowd out a call to a real applicant. We do not believe our study poses this harm. The act of calling one family likely does not crowd out calling another family.

An additional possible hazard in a labor-market audit study is that the fictitious applicants never accept the job interviews. If they have some identifiable factor, such as foreign-sounding names, this may cause firms to negatively update their views of real persons with foreign-sounding names. Again, we do not think our study poses this harm as all of our households are two-parent households with racially neutral names, as such it is difficult to identify which subgroup a school principal would negatively update about in our study.

Lastly, a large survey of economists finds that researchers are quite comfortable with the lack of informed consent common in natural field experiments like audit studies (Charness et al., 2022). The same survey finds that economists prioritize avoiding more explicit deception but believe it is acceptable for important questions when alternative research designs are unavailable. Informed consent is ideal, but it is difficult to study gender discrimination with informed consent without possibly biasing the results. Recent studies find that informing people they are in a study leads to lower measures of discrimination (Agan et al., 2023). Our study was approved by the relevant Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) at our home institutions, and as such the harms and benefits have been evaluated by a third party that approved the research design.

K Efficiency

Multiple parties are involved in the interaction that we investigate: the parents, the external decision-maker (in our case, the school), the child, and the parent's employers if employed. With multiple parties involved and many trade-offs to consider, it is not readily apparent what the most efficient allocation of calls between mothers and fathers is.

Parents. The existing skew toward mothers contributes to gender gaps in a wide range of labor market and educational outcomes, including career trajectory, occupational choice, and earnings. Workday disruptions stemming from child-related interruptions have also been linked to declines in women's physical and mental health (Zamarro and Prados, 2021). Furthermore, contacting the person the household indicates has more availability would likely reduce parents' stress levels; such reductions in stress are associated with better parenting (Conger et al., 2010).

In our experimental data, even when the the father sends the email and signals that he is highly available, 12% of the calls are still directed to mothers (Table 2). This indicates that households that want a more egalitarian division of child-related tasks and household labor, specifically fathers who want to be more involved, may be limited in achieving their goals in this area. Therefore, the current inequality in demands for parental involvement appears to be inefficient for some parents.

Finally, even if we assume that men and women, *on average*, have different comparative advantages, there is a distribution of these skills within each gender. This implies that households differ from the population average, resulting in a deadweight loss due to inefficiencies within households. This further suggests that reducing the restrictions placed on households by institutions would decrease the deadweight loss.

External decision-makers. Decision-makers may have multiple competing objectives. In our model (Section H), the decision-maker maximizing the likelihood of a useful response–a short-run outcome. However, in the long run, an entity (school, church, extracurricular program, doctor) may find it desirable to have a more diverse set of parents involved (e.g., not skewed toward mothers). They may also prefer to have more parents (e.g., both parents versus one) involved (Clark et al., 1980). A less myopic decision-maker may want to call the father even if they believe he is less likely to respond or may provide a less useful response. We believe investigating these trade-offs is an important area for future research.

Child. The skew toward mothers being called more may be welfare-harming for children, given the extensive evidence that children benefit from having both fathers and mothers involved (Pleck, 2007; Nakata, 2023). Yet, research on the engagement of fathers in child-related social services has found that along with gendered and cultural factors that support a preference for the mother, the institutional aspects of social services result in partial or full exclusions of fathers from child-related interventions (Perez-Vaisvidovsky et al., 2023). This implies considerable welfare costs for children.

Parents' Employers and Economic Efficiency. Parents' employers would like to minimize interruptions to their employees' workday. If the school is going to contact a parent, each employer would prefer that the school contacts the parent it does not employ. This has the flavor of a zero-sum game between the two employers. However, it would be most efficient, from the standpoint of both the mother's and the father's workplaces (and the overall economy), for the parent who has signaled more availability to be contacted, provided that the household has information about which parent is a more productive worker. This would protect the more productive worker's time, increasing the combined output from the two parents. We find evidence that decision-makers listen to these signals but do not fully integrate them, as 26% of the calls still go to mothers even when the father states he is highly available (Table 1).

An important next step in this research agenda is further investigation of the trade-offs each party faces and how a social planner might weigh the needs of the various parties.

