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THE ROLE OF GENDER AND AGE IN SHAPING ATTITUDES TOWARDS
CHILDCARE AND FINANCIAL ROLES IN AMERICAN FAMILIES

BY

SPOORTHI GOLLA VASANTHA NARENDER

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Major in Sociology

South Dakota State University

2024

DISSERTATION ACCEPTANCE PAGE

Spoorthi Golla Vasantha Narender

This dissertation is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree and is acceptable for meeting the dissertation requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my mother, whose unwavering support, love, and encouragement have been my anchor throughout this journey. Your faith in my abilities has been a constant source of motivation. To my husband, thank you for your endless patience, understanding, and for always believing in me. Your support has been instrumental in allowing me to pursue my dreams. Lastly, to my daughter, you are my inspiration and my joy. Your smiles and hugs have given me the strength to persevere through the challenges. This accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine. Thank you all for being my pillars of strength and my greatest cheerleaders.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my advisor, Dr. Badahdah, for his invaluable support and guidance throughout this doctoral journey. Your wisdom and mentorship have been crucial in shaping my research and pushing me to reach new heights. Additionally, I am deeply grateful to my committee members, Dr. Redlin, Dr. Zhang, and Dr. Miller, for their insightful feedback, encouragement, and dedication to helping me refine and strengthen my work.

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF GENDER AND AGE IN SHAPING ATTITUDES TOWARDS
CHILDCARE AND FINANCIAL ROLES IN AMERICAN FAMILIES

SPOORTHI GOLLA VASANTHA NARENDER

2024

This study explores public attitudes towards parental roles in childcare and financial support, employing Risman's theory of gender as a social structure as the theoretical framework. Utilizing data from the General Social Survey (GSS) of 2022, the research examines how gender and age influence attitudes about the involvement of mothers and fathers in children's lives. The analysis reveals significant gendered attitudes. That is, women demonstrate a greater tendency towards supporting equitable sharing of childcare duties and financial responsibilities. Conversely, with men often endorsing traditional roles for mothers as primary caregivers and men as primary financial providers. The study also identifies a generational shift, with younger parents showing more progressive attitudes towards equal distribution of childcare duties and financial responsibilities compared to older parents. By integrating Risman's interactional, institutional, and individual levels of analysis, the findings underscore the persistence of traditional gender scripts and their impact on family dynamics. The results highlight the influence of socio-demographic variables such as income, education, race, marital status, and work status on these attitudes. This research provides valuable insights for policy development and educational programs

aimed at promoting gender equity in parenting, emphasizing the need to address deeply ingrained attitudes about parental roles.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

While the traditional division of parental roles has been challenged and reshaped in recent decades, it has perhaps never been as dramatic as during the COVID-19 pandemic. Millions of families entered a new reality where remote work and home-based education became the norm as the virus spread worldwide. Parents, regardless of their gender, found themselves juggling professional responsibilities and full-time caregiving, underscoring the significance of demographic factors such as age, gender, race, and income (Carlson et al. 2022). Social media became a platform for fathers to share their experiences of taking on more household chores and childcare, while mothers discussed the challenges of balancing work and family life. These stories highlighted the potential for a redefinition of gender roles within the family unit (Churchill and Craig 2022).

These evolving dynamics call for a deeper examination of how societal perceptions of parental responsibilities have changed, especially considering the influence of demographic variables such as age, gender, race, income, education, marital status, and work status. The United States has witnessed notable shifts in notions of gender relating to the traditional roles of mothers and fathers over the years. For instance, the "gender revolution" of the 1960s and 1970s shifted gender expectations as more women entered the workforce (Bianchi 2000; Goldin 2006). The expectation thus rose for men to be active in childcare while working women were assuming financial responsibilities. However, studies have shown that the progress of male participation in childcare was much slower

and less consistent, while women still bear a disproportionate burden of childcare and household duties, contributing to what Bianchi (2000) refers to as a "stalled revolution."

The persistence of traditional gendered attitudes and the challenges American families face in achieving true gender equity highlights the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding childcare and financial provision (Ciaccio et al. 2021). Theoretical models based on gender ideologies assume that both partners view house chores as undesirable and tend to engage in them based on resource possession, power dynamics, and availability (Cooke and Baxter 2010). Unfortunately, despite their increased participation in the labor force and desire to share household responsibilities equally, mothers continue to invest significant time in childcare, often at the same level or even higher than before entering the workforce (Ciaccio et al. 2021). While fathers are generally more involved with their children nowadays, research has not consistently shown that fathers participate more in families with working mothers compared to those with stay-at-home mothers (Craig and Mullan 2011).

Previous literature has primarily focused on gender inequality, housework, childcare, and financial support, indicating how a significant portion of American parents' time is spent (Scheilbling 2019). Studies that focus on the "motherhood wage penalty" indicate that the differences in childcare responsibilities could impact gender equality in employment outcomes (Budig and England 2001; Budig and Hodges 2010; Correll et al. 2007; Waldfogel 1997; Wilde et al. 2010). The current study focuses on childcare and financial support, emphasizing the role of gender and age in shaping parents' attitudes. Parenting responsibilities, including childcare and financial support, are influenced by the intersection of gender and age. These roles are not static and evolve with societal changes,

individual circumstances, and broader cultural contexts. Therefore, this research examines how gender and age shape parents' attitudes toward parental roles, highlighting the ongoing shifts and persistent disparities in these areas. By investigating the factors that contribute to the complexities of modern parenting, this study offers insights into the evolving nature of parental responsibilities and the persistent challenges in achieving gender equity in both childcare and financial support. The following sections will provide a brief overview of the literature that informed the selection of the variables examined in this study.

1.1 Gender and Childcare Responsibilities

Traditionally, childcare has been perceived predominantly as the mother's domain, a notion deeply rooted in historical gender roles. Despite significant societal changes, this expectation persists in many parts of the world. For instance, research by the Pew Research Center indicates that mothers in the U.S. spend an average of 14 hours per week on childcare, whereas fathers spend about 8 hours per week, a discrepancy that underscores the enduring influence of traditional gender roles (Parker 2015).

However, there has been a notable increase in paternal involvement in childcare. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports that fathers' time spent on childcare has tripled over the past 50 years in many OECD countries (OECD 2019). This shift can be attributed to changing societal norms, increased female workforce participation, and policies promoting paternal leave. For example, in Scandinavian countries, which offer generous paternity leave policies, see a more equitable sharing of childcare duties (Haas and Hwang 2008).

1.2 Financial Support and Gender Dynamics

Financial support for the family is another domain reflecting significant gender dynamics. Traditionally, men have been viewed as the primary breadwinners, a role aligning with patriarchal views of male responsibility and female. Despite advances in gender equality, this model remains prevalent. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that men still out-earn women, with a median weekly earnings gap where women earn 82 cents for every dollar earned by men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021).

However, the financial landscape is evolving. An increasing number of families depend on dual incomes, and women's contributions to household finances have grown substantially. In some cases, women are the primary earners. According to the Pew Research Center, in 29% of heterosexual dual-income households, the mother earns more than the father (Parker and Stepler 2017). This shift has implications for how financial and domestic responsibilities are negotiated within families.

1.3 Policy and Cultural Influences

Government policies and cultural contexts play a significant role in shaping these gendered and age-related differences. Countries with supportive family policies, such as paid parental leave and affordable childcare, tend to see more equitable sharing of both childcare and financial responsibilities. For instance, Sweden's comprehensive parental leave policies encourage fathers to take a more active role in childcare, contributing to a more balanced distribution of parental duties (Aidukaite and Telisauskaite-Cekanavice 2020).

