

Who ya gonna call?: Gender inequality in demand for parental involvement

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Introduction

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- ▶ Important contributor is women's tendency to concentrate in more flexible jobs (Price & Wasserman, 2022; Goldin, 2014; Flabbi & Moro, 2012)
 - ▶ Especially true for mothers (Price & Wasserman, 2022; Wiswall & Zafar, 2018; Mas & Palais, 2017; Goldin & Katz, 2011)

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- ▶ Some of this time inequality may be externally driven

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- ▶ Develop a theoretical model to inform our field experiment

Theory Sketch

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- ▶ call female first ($j = f$), male first ($j = m$), OR neither parent ($j = n$)

$$\underbrace{U_{ij}}_{\text{Utility of } i \text{ from action } j} = \underbrace{\mathbb{E}(r_{ij})}_{\text{Expectation of benefit of response from parent } j} - \underbrace{c_i}_{\text{cost of calling}} - \underbrace{\delta_{ij}}_{\text{other deterrents}}$$

We assume no benefit or cost when calling neither parent, so $U_{in} = 0$

Who ya gonna call?

- ▶ If utility from calling both parents < 0 ($U_{in} = 0$), principal calls neither parent
 - ▶ $U_{if} < 0$ and $U_{im} < 0$
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 - ▶ female parent when $U_{if} \geq U_{im}$
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 - ▶ male parent when $U_{if} < U_{im}$
 - $\mathbb{E}(r_{if}) - \delta_{if} < \mathbb{E}(r_{im}) - \delta_{im}$

Signals & Updating

- ▶ Signal to DM i about responsiveness of *either* female (r_{if}) or male parent (r_{im})
- ▶ DM i 's posterior mean \tilde{r}_{ij} for the responsiveness of j is

$$\underbrace{\tilde{r}_{ij}}_{\text{posterior}} = \underbrace{\lambda_j \bar{r}_j}_{\lambda_j * \text{Expectation of benefit of response from parent } j} + \underbrace{(1 - \lambda_j) x_{ij}}_{(1 - \lambda_j) * \text{signal about parent type } j}, \quad \underbrace{\lambda_j}_{\text{weighting}} = \frac{1/\omega_j^2}{1/\omega_j^2 + 1/\sigma^2}$$

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▶ Assumptions

- ▶ Risk neutrality \Rightarrow only marginal means impact decisions
- ▶ All priors and signals are normally distributed

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

- ▶ Priors for r_{if} and r_{im} are independent of each other & cost & distaste distributions
 - A signal about one belief shifts only that belief (this can be relaxed)
 - Signals do not impact δ_{if} , δ_{im} or c_i

Updating Utility After A Signal

$$U_{ij} = \mathbb{E}(r_{ij}) - \delta_{ij} - c_i$$

becomes

$$\underbrace{U_{ij}}_{\text{Updated utility}} = \underbrace{\bar{r}_j}_{\text{Avg. beliefs of responsiveness of parent type } j} - \underbrace{(1 - \lambda_j)\bar{r}_j w_{ij}}_{\Delta \text{ in beliefs from any signal being sent about parent type } j} + \underbrace{(1 - \lambda_j)w_{ij} x_{ij}}_{\Delta \text{ in beliefs from specific signal (high/low) about parent type } j} - \underbrace{\delta_{ij}}_{\substack{\text{other deterrents} \\ \text{eg, tastes, gender norms} \\ \text{etc.}}} - \underbrace{c_i}_{\text{cost of call}}$$

discrimination due to beliefs about responsiveness discrimination due to other factors

- ▶ w_{ij} is indicator for sending i a signal about parent $j \in \{f, m\}$
- ▶ Recall $U_{in} = 0$ (no response, no distaste, no cost of calling)

Field Experiment

Experimental Design

- ▶ Emails to school principals from a fictitious family ask to contact one parent [Details](#)
 - ▶ 40% US households (\approx 50 million) have school-aged children (NCES, 2021)
 - ▶ Gender gap in school-related time mirrors overall inequality in time with children (BLS ATUS, 2021)

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- ▶ Main Treatments:
 - ▶ Baseline: no signal
 - ▶ Treatment 1: Male high availability signal
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 - ▶ Treatment 3: Female high availability signal
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- ▶ About 2 weeks later, send “no longer need to speak” email

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?