L Data Collection and Matching

Emails and Phone Numbers To record phone metadata and voicemails we used a service called Callfire to set up a series of different phone numbers for our male and female parents. First, we set up a series of phone numbers with a generic voice mail and auto-reply text messages saying that the number did not receive text messages. We also set up email addresses with an auto-reply directing responders to please call instead of emailing. The exact email addresses from which we sent our messages were "erica@miller-family.net" and "roy@miller-family.net" for part of our data collection. We switched to emails from "audrey@the-johnsonfamily.net" and "curtis@the-johnsonfamily.net" for the bulk of data collection. We discuss the choice of exact names in detail below and in Section L.1. Due to constraints on email send limits, the follow-up emails sent after the first email which said the family no longer needed to talk were sent from "audrey@the-johnson-family.net " and "curtis@the-johnson-family.net."

Email is a common way for parents to contact schools. In our own survey, three-fourths of educators reported being contacted by parents via email at least once a month (Section M.1). These educators also reported that, when being emailed by both parents, a single parent emailing and cc'ing the other parent was more common than emails from a joint family email account. In one of our pilot data-collection efforts, we found that emailing from a joint email account lowered callback rates (Section L.1). Furthermore, we were concerned that a joint family email address might signal a more egalitarian family, which might bias our results towards finding more equal calls to mothers and fathers. As such, we decided not to use any joint family email accounts.

Names We chose the names from the top 200 listed by the Social Security Administration in 1980 (SSA, 2022a). We chose 1980 because we primarily contact schools that enroll children ages 5 to 18, the average age being 11.5 years old. A child who is 11.5 in 2021 was born in 2009 (2021-11.5=2009.5). The average age of a first-time parent in 2009 was 29.4 years old (CBS, 2019), which means our parents on average would have been born in 1980 (because 2009-29.4=1979.6). From the 1980 list, we chose first names that did not have a strong indication of a specific race or ethnicity (Tzioumis, 2018) (Erica and Roy) and we chose our last names (Johnson and Miller) from the list of the most common last names in the US over many decades (SSA, 2022b). We also did online searches for the names (Audrey Johnson, Curtis Johnson, Erica Miller, Roy Miller) to see if there were any famous or infamous people with these names that might bias our results. In addition we did a Google image search for these names to ensure they encompassed a balance of race and ethnicities.

Messages We pretested our messages using a survey run on Amazon Mechanical Turk to select which messages gave the widest variation in the self-reported likelihood of getting a callback. We also pretested our messages with a set of educators (see Section M.1) to ensure the messages seemed natural to this audience. Furthermore, we tested different versions of the two message variations we sent the most (Baseline and Equal Decision). The messages we sent were brief by design in effort to use less of the decision-maker's time and to make

Table L.1: Longer Versions of Messages

Variation & Treatment	Body Text
Baseline No Signal (Used in Study)	We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?
Baseline No Signal (Longer Alternative)	I'm Curtis[Audrey] Johnson. I'm writing to request information about your school because we are searching for schools for our child, Riley. Riley is a well behaved student, and loves most subjects. We're not totally sure when we will be needing to enroll, but we are looking forward to hearing more from you at your earliest convenience. Could you call one of us to discuss? Thank you very much,
Equal Decision No Signal (Used in Study)	We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss? This is the type of decision we both want to be involved in equally.
Equal Decision No Signal (Longer Alternative)	We are searching for schools for our child. Could you call one of us to discuss? You can call either me or my wife, Audrey [husband, Curtis]. Since we make these kinds of decisions together, whoever you call will convey the information to the other parent. Thank you very much,

our treatments about parent availability more salient. We did test longer versions of our two most-emailed messages, as detailed in Table L.1, but found that the difference in the callback rates was not statistically significant, nor was the proportion of calls to mothers versus fathers.

L.1 Pilot Studies

In May of 2021, we sent 767 emails; in June 2021, we sent out 1,250 emails; and in November 2021, we sent out 1,250 emails. The primary purpose of this early data collection was to refine the process by which we send emails, learn about response rates, and test our ability to match phone calls to emails sent. As such, we concentrated on a subset of our treatments: No Signal, Male High Availability, Male Low Availability in the May and June 2021 waves, and expanded to five treatments in the November 2021 wave with the inclusion of the Female High Availability, Female Low Availability treatments.

Our pilot studies tested several procedural items. For our May pilot, we chose the names Jennifer and Michael because they signal gender well. However, Jennifer and Michael are predominantly white names, so we wanted to test a more race-neutral set of names (Erica/Roy) to see if this impacted callbacks. Testing Jennifer/Michael vs. Erica/Roy, we found that using the more race-neutral names (Erica/Roy) decreased callbacks by 8.8 percentage points. We felt that using the more race-neutral names increased the external validity of our findings and as such decided to use them in our full data-collection effort.