Cultural attitudes towards gender roles in the family also vary significantly across different societies. In more egalitarian cultures, there is a stronger emphasis on shared responsibilities, while traditional cultures may reinforce gender-specific roles (Harkness and Super 2006). Understanding these cultural influences is crucial for developing policies and interventions that support gender equality in parenting roles, as cultural norms and societal expectations significantly shape gender within families. In some cultures, traditional gender roles remain deeply entrenched, and there is strong resistance to change (Inglehart and Pippa 2003; Pfau-Effinger 2003; Risman 2004). In other cultures, there is a greater emphasis on gender equality and shared responsibilities, and thus, one should consider the cultural contexts when examining the gender dynamics in parenting (Hofstede 2001; Kagitcibasi 2007; World Bank 2011)

1.4 Background and Problem Statement

Despite significant strides in gender equality, traditional stereotypes regarding parental roles persist. Women are often perceived as the primary caregivers, while men are seen as the primary financial providers (Doucet 2018). These entrenched roles impact family dynamics and the overall well-being of children as well as their parents, creating tension and confusion within modern families (Petts 2022). Even as cultural norms evolve to support greater paternal involvement in childcare, societal expectations and stereotypes continue to hinder an equitable distribution of parenting responsibilities (Scheibling 2019).

Cultural and age-related factors significantly shape parental roles and responsibilities. In some cultures, gender-specific expectations remain strong, reinforcing traditional roles (Doucet 2018). Moreover, age influences parental responsibilities, with

certain communities advocating for younger parents to take on more active roles (Petts 2022). These dynamics contribute to intricate expectations that affect how parental responsibilities are negotiated and executed, which often leads to mixed reactions and conflicts within families (Borelli et al. 2016).

Furthermore, socio-demographic factors such as income, education, race, marital status, and work status further intersect to shape individuals' experiences with caregiving and financial provisions (Craig and Mullan 2013; Edin and Lein 1997). Several studies have noted that mothers with partners who share childcare responsibilities may experience higher earnings and career advancement. Alternatively, those primarily responsible for caregiving face penalties in the labor market, such as reduced wages and fewer promotions, as they are perceived as being less committed to their careers due to caregiving responsibilities (Budig and England 2001; Killewald and Gough 2010).

The persistence of traditional gender role expectations in parenting presents a significant barrier to achieving gender equality within families (Scheibling 2019). Despite the progress in societal attitudes and cultural norms advocating for equal parental involvement, many families continue to struggle with the equitable distribution of childcare and financial responsibilities. Some argue that this issue is compounded by socio-demographic factors that continue to influence public perceptions and familial dynamics (Petts 2022).

Therefore, this paper explores the complexities surrounding gender and parental roles while focusing on how public perceptions and societal expectations shape these responsibilities. By investigating the influence of participants' gender and age on their attitudes toward parenting, this study seeks to gain insights into the barriers and enablers

of shared parental involvement in childcare, and financial responsibility. Understanding these dynamics is vital for promoting gender equity within families and ensuring that both men and women invest in their children (Scheibling 2019).

1.5 Statement of Purpose

This study aims to delve deeply into the dynamics of gender and age on parental roles within modern family structure. By examining public perceptions and existing literature, this paper seeks to uncover how demographic variables of gender, age, income, race, education, marital status, and work status influence attitudes toward the division of childcare and financial responsibilities among parents. Further, it seeks to address the gap in understanding the societal expectations and stereotypes shaping parental roles and how they evolve. This study explores public attitudes towards parental roles in childcare and financial support, and influence of some sociodemographic variables of age and gender. Through this exploration, the research contributes to the broader discourse on gender equality in parenting, offering valuable insights for future studies.

1.6 Broad Objective

The primary objective of this study is to explore the impact of gender and age on attitudes toward parental roles and to understand how public perceptions shape the roles of mothers and fathers. By focusing on gender and age as the primary research variables and income, education, race, marital status, and work status as control variables, this research aims to elucidate the complexities of parental roles in contemporary society. This study sheds light on the factors that influence public attitudes toward the division of childcare

and financial responsibilities, providing a comprehensive understanding of the current state of gender roles in parenting.

1.7 Specific Objectives

1. Assess how participants' perceptions of childcare vary across different socio-demographic groups and to identify patterns and trends in attitudes towards the gendered division of childcare responsibilities.
2. Analyze the extent to which traditional gender roles about financial provision persist among participants and determine how various socio-demographic factors influence attitudes towards gender roles in financial support.
3. Examine the relationship between a parent's age and their views on sharing childcare responsibilities and identify age differences in attitudes towards gender roles in childcare.
4. Analyze how age-related factors impact participants' perceptions regarding the division of financial responsibilities between parents.

1.8 Research Questions

1. What are the participant's attitudes towards which parent should be responsible for providing childcare for the family after controlling for income, education, marital status, work status, race, and age?
2. What are the participants' attitudes towards which parent should be responsible for financial support for the family after controlling for income, education, marital status, work status, race, and age?

3. How does a parent's age influence the provision of childcare for the family after controlling for gender, income, education, marital status, work status, and race?

4. How does a parent's age influence financial support for the family after controlling for income, gender, education, marital status, work status, and race?

1.9 Contributions of the Research

This research paper makes several key contributions to the ongoing conversation about which parent should be responsible for childcare, providing financial support for the family, and the influence of participants' gender and age in shaping their attitudes. It aims to make contributions in the following ways.

Understanding Gender norms in Parenting: This research highlights the persistent influence of traditional gender roles in childcare responsibilities, where mothers continue to spend more time on childcare than fathers. It also underscores the growing involvement of fathers in childcare, promoting gender equality in parenting roles (Haas and Hwang 2008; OECD 2019; Parker 2015).

Economic Contributions and Gender: This research delves into the changing dynamics of financial support within families, challenging traditional notions of male breadwinners and supporting the argument for more equitable sharing of both financial and domestic duties (Parker and Stepler 2017).

Age-Related Variations in Parenting: The study reveals generational shifts in attitudes towards parenting roles, with younger parents more likely to embrace egalitarian roles. The findings are vital for understanding and promoting balanced parenting roles across different age groups (Wilcox and Kline 2020).

Call for Further Research: This paper encourages further research on caregiving and financial support within families, particularly in different cultural contexts. By identifying gaps in the literature and areas for future investigation, the paper contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping caregiving and financial provision within families (Kaufman et al. 2023).

1.10 Organization of the Paper:

This dissertation consists of six chapters and is structured in the following sections as follows:

- 1. Chapter One (Introduction):** This section provides a comprehensive overview of the research topic, background, problem statement, contribution to the research field, research objectives and research questions.
- 2. Chapter Two (Literature review):** This section provides a review of studies related to gender ideology theories and mothers' and fathers' parental roles relevant to this study. Additionally, it provides the theoretical framework for examining the research questions.
- 3. Chapter Three (Research methodology):** This section describes in detail the research design, data collection methods, and analytical approach employed in the study.
- 4. Chapter Four (All results):** This section provides comprehensive information about the findings gained from the analysis of public attitudes toward the involvement of mothers and fathers in children's lives.
- 5. Chapter Five (Discussion):** This section analyzes the findings and the theoretical and practical implications of the identified domains related to future research in detail.

6. **Chapter Six (Implications, limitations, and conclusion):** This section summarizes the key findings of the research while providing concluding remarks concerning its significance and contribution to sociological knowledge.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the context of evolving family dynamics, the roles of mothers and fathers in providing childcare and financial support have become increasingly multifaceted (Craig and Mullan 2013). This literature review explores the influence of gender and age in shaping parental responsibilities. Drawing on a wide array of research, this chapter highlights the complexities of modern parenting roles, particularly regarding childcare and financial contributions. It examines the shift from traditional gender ideologies that designated distinct roles for mothers and fathers to a contemporary understanding that encourages shared parenting responsibilities.

The review highlights how socio-demographic factors and workplace dynamics influence the distribution of financial responsibilities within families, assessing the impact of dual-income households and parental roles in professional settings. It will also briefly discuss the role of government policies and cultural norms in supporting or hindering equitable parental roles. By exploring these themes, the chapter sets the groundwork for understanding how different factors affect family dynamics.

2.1 Evolution of Childcare Responsibilities

Historically, family childcare responsibilities were predominantly assigned to women, rooted in traditional gender roles that viewed mothers as the primary caregivers. This perspective was supported by societal norms and expectations that limited women's participation in the workforce and emphasized their roles within the home (Parsons 1951). Parsons and Bales (1995) argued that early sociological theories reinforced this division by

characterizing women's roles in family life as fundamentally nurturing and domestic, while men were viewed as providers. The distinct separation of gender roles reflected broader societal expectations and was institutionalized in policies that frequently excluded women from equal participation in many sectors of public life.