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

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To: laura.k.gee@gmail.com
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Dear Principal Gee,

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

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

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

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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 [a lot of][limited] availability to chat, but you can call either me or Roy.

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

▶ More Details

▶ Robustness: email language

Results

May - August 2022 Data Collection (N=80,071)

▶ Main Variation

- ▶ Sent approximately equal number of emails from 5 "Main" treatments; $N = 30,471$
- ▶ Random sample of all US
- ▶ 21% of principals called at least 1 parent
 - Focusing on 1st call; this is the person who fields most external demands

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"This is the type of decision we both want to be involved in equally."

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- ▶ Variation 2 "Full-time" ($N = 9,472$): Shut down labor force participation
"We both work full time"

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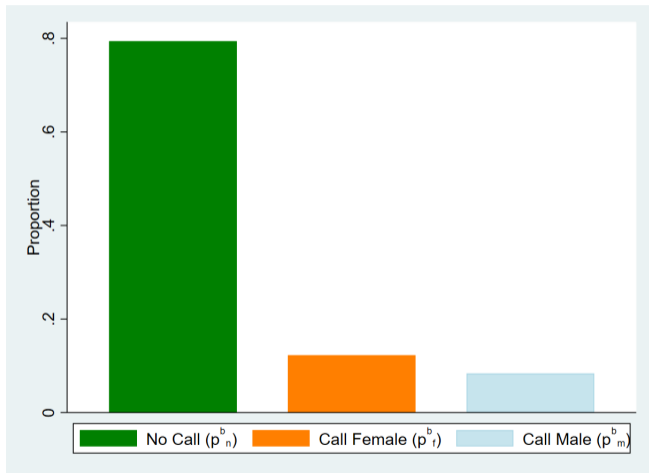
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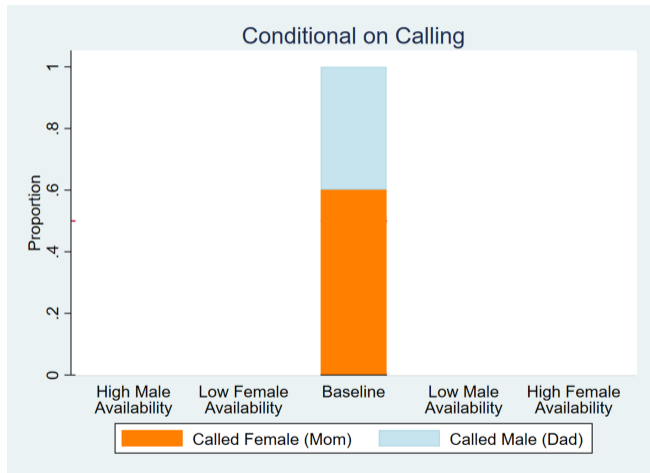
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"We both work full time"
- ▶ Variation 3 "Male domain" ($N = 9,808$):
"We are especially interested in discussing school fees and other expenses."

Descriptive: H1 Is there an external demand gender gap? YES



- ▶ $\mathbb{P}[f|b] = 12\% > \mathbb{P}[m|b] = 8\%$
 $N = 5,612$ emails sent in Main
Baseline
 $Pr(T > t) = 0.00$

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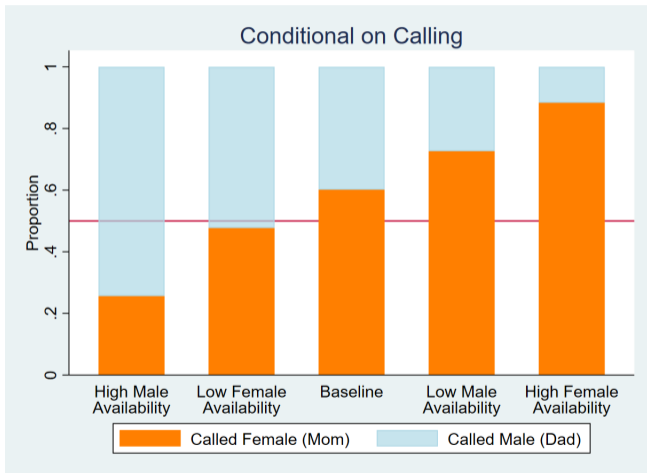
► $\mathbb{P}[f|b] = 12\% > \mathbb{P}[m|b] = 8\%$
 $N = 5,612$ emails sent in Main Baseline