Additionally, we tested two types of email accounts in our pilots, given that our survey of educators indicated that the use of a joint family email address was less common than the use of individual email addresses and cc'ing the other parent (Section M.1). We found that using a joint family email address (versus individual email addresses, with one parent cc'ing the other parent) decreased our callback rates by 9.2 percentage points ($p = 0.032$). With the evidence from both the pilot and the survey, we dropped the joint family email address in our full data-collection efforts.

L.2 Phone Call Data

May 2022 Phone Calls In May of 2022, we sent about eight thousand emails to schools. However, we found that some of these schools shared a single email address or a single phone number (e.g., a network of charter schools, or a school district that uses a centralemail address and/or central phone number). In addition, an error in our code meant we mistakenly sent more than one email to some email addresses. Removing all these from our dataset, we retained 7,935 emails sent to schools that each had a unique email and unique phone number.

In the weeks following, we received 2,990 callbacks to our May 2022 emails. Some of these callbacks are problematic: some are assuredly in response to emails we dropped from our dataset for the reasons outlined above, and a small number are likely spam calls made to our fictional parents' numbers (though these are most likely randomly distributed across our phone numbers). More of an issue is that these callbacks include calls made by the same school principal using multiple different phone numbers or just calling the same household multiple times in a row to the mother, the father, or some combination of both. Our outcome variable of interest is the first parent contacted, rather than the total number of calls made by a principal (although this could also be of interest). Furthermore, to be able to perform an analysis of a school or principal's specific demographics, we need to link each phone callback to a specific email sent. This matching is a multi-step process.

July 2022 Phone Calls In July and August of 2022, we sent 72,136 emails. In the weeks following, we received 30,214 calls. Much like our May data, these calls include spam calls. Our primary objectives with matching callbacks to specific schools are to allow analysis by the school's attributes and to correctly identify which parent was called first if calls were made from multiple phone numbers by the same school principal.

Matching Phone Calls To Emails First we created a dataset with a single line for each unique phone number. We also included all the phone calls from "Restricted" phone numbers, as it is impossible to tell if those are unique. In May 2022 the one-call dataset had 1,684 lines, and in June/July 2022 the one-call dataset had 17,139 lines. We then matched these CallFire 10-digit phone numbers to the 10-digit phone numbers associated with our schools. A little over 60% of calls matched up.

We then took the remaining CallFire phone calls and performed a "fuzzy" match on the first 6 digits of each phone number. For example, all calls originating from Tufts University start with these same 6 digits, 617-627; all calls from Brigham Young University start with 801-422. We then had research assistants check these fuzzy matches for accuracy and disambiguation when two-plus schools matched to a single CallFire phone call. Around one-fifth of calls are matched by a "fuzzy" match. For the remaining CallFire phone calls, we asked research assistants to listen to voicemails and perform Web searches to attempt to match them to a school we emailed. Last, we randomly selected a subset of these matches to be audited by a different research assistant to check for the quality of our matching.

M Survey Evidence

We collected data for this project via survey three times in 2022, 2023 and 2025. Here we describe those surveys in more detail. All the surveys were run on Prolific (IRB number STUDY00002608).

M.1 Educator Survey

In April 2022, we ran a survey of educators before conducting our main field study. People were eligible to take our survey if they were over 18, resided in the US, and answered "Yes" to the following question "Do you regularly reach out to parents as part of your job (or for a previous job)?" To limit our sample to educators, on the survey platform Prolific we only allowed participants who listed their employment sector as "Education & Training." We had 238 educator respondents in 2022.

The goal of this survey was to check that the type of email we were sending to schools was appropriate. Over 50% of educators reported getting the most questions about school enrollment during the month of August. August was followed by the months of May, September, July, June, and April (in that order), with about 18% to 28% of educators stating they got the most questions about enrollment in these months. About three-fourths of educators said that being contacted by parents was either very common (at least once a week) or somewhat common (at least once a month). When being emailed by both parents a single parent emailing and cc'ing the other parent was more common than emails from a joint family email account. Educators reported they contacted parents by phone about the same amount as they did via email, email being slightly more common.

A second goal of our survey was to see how educators self-reported calling mothers versus fathers in response to different types of inquiries. We found that educators self-reported they would make no call in response to a message like our Baseline No Signal only 8% of the time; this is very different than the rate we observe in our natural field experiment which is closer to 80% not calling back either parent. This could be because some of our email messages are going to spam, or because the group of survey respondents is a selected group, or because educators are overly confident in their likelihood of making a call. This disconnect highlights the importance of running a natural field experiment in this setting. Interestingly, conditional on self-reporting making a call the educators said they would call the female parent 57% of the time, which is quite similar to the rate we observe in the natural field experiment (Table 1 Panel A.ii Column 3 and Panel B.ii Column 3).