However, the landscape of childcare responsibilities has undergone significant transformations due to the various social, economic, and cultural changes that have occurred over the past few decades. For instance, the feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s catalyzed shifts in public perceptions, advocating for gender equality and challenging traditional roles. The movements led to increased female participation in the labor force and a gradual reevaluation of paternal roles in childcare. Furthermore, Lamb (2010) has underscored the benefits of involved fatherhood not only for the development of the children but also for the father's wellbeing. Studies have shown that when fathers more actively engage in caregiving, there are positive implications for family dynamics and gender equality, which underscores the shared nature of parenting responsibilities.

Additionally, societal advancements have led to a more intriguing understanding of family structures and the distribution of childcare duties. Influenced by economic necessity and changing cultural norms, there has been a rise in dual-income families, which also necessitated a more balanced approach to sharing childcare responsibilities (Bianchi and Milkie 2010). A study conducted by Craig and Mullan (2011) showed how modern parental leave policies and flexible work arrangements have facilitated a more equitable sharing of childcare labor between mothers and fathers. These shifts in policies reflect a growing recognition of the importance of supportive environments that enable both parents to balance work and family life more effectively.

2.2 Evolution of Financial Responsibilities

The financial responsibilities within families are strongly intertwined with gender, where traditionally, men are seen as primary breadwinners. This perception is reinforced by gender pay gaps where a higher percentage of men are paid higher wages compared to women in similar jobs (Blau and Kahn 2017). Men are also more likely to be promoted to senior level and decision-making roles compared to women (Hochschild and Machung 2012; Eagly and Wood 2012). Meanwhile, women often earn less than men either due to wage disparities or part-time arrangements tailored to accommodate childcare and as a result are viewed as secondary earners. This influences how financial duties are divided, with men taking on more responsibility for financial decisions. Such expectations contribute to power imbalances within the home, often disadvantaging women in terms of economic autonomy and career growth (Eagly and Wood 2012).

However, the dynamics are gradually shifting as societal norms evolve, which promotes a more equitable distribution of financial duties between genders. Public attitudes are becoming more egalitarian, challenging the traditional roles of parents in households, including the notion that financial provisions are solely a male responsibility (Mauerer 2023). A few studies have shown that when women contribute significantly to the family income, it could reshape the perceived value of their roles both within and outside the home (Bittman et al 2003; Hook 2006; Sayer, Bianchi, and Robinson 2004). Women's financial contributions promote a more equitable distribution of both financial and non-financial family responsibilities (Gornick and Meyers 2003). Additionally, legislative changes and organizational policies that promote gender equality in the workplace are crucial for this shift. Some experts argue that these changes would not only

provide a structural basis for equality but also help in redefining societal norms about gender in financial provisioning.

The interplay of these factors demonstrates how deeply gender ideologies can influence economic spheres and decisions within families. Gaining an understanding of this dynamic could assist in contributing more meaningfully to the discussion of the current family structure and how responsibilities like financial provisions are shared between parents.

2.3 Influence of Demographic Variables on Childcare and Financial Responsibilities

This section examines how different demographic variables such as age, gender, race, income, education, marital status, and work status could influence the division of childcare and financial responsibilities among fathers and mothers. By exploring the findings of existing literature on how these factors play a role in family dynamics, this section aims to guide the current research and identify gaps that this study could address. Moreover, by incorporating demographic variables into the analysis, this study provides a deeper understanding of how public attitudes shape these factors' family dynamics. This current research explores whether public attitudes toward familial gender roles aligns with or diverges from actual responsibilities, shedding light on the evolving nature of gender roles in contemporary families. The following sections explore the individual factors and their impact on childcare and financial responsibilities.

Gender

In contemporary societies, traditional gender roles regarding parental responsibilities have undergone significant scrutiny and transformation. Historically, the

division of childcare and financial support responsibilities within families has often been based on stereotypical gender expectations. Since the late 20th century, societal changes, including increased female workforce participation and evolving gender ideologies, have challenged these traditional roles. Studies (West and Zimmerman 1987; Hakim 2000) have noted a trend toward shared responsibilities, with both parents contributing to childcare and financial support based on individual preferences, economic circumstances, and attitudes rather than rigid gender proscriptions. Economic factors also play a crucial role in shaping parental roles. Bianchi et al. (2000) indicate that economic necessity often influences decisions about which parent assumes primary childcare or financial responsibilities. Economic stability, employment opportunities, and educational attainment also influence the division of labor within families. Moreover, studies have shown that even in dual-income households, women often assume the responsibility of childcare duties (Bittman et al. 2003). Conversely, recent trends have noted a shift towards more egalitarian parenting roles, especially with younger couples (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang 2012). At the same time, it is essential to note that this shift is not observed across all demographic groups, as a number of culturally sensitive studies have indicated the persistence of traditional gender roles in certain socio-demographic contexts (Halpern and Perry-Jenkins 2016).

Likewise, financial responsibilities in families are also strongly influenced by gender. Traditional gender roles have placed men as the primary breadwinner, though the workforce has seen an uptick in women's participation. Typically, men are expected to provide the majority of the financial support, even in families where women earn higher wages. Though these expectations are slowly changing, these changes are only prevalent

among younger, urban generations (McHale et al. 2014). Additionally, the public plays a vital role in shaping these dynamics. While societal perceptions still align with some of the traditional norms that view men as the primary financial providers while women are seen as the caregivers, there appears to be a shift towards supporting more balanced roles.

Age

Age appears to play a considerable role in shaping attitudes relating to childcare responsibilities. Studies have indicated that younger parents are more likely to adopt egalitarian views on parenting compared to older generations (Sullivan 2010). A Pew Research Center (2015) study showed that millennial-generation parents tend to share childcare duties equally, challenging the conventional model where mothers are primarily responsible for childcare. Conversely, parents from older generations adhere more closely to traditional norms where mothers are expected to take on the primary caregiving role (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang 2012). The generational shift depicts movement toward a progressive attitude in younger parents, influenced by societal changes.

Similarly, age also plays a substantial role in shaping attitudes toward familial financial responsibilities. Younger parents who are often in the early stages of their careers may face greater financial instability compared to older parents, who are likely to be more established in their professions (Hoffmann, Sattler, and Vancea 2021). This could impact their ability to provide financial support, which could lead to reliance on dual incomes. On the other hand, older parents may have better financial security and assets that provide flexibility in financial responsibilities (Bianchi et al. 2006). However, there appears to be a gap in understanding how age-specific financial pressures impact the division of financial responsibilities within families.

Studies on societal attitudes towards age-related dynamics also reveal shifting patterns. For instance, Hoffman, Sattler, and Vancea (2021) noted that younger generations show stronger support for egalitarian roles in both childcare and financial responsibilities, while older generations respondents are significantly more likely to support traditional gender roles.

Race

Racial and ethnic backgrounds influence providing for childcare expectations. Past literature has highlighted how cultural norms within different racial groups shape the distribution of childcare responsibilities (Garcia Coll et al. 1996). For example, a study conducted by McLoyd et al. (2000) showed that African American families exhibit more flexible and shared childcare arrangements than White families. On the other hand, Latinx families tend to adhere to more traditional gender roles where mothers are primarily responsible for childcare. The differences among these cultural groups underscore the importance of considering the cultural contexts when examining parental responsibilities for childcare.

Racial and ethnic differences also play a role in families' division of financial responsibilities. Bowman (2016) found that African American families tend to engage in flexible financial arrangements where both partners contribute to household income, while Latino families often stick to traditional gender roles, with men being primarily responsible for financial responsibility (Vespa, Lewis, and Kreider 2013). These differences show how disparate racial and ethnic groups distribute financial responsibilities and demonstrate why race and ethnicity should be considered when examining the evolution of gender roles in parenting.