$$Pr(T > t) = 0.00$$

► Conditional on calling, female is called 59% vs. male 41%

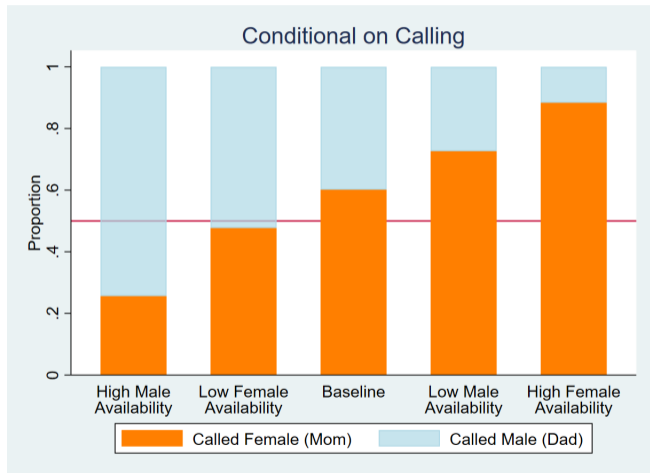
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Can signals improve gender gap in external demands? YES



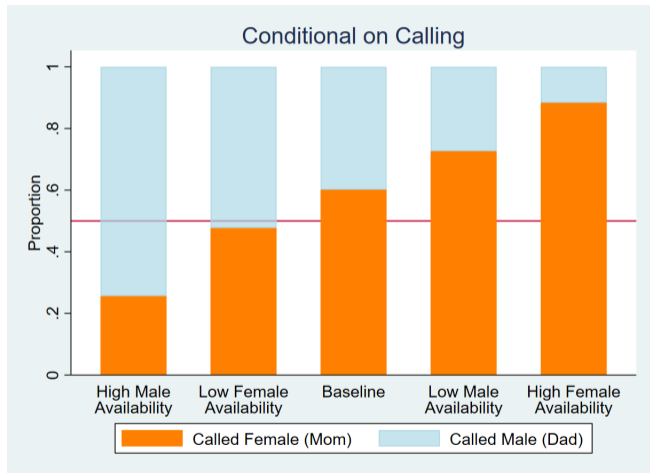
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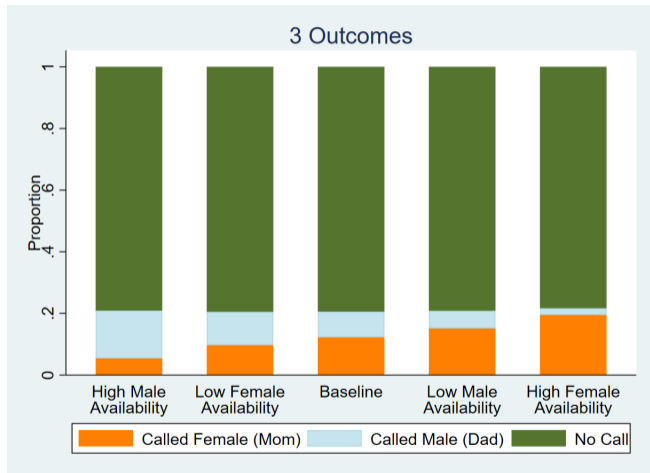
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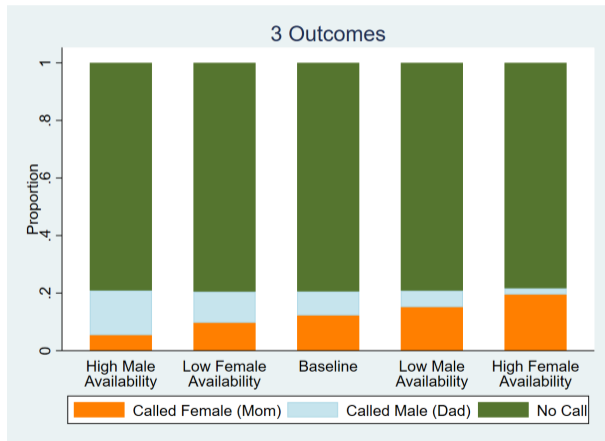
- ▶ Messages change who is called
 - ▶ All stat. sign. different from baseline
- ▶ Female still called 26% when male “very available” (Male called only 10% when female “very available”)
- ▶ Across all treatments, women are called 58% vs. men 42%