We found that educators always reported a higher level of wanting to contact the mother instead of the father if they had to choose a single parent to contact about a child being sick (98% contact mom), volunteering at a book fair (96%) or career day (78%), school related payments (86%), or a child's allergies (97%). We allowed the educators to rank the following reasons for choosing to contact the person which were displayed in a random order: I expect this person to be more likely to respond quickly, I expect this person to be more likely to be the primary decision-maker about this topic, I simply like interacting with

this person more, and Other. The reasons of "I expect this person to be more likely to respond quickly", "I expect this person to be more likely to be primary decision-maker about this topic" were very similarly ranked as the top choice within each type of inquiry.

M.2 Decision-Maker Survey

In April 2023, we ran a similar survey of adults who interact with parents, including educators. People were eligible to take our survey if they were over 18, reside in the US and regularly reach out to parents as part of their job. Specifically, they had to answer in the affirmative this question "Do you, or have you ever, regularly interacted with parents?" We had 377 respondents from a variety of persons who interact with parents (the most common were Teacher, Childcare provider, Medical Practitioner, Nurse, Sports Leader). Of the 377 respondents in 2023, 77 self-identified as interacting with parents in the role of "other", and we also include decision-makers with small numbers in this other category. Specifically Religious Leaders (7), Law Enforcement (6) and Family (14) are included in "Other." The primary purpose of this survey was to produce panel B of Figure 1. We randomly assigned whether a decision-maker was asked the following question about a [mother] or [father]: What proportion of the time do you contact the [father][mother] first if only contacting one parent first?

We also asked some of the questions we had asked in our 2022 educator survey of all types of decision-makers. Trends were broadly similar for educators asked in 2022 and 2023, and for educators versus all types of decision-makers.

In Figures D.1 and D.2 we break out our natural field experiment results by the gender of the principal at the school. We can do a similar exercise with our survey data where we compute the average self-reported calls to mothers within each type of decision-maker, and we find a positive correlation as shown in Table M.1.

Table M.1: **Mean Self-Reported Percent of Calls to Mothers By Decision-Maker Type**

Decision-Maker Type	Proportion Female	Contact Mom 1st	N
Childcare provider	0.77	0.78	44
School Related	0.62	0.75	63
Medical/Dental	0.60	0.72	77
Extracurricular	0.47	0.74	30
Sports Leader	0.38	0.58	32
Tutor	0.30	0.70	27

Last, within our surveys, we also identified which respondents were parents from a household with one male and one female parent. In April 2022, there were around 90 respondents who answered a series of questions about households and schools for us; in April 2023, just over an additional 125 parents answered questions about schools and other points of contact (e.g. Doctors, Law Enforcement, Sports). We asked these respondents a number of questions about their experiences as parents, which informed our next survey of

households.

M.3 Household Surveys

In February 2025, we ran a survey of individuals over 18 who were based in the U.S. and identified as current or former parents in a two-parent household where both parents were present.[15] We had 353 respondents, 44% of whom identified as mothers, and the rest identified as fathers. One purpose of this survey was to measure how child-related interruptions impacted mothers' and fathers' labor market and human capital decisions. We report our findings in Figure 5. We emphasized respondents should think of "non-routine/unexpected child-related interruptions to your job(s)" by external organizations when their children were living at home with them that were initiated by the external organization (for example, a call about a sick child, an email/text to schedule a doctor/dentist appointment, a reminder to register for camp/practice/extracurricular activities).

We compare our sample to the general US population who are married and living together in households with at least one child under the age of 18. Our respondents are slightly younger (43 vs. 55 from IPUMS), more white (78% vs. 54% in IPUMS), more black (11% vs. 6% in IPUMS), less Hispanic (5% vs. 19% in IPUMS) and less Asian (4% vs. 14% in IPUMS), more liberal (30% vs. 21% in NORC), more conservative (46% vs. 29% in NORC), less moderate (24% vs. 50% in NORC), and more likely to hold a BA as their highest level of education (39% vs. 24% from IPUMS).[16] Also, of our female respondents 27% are currently a stay-at-home mother and of our male respondents 3% are currently a stay-at-home father which is quite close to the statistics reported from Pew Research (26% moms and 7% dads) and IPUMS (26% moms and 8% dads).[17] We also ask if our female and male respondents have ever identified as a stay-at-home parent for more than one year while their children were below 18 and living at home. We find that 68% of mothers and 14% of fathers identified as a stay-at-home parent for more than one year while their children were below 18 and living at home, however we have been unable to find nationally representative data which asks a similiar retrospective question.