Income

Many studies have shown how income levels could impact childcare responsibilities significantly. For example, families with higher incomes could alleviate the burden of direct caregiving by hiring childcare services. Conversely, lower-income families tend to seek assistance from extended family members as an informal solution (Laughlin 2013). Financial stability enables parents to negotiate roles more effectively, embracing more egalitarian arrangements. However, research also indicates that income disparities could perpetuate inequalities in family dynamics, which poses challenges to achieving a balanced distribution of childcare duties (Maume 2008).

In addition, families with higher incomes tend to adopt more equitable financial arrangements due to better job opportunities and financial planning resources (Killewald and Gough 2010). Conversely, families with lower incomes often abide by traditional financial roles, where men are the primary breadwinners due to limited economic resources and planning (Bianchi et al. 2006). Moreover, public attitudes toward financial responsibilities also reflect these dynamics. Research has found that higher-income individuals are more supportive of egalitarian financial roles, while individuals with lower income may have traditional financial views as it is more practical to their economic circumstances (Davis and Greenstein 2009). These public attitudes appear to reflect the correlation found between income and financial roles, which has been well-documented by existing research.

Education

Another factor that impacts childcare responsibilities in families is educational attainment. Bolzendahl and Myers (2004) noted that higher levels of education are associated with more egalitarian views on gender and lead to a more equitable division of childcare tasks. According to Bornstein and Bradley (2014), education not only influences the distribution of childcare duties but also the quality of parenting. This is because educated parents tend to be more equipped with knowledge and resources that could foster positive child development. Several other studies have validated this finding by establishing a link between education and progressive parenting approaches (Abuya, Ciera, and Kimani-Murage 2012; Ahmed et al. 2010; Burchi 2012). However, there has been limited exploration of the impact of educational disparities on attitude towards the gendered distribution of childcare responsibilities.

Moreover, education level also influences financial responsibilities, as a higher educational level correlates with greater earning potential and financial stability (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004). When parents have higher earning potential, they are more flexible with their financial responsibilities and more likely to engage in joint financial planning (Pfeffer and Schocni 2015). However, there has been limited exploration of how the differences in educational levels among couples may impact their attitudes toward their financial responsibilities.

Marital Status

Marital status also significantly affects the distribution of childcare responsibilities. Married or cohabitating couples are more likely to share childcare duties

since there is a presence of a partner, leading to a more balanced approach to caregiving (Raley, Bianchi and Wang 2012). On the other hand, single parents, particularly single mothers, generally face more challenges in managing childcare as they are also faced with economic pressures and limited support systems (Hofferth and Goldscheider 2010). This dynamic is also reflected in the public attitudes towards parenting. There is also a difference between single and partnered parents when it comes to cognitive and emotional development since children raised in dual parenthood may experience low level of stress and resources as compared to their peers from single parenthood. Research has indicated that societal views tend to favor the idea of shared childcare responsibilities among married couples (Parker and Wang 2013). At the same time, there appears to be societal recognition of the challenges faced by single parents in raising children alone (Howell 2005).

Similarly, marital status plays a vital role in shaping financial responsibilities within families. According to Bianchi et al. (2006), married couples are able to achieve greater financial stability as they can gather resources together and share economic burdens. On the other hand, single parents bear financial responsibility alone, which often leads to financial strain (Raley, Bianchi and Wang 2012). Lack of attaining financial responsibilities by single parent may lead to increased stress and health issues on single parent which may be passed to the child thus rising cases of childhood trauma. These realities are also reflected in public attitudes, as a society typically views married couples as more financially stable due to their combined resources while recognizing the burden that single parents face (Pew Research 2015).

Work Status

Employment status is a determining factor in the distribution of childcare responsibilities, as full-time working parents, especially mothers, are likely to struggle to balance professional obligations and childcare duties (Craig and Mullan 2011). Bianchi et al. (2006) noted that some parents mitigate the stress of balancing work and childcare by having either part-time work or flexible job arrangements, allowing for a more equitable division of childcare. However, it is also crucial to note that the traditional view on gender equity in parenting roles continues to place a disproportionate burden on women to be primary caregivers even when both parents are employed (Gornick and Meyers 2003).

Public attitudes towards parents' work status and childcare responsibilities also tend to reflect these challenges. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2015) showed that there is recognition in society regarding the challenges faced by parents who work full time, especially mothers when it comes to balancing both work and childcare. Additionally, there is also a notable increase in support for flexible work arrangements for parents so they can balance these parental duties (Pew Research Center 2015). However, it is also important to note that the traditional views continue to persist, and the public expects mothers to prioritize domestic responsibilities over employment (Gerson 2017).

Studies have indicated that work status directly influences financial responsibilities within families. Full-time employment commonly offers financial stability that enables families to manage their financial duties more effectively (Craig and Mullan 2011). However, as traditional gender ideologies persist, there is a disproportionate financial burden on men, even in households where both partners are employed. Meanwhile, women,

especially those working part-time or with flexible jobs, are expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities over financial distributions (Bianchi et al. 2006).

Public attitudes towards financial responsibilities also reflect these dynamics where society often views full-time working men as the primary providers for the family, whereas part-time working women are seen as having to balance their financial contributions with domestic responsibilities (Pew Research Center 2015). This view aligns with the common tendency of men having a larger portion of financial responsibilities in families, even when women contribute significantly to the household income.

In summary, extensive literature has shed light on how demographic variables such as age, gender, race, income, education, marital status, and work status shape public perceptions of childcare and financial responsibilities within families. These perceptions typically reflect societal norms and influence how parental roles are distributed in a family. Nonetheless, there appear to be gaps in the literature that limit our understanding of how these perceptions evolve with changing societal norms. This study aims to explore these gaps, especially on how public attitudes align or are diverse from the actual dynamics in contemporary society.

2.4 Gender Ideology on Family Dynamics and Parental Roles

Gender ideology encompasses a broad range of attitudes and norms that dictate appropriate attitudes and roles for men and women in society (Ridgeway and Correll 2004). These ideologies heavily influence family life by shaping expectations about who should perform childcare and who should manage the finances. Additionally, demographic variables such as age, race, and income further complicate these gendered expectations.

Early sociological work often emphasized a clear division of labor, with women in caregiving and men in provider roles, which reflects the dominant societal attitudes about gender (Parsons and Bales 1955). However, as societal norms evolve, so does the conceptualization of gender roles within the family. As mentioned in the previous section, recent research has challenged traditional gender roles by documenting a gradual shift toward more egalitarian views. Scholars like Risman (2004) argue that changing gender ideologies are key to the increased participation of men in traditionally female-dominated roles such as childcare. This change tends to be more visible in urban and more developed contexts where educational and professional opportunities for women have shifted the economic dependencies and family structures (Bianchi et al. 2006).

It is also important to note the relationship between income and gender ideology. Research has indicated that higher income levels are often correlated with more egalitarian arrangements and a greater willingness to share responsibilities related to childcare and financial support (Davis and Greenstein 2009; Glauber 2007). In families with higher income levels, both parents may have greater access to resources, such as paid childcare services or domestic assistance, which can alleviate some of the traditional gender role expectations (Killewald and Gough 2010). This financial stability can empower parents to negotiate and redefine their roles within the family, leading to more balanced divisions of labor.

Moreover, age and parenting styles further influence how gender ideologies are manifested within the family. Younger parents, who have grown up during periods of intense social change, are more likely to embrace egalitarian views than older parents of older cohorts raised under more traditional paradigms (Rishman and Johnson-Sumerford

1998). These generational differences are often reflected in parenting attitudes, where younger parents might share childcare and financial duties more equally than older parents.