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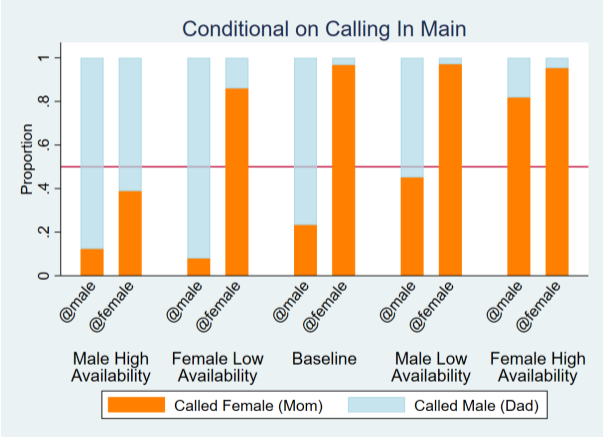
- ▶ Messages generally change who is called as expected ($N = 30,471$ emails sent)
- ▶ NoCall rate not statistically different treatments vs. Baseline

Mechanisms: H2 & H3 What drives decision makers to call mom in Baseline?



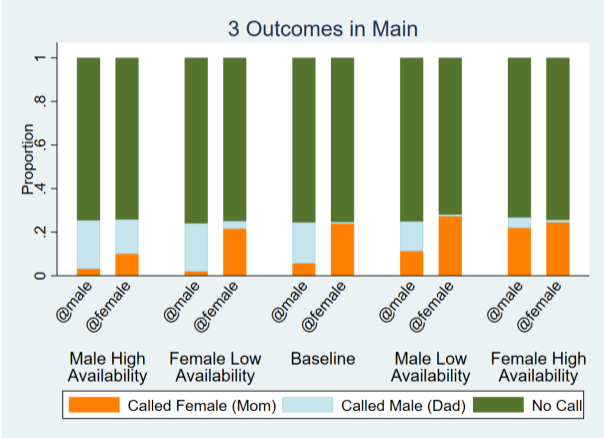
- ▶ Using info from figure & model, more calls to female parent in **Baseline** because:
 - ▶ Decision-makers believe women are marginally more responsive than men:
 $\bar{r}_f = -0.34$ and $\bar{r}_m = -0.42$
 $Prob > chi2 = 0.64$
 - ▶ Decision-makers have different “deltas” for male/female parent:
 $\bar{\delta}_m - \bar{\delta}_f = 0.33$
 $Prob > chi2 = 0.02$

Solutions: Who emails & who calls mom?



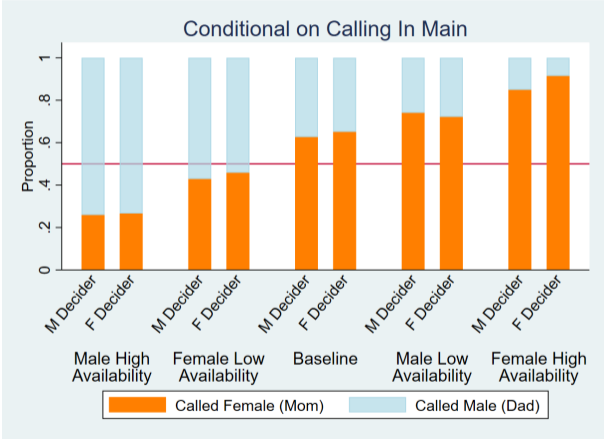
► Sending emails from men increases calls to men vs. women by 10 ppt (pooling across 5 treatments)

Solutions: Who emails & who calls mom?