We also used this survey to better understand how two-parent heterosexual households perceived their interactions with decision-makers at schools and other organizations. We report the findings from this survey throughout the paper to inform our understanding of how a mother vs. father feels about: outsourcing an interruption to their partner,

[15] We also ran versions of this survey in April 2024 ($N = 349$) and September 2024 ($N = 142$). The results from previous versions of this survey are quite similar to the most recent wave of the survey (available from the authors upon request). We ran the most recent wave to be able to address comments brought up during the editorial process.

[16] https://usa.ipums.org/usa/ and https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/home

[17] IPUMS does not have data on if someone is a current stay at home mom or stay at home dad. With the numbers I provided, I defined the current stay at home mom as the percentage of females with children 0-18 working 10 or less usual hours worked per week, and the current stay at home dad as the percentage of males with children 0-18 working 10 or less usual hours worked per week. Please let me know if you would like me to adjust this definition. The IPUMS data are from 2022. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/08/03/almost-1-in-5-stay-at-home-parents-in-the-us-are-dads/

schools/organizations' ability to honor a family's request about who to contact, how often schools/organizations contact each parent and how often each parent *wishes* the schools/organizations called them.

Additionally our survey allows us to ask mothers and fathers how much they wish they were contacted by individual entities and overall by all entities. One might think that a household hoping to achieve an approximately equal split of contact over all entities might obtain this by assigning the mother as the sole contact for some entities (e.g. school, medical), and the father as the sole contact for others. For those households who wanted an approximately equal split over all entities, we show the reported desired contact from each entity in Figure M.1.[18]

Even when we do not subset on those who wanted an approximately egalitarian split as in Figure M.2 we still see relatively little mass at the 0 or 100 end of these sub-figures. However, there are some notable exceptions with mostly female respondents reporting they want 100% of the contact from tutoring, medical/dental, extracurricular, school and child care providers.

M.3.1 Hypothetical Choice Experiment

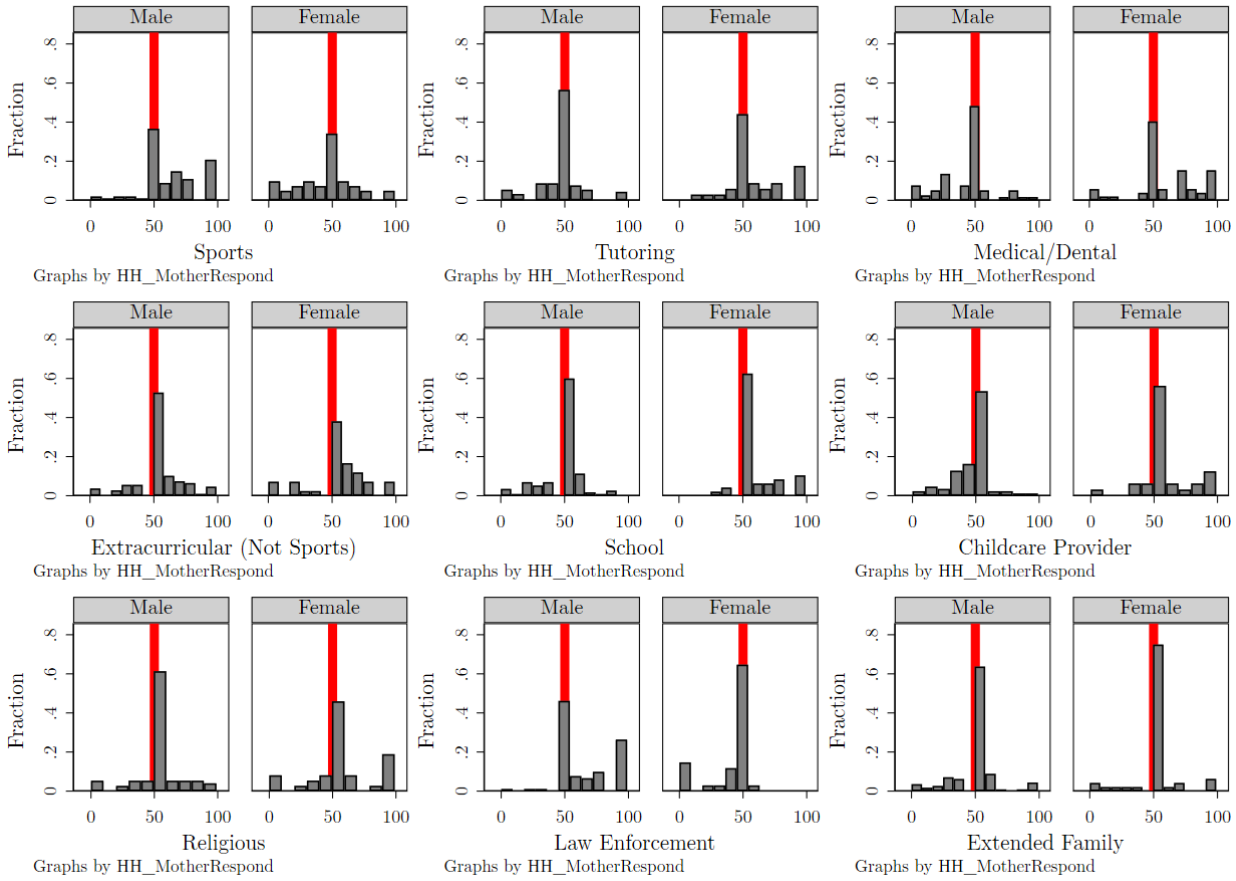
To better understand how two-parent households react to the findings from our paper we ran a hypothetical choice experiment without our household survey in February 2025. The experiment was pre-registered at AEARCTR-0015108. We used a between-subjects design where we test the effect of showing the findings of our study on the likelihood a respondent will report that their household would increase the proportion of contact from the father to the school on a five point scale (Decrease A Lot / Decrease Somewhat / No Change / Increase Somewhat / Increase A Lot). Specifically we ask: How does all the information above change the proportion of contact by the father in your household (versus the mother) to the school? Table M.2 shows the messages shown in our main control and treatment arms.[19]