Nonetheless, the transformation in gender ideology does not occur in isolation but interacts with broader socio-economic changes. As some researchers have noted, despite the push towards egalitarian views, many families continue to experience a "stalled revolution," where changes in professional realms outpace changes at home (England 2010). This is often caused by persistent traditional ideologies that continue to value men's careers over women's' and view men's childcare involvement as supplementary rather than fundamental. Hence, understanding the impact of gender ideology on family dynamics and parental roles requires a multidimensional approach that considers the complex interplay of socio-demographic factors of, age, education, income, race, marital status, and working status. This approach provides a comprehensive picture of how families navigate the shifting landscape of gender roles in parenting and responsibilities within contemporary society.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework draws upon Barbara J. Risman's theory on gender as a Social Structure. Risman (1998) posits that gender operates as a fundamental organizing principle in society, influencing social interactions, roles, and expectations. The theory urges us to consider how deeply embedded societal norms and expectations could influence gender roles in parenting within families. This theoretical approach would allow for a deeper understanding of gender as a dynamic system of roles and attitudes that prescribes roles within families that traditionally cast women as primary caregivers and

men as primary earners (Risman 2004). In addition, it also shapes individual opportunities and identities within broader societal contexts.

Furthermore, the application of gender as social structure theory challenges traditional views by highlighting the plasticity and constructed nature of these roles. It posits that “doing gender” is not a static act but an ongoing performance shaped by persistent social, economic, and cultural forces (Risman 2008). Changes in workforce participation, shifts in policy regarding family leaves, and evolving societal attitudes toward parenting are all factors that could disrupt traditional gender roles. The theory suggests a movement towards a more fluid family structure where caregiving and financial responsibilities are shared more equitably among partners.

Risman's framework also emphasizes the dynamic nature of gender structures, suggesting that they are continually reproduced and reinforced through day-to-day interactions and are also subject to disruption over time (Risman 2011). This perspective is vital when examining how shifts in cultural norms and economic conditions could reconfigure traditional divisions within families, as it could foster environments that embrace egalitarian arrangements (Shannon and Risman 2015).

Risman's theory (1998; 2004) on gender as a social structure discusses both the sources and implications of structural inequalities as reflected in data on childcare and financial support responsibilities. Risman does not argue that establishing gender as a social structure undoes the notion of sex-role socialization or, more recently, the idea of "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987), but rather sees these concepts as co-existing within the framework of social structures.

Risman (1998) posits that the social structure of gender has consequences on three critical levels: the individual level (development of gendered selves), the interactional level (differing gendered expectations for men and women), and the institutional level (policies regarding access to resources). She maintains that too much emphasis is often placed on the individual and interactional levels, and not enough on the institutional level. This analysis gives particular attention to the institutional level by examining how public attitudes, as influenced by broader societal norms and policies, reflect and reinforce institutional expectations regarding gender roles in families. Public attitudes about which parent should be responsible for childcare and financial responsibility are shaped by many factors including institutional norms and policies which then influence attitudes and interactional dynamics. By focusing on the institutional level, the current study uncovers how societal expectations and norms shape public attitudes. These attitudes could either support traditional gender roles or embrace egalitarian arrangements, providing insights into the broader institutional influences on gender dynamics within families.

At the individual level, gender attitudes influence how parents perceive and perform their roles in childcare and financial support. Research shows that women are more likely to assume primary responsibility for childcare due to deeply ingrained societal expectations (Hochschild and Machung 2012). Women often internalize these attitudes, leading them to prioritize caregiving roles even when they are also engaged in paid work (Risman 2004). This internalization can result in a "second shift" for women, where they manage both professional responsibilities and extensive childcare duties (Hochschild and Machung 2012). Conversely, men may internalize norms that prioritize their roles as breadwinners, leading to less engagement in childcare and domestic tasks (Coltrane 2000).

At the interactional level, gendered expectations manifest in how parents interact with each other and with their children. These expectations often reinforce traditional gender roles. When mothers take on the bulk of childcare duties, they may have less time and energy to devote to their careers, which can limit their professional advancement and financial independence. This dynamic reinforces the idea that men should be the primary financial providers, further entrenching gender disparities in the workforce and within the family. Additionally, fathers who are less involved in childcare may miss out on the opportunity to develop close, nurturing relationships with their children, perpetuating the stereotype that caregiving is inherently a female role (Blair-Loy 2003; Hochschild and Machung 2012).

At the institutional level, policies and organizational structures play a significant role in shaping gendered attitudes and expectations regarding childcare and financial support. Policies that lack adequate parental leave or flexible working arrangements can disproportionately affect women, who are more likely to take time off for childcare. This structural constraint can limit women's career advancement and financial independence, reinforcing traditional gender roles (Gornick and Meyers 2003). For example, inadequate parental leave policies significantly influence gendered attitudes and expectations within families. Research indicates that in countries with limited parental leave, women are more likely to take extended time off work for childcare, often due to the societal expectation that mothers should be the primary caregivers. This can result in career interruptions that adversely affect women's professional growth, earning potential, and long-term financial security. Conversely, in countries with generous and gender-neutral parental leave policies, fathers are more likely to take leave, which helps to balance caregiving responsibilities and

mitigate career penalties for women (Gornick and Meyers 2003; Ray, Gornick, and Schmitt 2010). Furthermore, the concentration of women in lower-paying, part-time, or flexible jobs can exacerbate economic disparities between genders (Budig and England 2001; Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007).

Effective policy interventions are essential for addressing these structural inequalities. Governments and organizations can implement policies that provide adequate parental leave for both parents, promote flexible working arrangements, and create supportive organizational cultures that value work-life balance. Such policies can help to distribute childcare responsibilities more equitably between parents, reduce career penalties for women, and challenge traditional gender roles. Research suggests that when both parents are encouraged and supported to take parental leave and participate in childcare, it leads to more balanced and equitable outcomes in both family and professional spheres (Gornick and Meyers 2003; Ray et al. 2010).

Risman's analysis emphasizes the importance of examining institutional factors that contribute to gender inequalities. Structural constraints placed on women in the home and workplace are critical in swaying outcomes for women, particularly in the realm of work and career (Risman 1998). The levels detailed by Risman are reflected in the dynamics of childcare and financial responsibilities: parent to parent, parent to workplace, and the overall societal context. The relationships between these levels form the basis from which covert biases develop and disseminate through family and societal structures.

Several researchers have noted the prevalence of subtle biases within institutional settings, rather than overt discrimination, as perpetrators of gender inequality (Winslow and Davis 2016). Risman's theory allows for the dissection of power-centered strata within

family and workplace settings to uncover the basis for many of these subtle biases. Risman's theory emphasizes the interplay between these three levels as the space within which biases develop.

When considering the impacts of gender on childcare and financial support, multiple facets must be considered: income, education, age, marital status, work status, and the race of parents. All these factors may be related to caregiving and financial responsibilities, as well as other cultural considerations related to gender and their impact on attitudinal decisions of parents themselves. By examining these factors through Risman's structural feminist lens and considering the contributions of earlier research, I can better understand the particular influences and issues that are pertinent to parents in various contexts. My goal is to uncover any gendered attitudes inherent within these structures and explore potential differences in how childcare and financial responsibilities are perceived and enacted by parents.

By incorporating Risman's theory, this study explores how gender as a social structure affects attitudes towards parental roles within the family, examining how these roles are negotiated and enacted amidst shifting social landscapes. The research seeks to elucidate the mechanisms through which societal expectations and norms around gender influence parenting roles relating to childcare and financial responsibilities. This comprehensive framework would allow the current research to produce a deeper understanding of the intricate ways in which gender norms are perpetuated and challenged within the family context.

In summary, Risman's theory on gender as a social structure offers a robust theoretical foundation for this study that examines the complexities of gender roles in

parenting. By utilizing this theory, the current study aims to deepen the understanding of how gender structures and social norms influence parental attitudes in contemporary society.

2.6 Conclusion

This literature review has explored the key themes shaping gender roles and responsibilities within family dynamics, emphasizing childcare and financial support. By delving into the concepts of gender ideology and Risman's theory of gender as a social structure, the chapter has explored how personal attitudes, social interactions, and institutional frameworks collectively influence the division of labor within families. The review has shed light on the evolution of these roles, acknowledging the shift towards more egalitarian attitudes in some areas while noting the persistence of traditional norms in others.

Furthermore, the literature review has demonstrated that demographic variables such as age, gender, race, income, education, marital status, and work status play vital roles in shaping childcare and financial responsibilities. These variables provide a better understanding of how different factors interact to influence family dynamics, highlighting areas where progress has been made and where gaps need to be filled.