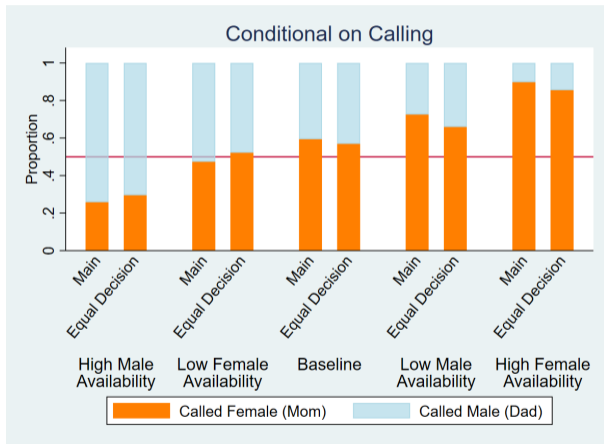
- ▶ Sending emails from men increases calls to men vs. women by 10 ppt (pooling across 5 treatments)
- ▶ Sending emails from men does not change “No Call” (pooling across 5 treatments)

Solutions: Attributes of decision makers & who calls mom?



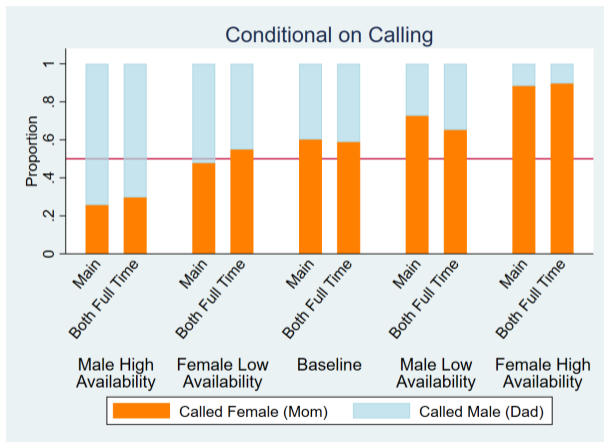
- ▶ Female decision-makers call mom 59% vs. male decision-makers 57% across all 5 treatments
- ▶ Later: link to attributes of school, geographic area (gender norms, labor force participation, etc.)

Alternative Mechanisms



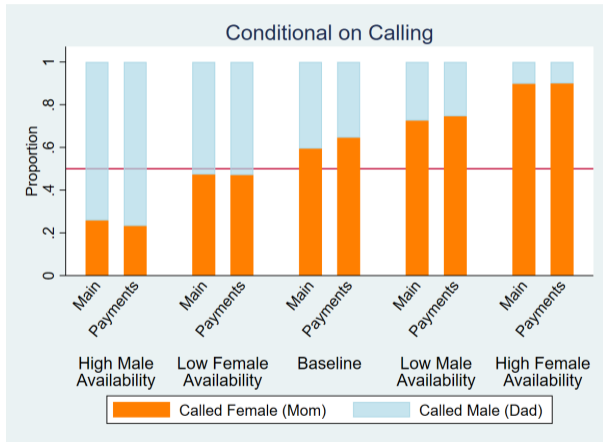
- ▶ "Equal Decision" Variation
 - ▶ “We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?”
 - ▶ + “This is the type of decision we both want to be involved in equally.”
- ▶ If mother’s implied expertise is driving results, expect fewer calls to mothers in “Equal Decision” variation
- ▶ Find small opposite expected diff
58% Main vs. 60% Equal Decision

Availability & Labor Force Participation



- ▶ "Full-time" Variation
 - ▶ "We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?"
 - ▶ + "We both work full-time."
- ▶ If mother's implied labor force participation is driving results, expect fewer calls to mothers in "FT Work" variation
- ▶ Find opposite 58% Main vs. 62% Full-time $p = 0.05$

Male Domain



- ▶ "Payments" Variation
 - ▶ "We are searching for schools for our child."
 - ▶ + "and we are especially interested in discussing **school fees and other expenses.**"
- ▶ Survey of ≈ 140 educators indicated "Payments" as more male domain
- ▶ Find same calls to mom in Main 58.1% vs. 58.0% in Payments

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 - ▶ We find that areas with higher sexism have higher inequality in demand for parental involvement
 - ▶ Baseline call-back rates for religious/public+private (non religious) schools: 23% /11-14% calls to moms vs. 7% /7-8% to dads