We create a binary variable which takes the value one if a respondent states their household will Increase Somewhat or Increase A Lot as our main outcome from the experiment.

[18] We define those who wanted an approximately equal split over all entities as those who answered 50-50, 40-60 or 60-40 to a question asking: *Consider the time spent being contacted by all the organizations combined (for example, school, child care center, doctor's office, sports coaches, extracurricular activities). What proportion of that time would you and your partner want to be contacted by all those organizations combined?*. This was 49% of our sample.

[19] We also had a version of the control which was slightly shorter than our main treatment message, but had less extraneous information. It read: *A recent study finds that when parents become more involved in their children's school lives by receiving regular information about their child's academic progress, their children develop more positive behavior in school.* In addition we had an arm of the study which showed a message about the effects of our mother low availability message and read: *A recent study finds that when parents become more involved in their children's school lives by receiving regular information about their child's academic progress, their children develop more positive behavior in school. Another recent study finds that if the child's father emails the school and indicates that the mother has limited availability, about 90% of responses from the school will be directed to the father.* We find our main outcome variable of increased contact from the father is not statistically significantly different across our two control messages ($p = 0.136$) nor across our two treatment messages ($p = 0.400$). We pool the control and treatment variations with the main versions in our analysis.

Figure M.1: Histograms of Self-Reported Contact Wanted By Mothers and Fathers for Households Which Want Egalitarian Split Over All Entities