These themes have provided a comprehensive foundation for this current study, focusing specifically on examining public attitudes toward gender norms and roles within contemporary family settings. By investigating how societal norms and expectations shape individuals' perceptions of parental responsibilities, this study uncovers the attitudes that influence the distribution of labor regarding childcare and financial responsibility. This

approach helps in understanding whether public attitudes align with or diverge from the evolving dynamics within families. The following chapter will outline the research methodology, detailing the design, data collection, and data analysis that is used in the research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3. Methodology

Data for this study came from the 2022 General Social Survey (GSS), a nationally representative survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. The GSS uses multi-stage area probability sampling to ensure a diverse and accurate representation of American adults. Most surveys are conducted via face-to-face interviews, supplemented by telephone and email interviews.

The initial GSS 2022 dataset included 3,455 respondents. However, after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria which include only individuals with children with complete information on marital status—and excluding cases with incomplete responses for key variables (gender, income, education, marital status, work status, race, age, and attitudes towards childcare and financial support), the dataset was reduced to 804 complete cases. This refined sample ensures the integrity and reliability of the analysis, focusing on parents who are directly involved in childcare and financial support decisions. The diverse sample provides a comprehensive view of the population's attitudes regarding gender ideologies and responsibilities.

The rationale for selecting only participants with children in this study is to capture the attitudes of people who have children towards childcare and financial responsibilities. Differences in attitudes can be best understood through the lived experiences of individuals who are actively engaged in parenting. By focusing on parents, the study aims to obtain a closer and more precise analysis of the research questions, reflecting the real-life implications of these attitudes.

3.1 Variables

This study accounts for possible confounding variables such as income, education, marital status, work status, and race while examining the correlations between attitudes toward parental engagement and characteristics including gender, age, childcare, and financial provision. The study accomplishes this objective by incorporating a variety of dependent, independent, and control variables as shown in Table 1. The following are the variables that were included in this study and their corresponding General Social Survey (GSS) variable names.

3.2 Dependent Variables

In order to answer the research questions, the study utilizes the following two statements from GSS:

1. People have different opinions about how well mothers and fathers are suited to look after their children. Which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion? Here, 'suited to look after' means taking care of the child.

This variable will be conceptualized as "Provision of Childcare". The choices of response categories are (1) the mother mostly, (2) the mother somewhat more than the father, (3) the mother and father equally, (4) the father somewhat more than the mother, and (5) the father mostly.

2. In your opinion, which parent should do the following? Who should provide for the family financially?

This variable will be conceptualized as “Financial support”. The choices of response categories are (1) the mother mostly, (2) the mother somewhat more than the father, (3) the mother and father equally, (4) the father somewhat more than the mother, and (5) the father mostly.

3.3 Independent Variables

1. Gender (GSS variable name: GENDER): This variable records the respondent's sex and allows for the investigation of any gender disparities in views toward parental attitudes.
2. Age (GSS variable name: AGE): This variable takes into consideration the possible impact of the respondent's age on opinions regarding engagement from parents.

3.4 Control Variables

1. Income (GSS variable name: INCOME): This variable examines the link between parental attitudes and socio-demographic position by measuring the total family income before taxes.
2. Education (GSS variable name: EDUC): The respondent's level of education was represented by this variable, which sheds light on how education influences opinions toward parental attitudes.
3. Marital Status (GSS variable name: MARITAL): Marital status or parental status of respondents are labels as currently married, never married, widowed, divorced, and separated
4. Work Status (GSS variable name: WRKSTAT): The respondent's work status, such as working or not working, as labels.

5. Race (GSS variable name: RACE): This variable ensures that any observed connections between the independent and dependent variables are not influenced by race.

The study attempts to give a comprehensive view of the factors impacting attitudes regarding parental roles in a childcare and financial responsibility by incorporating these dependent, independent, and control variables in the analysis. By employing a sturdy dataset and all-inclusive factors, the study aims to provide a significant understanding of this crucial facet of parental attitudes.

3.5 Data coding

Table 1 Data coding and labels of the variables.

Label	Coding
Gender	Male=0
	Female=1
Income	Less than \$49,999=1
	\$50,000 to \$89,999=2
	Greater than \$90,000=3
Education	Less than college=0
	College degree=1
Marital Status	Married=0
	Never married married=1
	Divorced/Separated/Widowed=2
Work Status	Not working=0
	Working=1
Race	Other=0
	White=1
Age	18-89
Provision of Child Care (Who is suited to look after their Child)	The mother and father equally=0
	Unequal care but mother provides more care =1
	The father mostly, and the father somewhat more than the mother=2
	The mother and father equally=0

Financial Support (Who should provide for family financially)	Unequal support but father provides more financial support=1 The mother mostly, and the mother somewhat more than the father=2
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3.6 Data analysis

This study makes use of a range of data analysis techniques to adequately answer the research questions and hypotheses. Specifically, the following data analysis methods were applied in this study:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** An overview of the sample's characteristics, such as the distribution of the dependent, independent, and control variables, is provided by descriptive statistics. The frequencies and percentages of the demographic characteristics of the sample provide a general understanding of the presence of the variables of the study. The continuous variables, such as age, were best summarized using the mean and standard deviation. The means are used to determine the variables' average, and the standard deviation provides more detailed information about the variables and how the data is centered or spread out around the mean
2. **Frequency tables:** The study used a Pearson's chi-square analysis to examine relationships between categorical variables, t-test for age as it is a continuous variable are used to assess whether these variables are statistically significant, making it a valuable tool in exploring public attitudes regarding which parent should be responsible for childcare and provision of financial support for the family while examining the influence of participants' gender and age in shaping their attitudes.
3. **Logistic Regression Analysis:** Logistic regression was chosen for this research to model and understand the binary outcomes related to attitudes towards parental

responsibilities while also examining the influence of gender and age as predictors, thereby providing insights into how these factors shape public perceptions and attitudes.

This study explores the general public attitudes toward male and female roles in parental involvement in children's lives with a specific focus on provision of care and financial support. The research design, variables, sampling strategy, analysis methods, and ethical concerns regarding the study have all been thoroughly explored. Descriptive statistics, frequency tables, and logistic regression analysis are used to help examine the study hypotheses in a thorough manner and offer insightful information on the factors impacting attitudes toward parental roles. Utilizing a publicly accessible and anonymized dataset, the study respects the rights and well-being of the research subjects. The researchers adhere to ethical research practices, particularly as they are concerned with informed consent and data privacy. The study results will be presented and analyzed in the upcoming chapter within the framework of extant parental roles and responsibilities literature.

3.7 Research questions

1. What are the participant's attitudes towards which parent should be responsible for providing childcare for the family after controlling for income, education, marital status, work status, race, and age?
2. What are the participants' attitudes towards which parent should be responsible for financial support for the family after controlling for income, education, marital status, work status, race, and age?

3. How does a parent's age influence the provision of childcare for the family after controlling for gender, income, education, marital status, work status, and race?
4. How does a parent's age influence financial support for the family after controlling for income, gender, education, marital status, work status, and race?

3.8 Hypotheses

This section explores the rationale to which the research hypotheses were chosen. These hypotheses aim to shed light on how deeply entrenched gender and age-related perspectives shape the attitudes and expectations regarding parental responsibilities in contemporary families. The division of childcare and financial responsibilities within families has long been influenced by various socio-demographic factors. This study aims to explore these influences by examining the relationships between parents' gender and age, and their attitudes towards the provision of childcare and financial support within the family. By controlling for variables such as income, education, marital status, work status, and race, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

1. Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant relationship between parents' gender and their attitudes toward which parent should be responsible for the provision of childcare for the family, after controlling for income, education, marital status, work status, and race.
2. Hypothesis (H2): There is a significant relationship between a parent's gender and their attitudes toward which parent should be responsible for the contribution to financial support for the family, after controlling for income, age, education, marital status, work status, and race.

3. Hypothesis (H3): There is a significant relationship between parents' age and their attitudes toward which parent should be responsible for the provision of childcare for the family, after controlling for gender, income, education, marital status, work status, and race.