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 - Benefit from having both parents involved (Peck, 2007).
 - ▶ Parents' employers & Economic efficiency
 - Most efficient for the parent who signals availability to be contacted

Discussion

- ▶ We decompose this inequality into discrimination due to beliefs about responsiveness vs. other deterrents and explore several mechanisms:
 - ▶ Beliefs about relative expertise
 - ▶ Beliefs about full time employment
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 - Striking asymmetry in the effect of information on reducing discrimination
 - ▶ Sending the email from the father's account
- ▶ Robustness across domains

Thank you!

olga.stoddard@byu.edu

Appendix

Details of Email Design

- ▶ Names from top 200 names social security admin. 1980s
 - ▶ School age child 5 to 18, avg = 11.5, born 2009
 - ▶ Avg. age parent 29.4
 - ▶ $2009 - 29.4 = 1979.6$
 - ▶ Chose names with Erica, Roy for May 2022 (Audrey & Curtis later) no strong signal of a specific race/ethnicity
 - ▶ Last name Miller May 2022 (Johnson later) from list of most popular last names
- ▶ Survey of Educators
 - ▶ 238 Educators in April 2022
 - ▶ Three-fourths being emailed by parent very common (at least once a week) or somewhat common (at least once a month)
 - ▶ 42% being emailed by 1 parent & CC other very common (at least once a week) or somewhat common (at least once a month)

▶ [Back](#)

Callback Rate

- ▶ Studies which email schools and receive emails back
 - ▶ 40% to 63% (Bergman and McFarlin Jr, 2018; Ahmed et al., 2020; Oberfield and Incantalupo, 2021)
 - ▶ Expect phone calls less than emails
- ▶ Principals response to other emailed tasks
 - ▶ 14% of principals respond in the first month after an email request to take a survey (Neal et. al., 2020)
- ▶ Traditional job audit studies
 - ▶ Combined email/phone response rates between 8% to 11% (see Agan and Starr, 2018 for a summary)
- ▶ [Back](#)

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.

All versions mostly balanced on being sent from male or female parent (results similar if re-weighted for balance on email sender) [▶ Back](#)

Robustness

Variation & Treatment	Body Text
Main Baseline (Used In Study)	We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?
Main Baseline (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 (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 (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,

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Treatments 1 & 2: Male high vs. low availability signals

School Inquiry	School Inquiry
<p>roy@miller-family.net <roy@miller-family.net> To: laura.k.gee@gmail.com Cc: erica@miller-family.net</p> <p>Dear Principal Gee,</p> <p>We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?</p> <p>I have a lot of availability to chat, but you can call either me or Erica.</p> <p>Roy (727) 855-3143 or Erica (727) 855-3100.</p>	<p>erica@miller-family.net <erica@miller-family.net> To: laura.k.gee@gmail.com Cc: roy@miller-family.net</p> <p>Dear Principal Gee,</p> <p>We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?</p> <p>Roy has limited availability to chat, but you can call either me or Roy.</p> <p>Erica (727) 855-3121 or Roy (727) 855-3099.</p>

All versions mostly balanced on being sent from male or female parent (results similar if re-weighted for balance on email sender) [▶ Back](#)

Treatments 3 & 4: Female high vs. low availability signals

School Inquiry	School Inquiry
<p>roy@miller-family.net <roy@miller-family.net> To: laura.k.gee@gmail.com Cc: erica@miller-family.net</p> <p>Dear Principal Gee,</p> <p>We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?</p> <p>Erica has a lot of availability to chat, but you can call either me or Erica.</p> <p>Roy (727) 855-3147 or Erica (727) 855-3137.</p>	<p>erica@miller-family.net <erica@miller-family.net> To: laura.k.gee@gmail.com Cc: roy@miller-family.net</p> <p>Dear Principal Gee,</p> <p>We are searching for schools for our child. Can you call one of us to discuss?</p> <p>I have limited availability to chat, but you can call either me or Roy.</p> <p>Erica (727) 855-3125 or Roy (727) 855-3157.</p>

All versions mostly balanced on being sent from male or female parent (results similar if re-weighted for balance on email sender) [▶ Back](#)