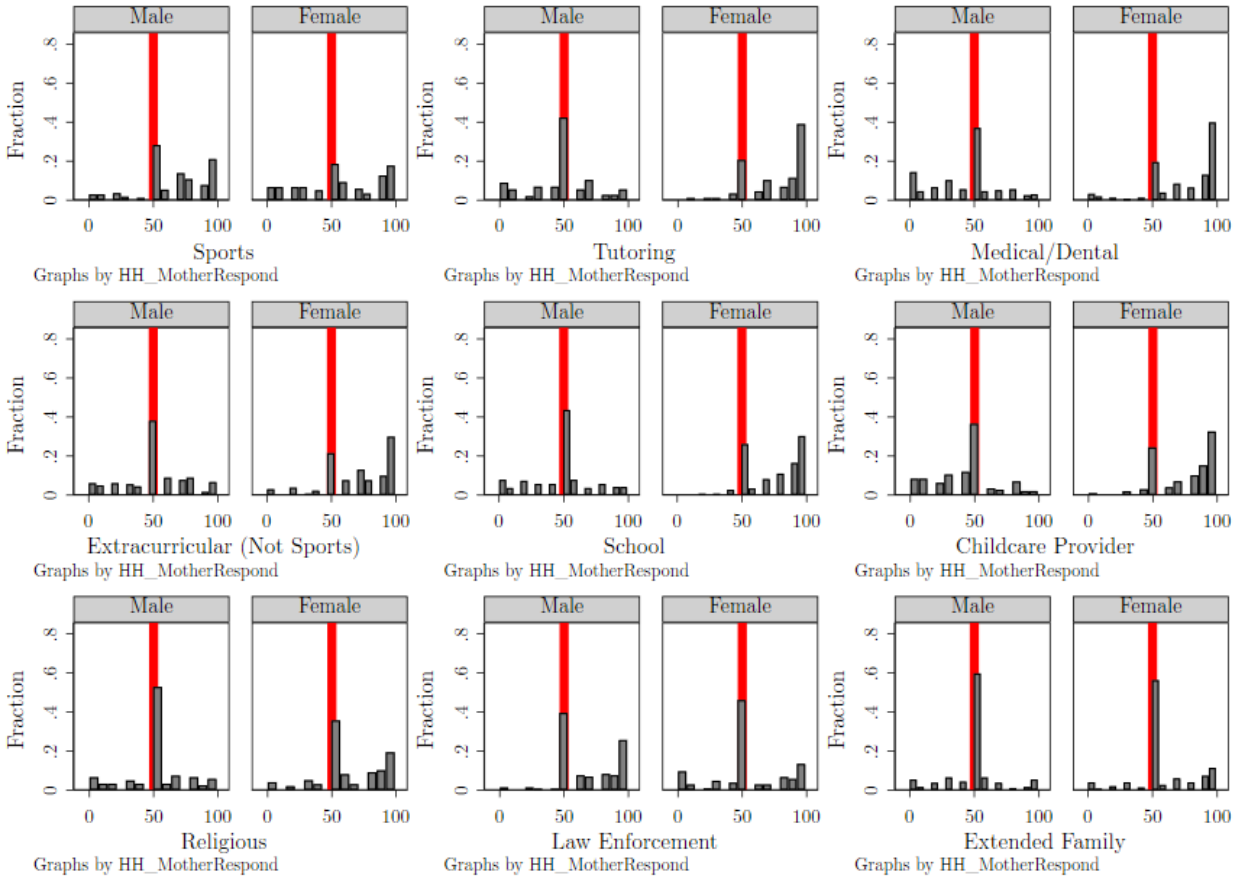


Notes: In this Figure we show histograms of the responses to the question: *We are going to list some common organizations below. How much do you wish each of these organizations contacted you vs. your partner? If your household does not interact with a specific type of organization please select "non-applicable"*. There is a vertical red line where for those who answered they wanted an exactly 50-50 split for an entity. We show the answers only for the subset of "Egalitarian" households, meaning those who answered 40-60, 50-50, or 60-40 to the following question: *Consider the time spent being contacted by all the organizations combined (for example, school, child care center, doctor's office, sports coaches, extracurricular activities). What proportion of that time would you and your partner want to be contacted by all those organizations combined?*. This represents 49% of respondents (173 of our 353 survey respondents). Figures exclude those who marked NA for an entity with the following total observations per sub-graph: Sports = 142, Tutoring=126, Medical/Dental=170, Extracurricular (Not Sports) = 150, School=163, Childcare Provider = 118, Religious = 112, Law Enforcement = 125, Extended Family = 161.

After we present these experimental messages, we ask respondents whether they knew the information from the studies beforehand. We found that around 20% of respondents knew the information from the our study in both Treatment and Control ($p = 0.2965$ Control vs. Treatment). The main thing we take away from this is that there may be a lack of information about our findings insofar as about 80% of respondents do not say they knew about the findings beforehand. We can also use this as a control variable in our analysis of the effect of our Treatment versus Control messages.

Specifically, we find that 41% say they will increase the proportion of contact from the father when told about our study while this is only 30% for those seeing the Control

Figure M.2: Histograms of Self-Reported Contact Wanted By Mothers and Fathers for All Households Split Over All Entities



Notes: In this Figure we show histograms of the responses to the question: *We are going to list some common organizations below. How much do you wish each of these organizations contacted you vs. your partner? If your household does not interact with a specific type of organization please select "non-applicable"*. There is a vertical red line where for those who answered they wanted an exactly 50-50 split for an entity. We show the answers all of our 353 survey respondents. Figures exclude those who marked NA for an entity with the following total observations per sub-graph: Sports = 284, Tutoring=231, Medical/Dental=347, Extracurricular (Not Sports) = 308, School=335, Childcare Provider = 240, Religious = 219, Law Enforcement = 248, Extended Family = 333.

message ($p = 0.0227$). If we limit to only those for whom our study findings provided new information we find the gap widens with only 26% in the control saying they will increase contact from the father while still 41% in the Treatment group ($p = 0.0076$). Furthermore, we can run a regression which controls for whether the respondent knew the information about either study beforehand, whether the experiment was at the beginning or end of the survey, and whether respondents saw one of the slight variations on our messages explained in footnote 19. This indicates that showing information about our findings causes a 13.3 percentage point increase in the likelihood of increasing the proportion of contact from the father ($p = 0.015$).