4. Hypothesis (H4): There is a significant relationship between a parent's age and their attitudes toward which parent should be responsible for the contribution to financial support for the family, after controlling for income, gender, education, marital status, work status, and race.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the summary results obtained from the descriptive statistics, Pearson chi-square, t-test, and logistic regression analysis. Table 2 below presents the frequency and percentage distribution of various demographic variables among the 782 respondents. Variable gender was almost evenly split between males (50.77%) and females (49.23%). The income distribution shows that 41.56% of respondents earned less than \$49,999, 27.24% earned between \$50,000 and \$89,999, and 31.20% earned more than \$90,000. Regarding education, a majority (64.19%) had less than a college degree, while 35.81% had a college degree. Marital status shows 40.41% were married, 33.25% were never married, and 26.34% were divorced, separated, or widowed. Meanwhile, work status shows that 62.79% of the population were working, and 37.21% were not working. The racial composition of the sample was predominantly white (73.02%), with 26.98% belonging to other races. For childcare provision, most respondents (72.76%) believed both parents should equally share childcare responsibilities, while only 25.85% thought that mothers should be more responsible. Moreover, financial provision shows that 62.92% believed both parents should share financial responsibilities equally, while 35.68% thought that fathers should be more responsible. Additionally, since only 1.38% of respondents believed that fathers are suited for childcare and another 1.38% believed that mothers should be the primary financial providers, these responses were excluded from further analysis. Consequently, the analysis as shown in Table 3 below is based on a total sample of 782 instead of the original 804 for Pearson's chi-square, t-test and logistic regression analysis for dependent variable.

The descriptive statistics highlighted several key insights. The nearly equal representation of males and females ensured a balanced perspective on gender-related issues. The varied income levels suggested a diverse socio-demographic background among the respondents, which might have influenced their views on financial and childcare responsibilities. The predominance of respondents with less than a college degree indicated a significant portion of the sample had different perspectives compared to those with higher education levels. The varied marital statuses might have allowed for insights into how different family structures impacted attitudes toward parenting roles. With a majority of respondents working, the findings reflected the challenges and dynamics faced by working parents. The large number of white respondents suggested subcultural influences typical of the racial group, with a quarter of the sample providing some racial diversity. Therefore, a strong majority believed in equal sharing of both childcare and financial responsibilities, indicating a trend toward more egalitarian views on parenting roles.

The analysis leverages data on demographic variables that reflect their distribution in the US population, providing a comprehensive overview of societal attitudes towards parental responsibilities. By examining the relationships between gender, age, and attitudes towards childcare and financial support responsibilities, this study aims to uncover significant patterns and insights. The following sections will test the formulated hypotheses, exploring how these socio-demographic factors influence perceptions and expectations of parental roles within families.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Gender, Income, Education, Marital Status, Work Status, Race, Age, Child Care and Financial Provision.

Variables	Frequency(percent)
Gender	
Male=0	397(50.77%)
Female=1	385(49.23%)
Income	
Less than \$49,999=1	325(41.56%)
\$50,000 to \$89,999=2	213(27.24%)
Greater than \$90,000=3	244(31.20%)
Education	
Less than college=0	502(64.19%)
College degree=1	280(35.81%)
Marital Status	
Married=0	316(40.41%)
Never married=1	260(33.25%)
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	206(26.34%)
Work Status	
Not working=0	291(62.79%)
Working=1	491(37.21%)
Race	
Other=0	211(26.98%)
White=1	571(73.02%)
Provision of Child Care* (Who is suited to look after their Child	
The mother and father equally=0	577(72.76%)
Unequal care but mother provides more care =1	205(25.85%)
The father mostly, and the father somewhat more than the mother=2	11(1.38%)
Financial Provision*	
The mother and father equally=0	499(62.92%)
Unequal support but father provides more financial support=1	283(35.68%)
The mothers mostly, and the mother somewhat more than the father=2	11(1.38%)
Age	Mean (48.35) SD (17.940) Min (18) Max (89)

(*) Discrepancies in the sample sizes for the dependent variables on childcare and financial responsibility were addressed by deleting the cases with low numbers, as this improves the accuracy and reliability of the analysis.

As shown in Table 3 below, a Pearson's Chi-square test was used to examine the relationships between the provision of childcare and gender, income, education, race, marital status, work status, and among these variables, the analysis revealed that only gender had a significant relationship with Childcare ($p=.01$). In terms of gender, a higher proportion of females (78.96%) perceived both mothers and fathers as equally suited for the provision of childcare compared to males (68.77%). Regarding income ($p=.69$), those earning over \$90,000 annually (71.83%) exhibited a slightly higher agreement with equal parenting suitability compared to lower income brackets (73.85%). Views on childcare provision were fairly consistent across income groups. Similar views on childcare provision exist regardless of education level. The education variable ($p=.812$) did not differ between those with less than a college degree (73.79%) compared to those with a college degree (73.51%). Respondents had similar attitudes toward childcare provision regardless of educational attainment. Marital status ($p=.215$) showed a slight variation, but the overall views on childcare were consistent across the marital status variables. Views on childcare responsibilities were relatively uniform across different marital statuses.

Moreover, the working status ($p=0.10$) of respondents was not significant about the provision of childcare. Slightly more working individuals (75.76%) believed in equal childcare sharing than non-working individuals (70.45%). Likewise, there was no significant difference in perceptions between racial groups ($p=.75$), with both "Other" (72.99%) and "White" (74.08%) respondents showed similar percentages of agreement.

Attitudes toward childcare provision were similar across different racial groups. Therefore, the Pearson's chi-square analysis revealed that gender was the only variable with a significant relationship to attitudes about childcare provision, with females more likely to advocate for equal sharing of childcare responsibilities. Other variables income, education, marital status, work status, and race, did not show significant differences in attitudes toward childcare responsibilities, indicating that views on this issue were broadly similar across these socio-demographic factors.

Table 3. Pearson's Chi-square Analysis Between the Provision of Childcare and Gender, Income, Education, Marital Status, Work Status, and Race.

Variables	Categories	Childcare				Total	<i>p</i> value
		0	%	1	%		
Gender	Male (n)	273	68.8	124	31	397	0.001
	Female (n)	304	79	81	21		
	Total (n)	577	73.8	205	26		
Income	less than \$49,999(n)	240	73.9	85	26	325	0.686
	\$50,000 to \$89,999(n)	153	71.8	60	28		
	greater than \$90,000(n)	184	75.4	60	25		
	Total	577	73.8	205	26		
Educational status	less than college(n)	369	73.5	133	26	502	0.812
	college degree(n)	208	74.3	72	26		
	Total(n)	577	73.8	205	26		
Marital Status	Married	227	71.8	89	28	316	0.215
	UnMarried	202	77.7	58	22		
	Divorced/Seperated/Widowed	148	71.8	58	28		
	Total(n)	577	73.8	205	26		
Working Status	Working	372	75.8	119	24	491	0.102
	Not Working	205	70.5	86	30		
	Total(n)	577	73.8	205	26		
Race	Other(n)	154	73	57	27	211	0.757
	White(n)	423	74.1	148	26		

Total(n) 577 73.8 205 26 782

Table 4 below showed the results of the t-test that was conducted to compare the mean age of Group 0 (The mother and father equally) (n = 577) and Group 1 (Unequal care but mother provides more care) (n = 205). The mean age for Group 0 (M = 47.16, SD = 17.69) was significantly lower than the mean age for Group 1 (M = 51.73, SD = 18.25), $df(780) = -3.15, p < .01$. The 95% confidence interval for the difference between the means ranged from -7.41 to -1.72. The combined mean age for both groups was 48.36 (SD = 17.94). This suggests that older individuals are more likely to support the traditional view that mothers should provide more childcare, while younger individuals are more inclined to believe in equal sharing of childcare responsibilities between parents.

Table 4. T-test Analysis Between Child Care and Age

Group	N	M	SD	95% CI for Mean	t	df	p
The mother and father equally=0	577	47.2	17.7	[45.72, 48.61]			
Unequal care but mother provides more care =1	205	51.7	18.3	[49.21, 54.24]			
Combined	782	48.4	17.9	[47.10, 49.62]	-3.2	780	0

Difference (0 - 1)	- 4.56	[-7.41, -1.72]
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M = mean, SD = standard deviation, CI = confidence interval, t = t-value, df = degrees of freedom, $p = p$ -value.