For those who saw our Treatment message and said they did not know about our study already, 57% reported making no change to their proportion of contact from the father. The

most popular reason stated for no change in reaction from a list we allowed them to choose from was because their household already decided that one person should handle all contact with the school. Of those who said a single parent was in charge of all contact with the school 77% reported this to be the mother while the remaining 23% reported it was the father.

Table M.2: Hypothetical Choice Experiment

Control: No information about our study's findings about calls being pushed to fathers	**Treatment**: Information about our study's findings
A recent study finds that when parents become more involved in their children's school lives by receiving regular information about their child's academic progress, their children develop more positive behavior in school. The messages that were used to communicate with the school were sent through a low-cost electronic technology.	A recent study finds that when parents become more involved in their children's school lives by receiving regular information about their child's academic progress, their children develop more positive behavior in school. Another recent study finds that if the child's father emails the school and indicates that he has a lot of availability, about 90% of responses from the school will be directed to the father.

Notes: This table presents the text shown in a between-subjects hypothetical choice experiment.

N American Time Use and the Current Population Surveys

Using ATUS data and following the methodology of Cubas et al. (2021), we are able to replicate their finding that 35% of women experience a household interruption on a typical workday versus 20% of men. In addition to the calculations we describe in Section 5, we can perform back-of-the-envelope calculations for the wage penalty associated with each type of the male-female split of interruption hours as well as each of the signals we send to decision-makers. We find that indeed our messages could be effective at ameliorating the wage gap.

For example, each extra hour of household care is correlated with a \$0.851 loss in hourly earnings using regressions similar to those presented in Table 4 (available from the authors upon request). We can start with the current female-male earnings gap ($0.834 = \frac{21.517}{25.799}$) which we see with mothers doing 0.169 hours of care and fathers doing 0.123 hours of care. If we instead pushed 92% of the hours to fathers, like we can with emails from the father with a message of low female availability then the female-male earnings gap would become ($0.842 = \frac{21.517+0.851*(0.169-0.023)}{25.799-0.851*(0.169-0.023)}$). That is, this intervention could close the hourly wage gap by about \$0.25.

Table N.1: **Correlations Between Log Wages and Household Care**

	Without Household Care	With Household Care	Low-Powered Jobs Without Household Care	Low-Powered Jobs With Household Care	High-Powered Jobs Without Household Care	High-Powered Jobs With Household Care
Ext: Incidence of HH care 8 to 5		-0.063***		-0.050***		-0.073***
		(0.013)		(0.014)		(0.026)
Int: Hours of HH care 8 to 5		-0.002		0.005		-0.009
		(0.012)		(0.013)		(0.035)
Female	-0.290***	-0.283***	-0.271***	-0.266***	-0.193***	-0.183***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.020)	(0.020)
R^2	0.346	0.348	0.280	0.281	0.252	0.255
Mean hourly wages						
Male & Female	3.011	3.011	2.885	2.885	3.487	3.487
Male	3.074	3.074	2.930	2.930	3.529	3.529
Female	2.891	2.891	2.809	2.809	3.359	3.359
Ext: Any HH care 8 to 5						
Male	0.197	0.197	0.206	0.206	0.170	0.170
Female	0.347	0.347	0.350	0.350	0.333	0.333
Int: Hours HH care 8 to 5						
Male	0.123	0.123	0.137	0.137	0.080	0.080
Female	0.169	0.169	0.173	0.173	0.144	0.144
Observations	12658	12658	9706	9706	2952	2952

Notes: The table is based on the work of Cubas et al. (2021). Respondents are 18–65 years old, who report usual weekly hours $\geq$ 35 in the CPS between 2003-2018, who are married with at least one child in the household, and whose diary day is a weekday. We also restrict the sample to those who report nonzero time spent on work-related activities at the work site during the diary day. Hourly wage is constructed by dividing weekly earnings reported in the CPS by usual (total) hours worked last week. Weekly earnings that are top coded are recoded as 1.5 times the top-code value. The hourly earnings measure we use is reported only for wage and salary workers, so this table excludes self-employed workers. The regression also includes fixed effects for single, years of age, detailed education categories, detailed race categories, and years. All regressions are weighted using ATUS weights.