Table 5 as shown below explores the relationship between respondents' demographics and characteristics and their attitudes about financial support responsibilities. Gender shows a significant relationship ($p=.00$). A higher percentage of females (71.43%) believed both parents should equally share financial responsibilities compared to males (56.42%). Additionally, income variables ($p=.013$) also showed a significant relationship. Respondents in higher income brackets were more likely to support equal financial provision compared to those in lower income brackets. The education variable was also significant with $p =.026$. Respondents with a college degree were more likely to support equal financial provision compared to those with less education. Marital status also indicated a significant relationship with $p =.041$. Never married individuals (69.62%) were more likely to support equal financial provision compared to married (62.34%) and divorced/separated/widowed (58.74%) individuals. Work status ($p=.004$) had a significant relationship. A higher percentage of working individuals (67.62%) believe in equal financial support compared to non-working individuals (57.39%). However, race ($p =.286$) was not significant. Views on financial provision were similar across different racial groups.

This Pearson chi-square analysis reveals that several socio-demographic variables significantly influenced attitudes about financial support responsibilities. Females are

significantly more likely than males to believe in equal sharing of financial responsibilities, indicating a gendered perspective on financial roles in the family. Higher income levels correlate with a greater likelihood of supporting equal financial provision, suggesting that financial stability might influence more egalitarian views on financial responsibilities. Higher educational attainment is associated with a greater likelihood of supporting equal financial provision, implying that education might play a role in promoting egalitarian views. Unmarried individuals were more likely to support equal financial provision than their married or divorced/separated/widowed counterparts, indicating that marital status influences attitudes towards financial roles. Working individuals were more likely to support equal financial provision compared to non-working individuals, possibly reflecting the influence of their own financial contributions and experiences. Overall, the analysis highlights that gender, income, education, marital status, and work status are key factors influencing attitudes about financial support responsibilities within families.

Table 5. Pearson's Chi-square Analysis Between Financial Support and Gender, Income, Education, Marital Status, Work Status, and Race.

Variables	Categories	Financial Support				Total	<i>p</i> value
		0	%	1	%		
Gender	Male(n)	224	56.4	173	44	397	0.000
	Female(n)	275	71.4	110	29	385	
	Total (n)	499	63.8	283	36	782	
Income	less than \$49,999(n)	205	63.1	120	37	325	0.013
	\$50,000 to \$89,999 (n)	122	57.3	91	43	213	
	greater than \$90,000(n)	172	70.5	72	30	244	
	Total(n)	499	63.8	283	36	782	

Educational status	less than college(n)	306	61	196	39	502	0.026
	college degree(n)	193	68.9	87	31	280	
	Total(n)	499	63.8	283	36	782	
Marital Status	Married	197	62.3	119	38	316	0.041
	Never Married	181	69.6	79	30	260	
	Divorced/Separated/Widowed	121	58.7	85	41	206	
	Total(n)	499	63.8	283	36	782	
Working Status	Working	332	67.6	159	32	491	0.004
	Not Working	167	57.4	124	43	291	
	Total(n)	499	63.8	283	36	782	
Race	Other(n)	141	66.8	70	33	211	0.286
	White(n)	358	62.7	213	37	571	
	Total(n)	499	63.8	283	36	782	

Table 6 below provides an t-test which was conducted to compare the mean age of Group 0 (The mother and father equally) (n = 499) and Group 1 (Unequal support but father provides more financial support) (n = 283). The mean age for Group 0 (M = 45.91, SD = 16.86) was significantly lower than the mean age for Group 1 (M = 52.69, SD = 18.97), $t(780) = -5.16, p < .001$. The 95% confidence interval for the difference between the means ranged from -9.36 to -4.20. The combined mean age for both groups was 48.36 (SD = 17.94). This suggests that older individuals were more likely to support the traditional view that fathers should provide more financial support, while younger individuals are more inclined to believe in equal sharing of financial responsibilities between parents.

Table 6. T-test Analysis Between Financial Support and Age

Group	N	M	SD	95% CI for Mean	t	df	p
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The mother and father equally=0	499	45.9	16.9	[44.42, 47.39]			
Unequal support but father provides more financial support=1	283	52.7	19	[50.47, 54.91]	5.2	780	0
Combined	782	48.4	17.9	[47.10, 49.62]			
Difference (0 - 1)		6.78		[-9.36, -4.20]			

Note- M = mean, SD = standard deviation, CI = confidence interval, t = t-value, df = degrees of freedom, $p = p$ -value.

Table 7 below presents a logistic regression analysis examining the influence of various socio-demographic variables on the likelihood of respondents believing that both parents should equally share childcare responsibilities. Gender is a significant predictor of attitudes about childcare provision. The model results showed that the odds ratio for the female variable was estimated as 0.59. This means that in comparison to male respondents, female respondents were less likely to support unequal provision of care with mothers providing more care. In other words, compared to males, the female variable was associated with a 41% decrease in the odds of supporting mothers should provide more care, highlighting a gender-based difference in attitudes towards the division of childcare responsibilities. The income variables were not significant,

indicating that income did not significantly influence attitudes about equal childcare provision. This suggests that attitudes toward sharing childcare responsibilities were consistent across different income levels. Education level also did not significantly affect attitudes about childcare provision. Respondents with varying levels of education shared similar views on the responsibility for childcare. Moreover, marital status did not significantly influence attitudes about equal childcare provision. Whether respondents were married, never married, or divorced/separated/widowed, their views on sharing childcare responsibilities were similar. Work status did not significantly impact attitudes about equal childcare provision. Both working and non-working individuals had similar attitudes toward sharing childcare responsibilities. Additionally, race did not significantly affect attitudes about childcare provision. Respondents from different racial backgrounds shared similar views on the responsibility for childcare. However, age ($p=.033$) was a significant predictor of attitudes about childcare provision. Older parents are more likely to support the idea that mothers should provide more childcare compared to the opinion that both parents should share childcare responsibilities equally. The odds ratio of 1.012 suggests that for each additional year in the parent's age, the odds of supporting unequal childcare responsibilities, where the mother provides more care, increase by 1.2%. Since the odds ratio is greater than 1, it indicates that as parents get older, they are more likely to endorse the view that mothers should provide more care compared to equal sharing of childcare responsibilities. This analysis underscores the importance of age in shaping parental attitudes towards childcare roles, suggesting that older parents may hold more traditional views about the division of childcare responsibilities compared to younger parents.

Table 7. Logistic Regression Analysis and 95% Confidence Interval of Gender, Income, Education, Marital Status, Work Status, Race, Age, and Provision of Childcare.

Provision of Childcare	Odds ratio	95% CI
Gender (ref = male)		
Female	0.59***	0.423-0.882
Income (ref = less than \$49,999)		
\$50,000 to \$89,999	1.034	0.682-1.567
greater than \$90,000	0.85	0.538-1.345
Education (ref = less than college degree)		
College degree	1.005	0.689-1.449
Marital Status (ref=Married)		
Never married	0.89	0.567-1.398
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	0.919	0.599-1.41
Working Status (ref=Not working)		
Working	0.975	0.659-1.442
Race (ref = Other)		
White	0.851	0.588-1.233
Age parent	1.012**	1.001-1.025
Constant	0.301**	0.124-0.729
*** p<.01, ** p<.05, *p<.1		

Table 8 below presents the logistic regression analysis examining the influence of various socio-demographic variables on the likelihood of respondents believing that both parents should share financial support responsibilities equally. The odds ratios (OR) and p-values are provided for each variable. Gender ($p=.00$) was a highly significant predictor of attitudes toward financial support provision. The model results showed that the odds ratio for the female variable was estimated as 0.51. This means that in comparison to male respondents, female respondents were less likely to support unequal provision of financial support with fathers providing more care. That means compared to males, the female variable was associated with a 49% decrease in the odds of supporting fathers should provide for the family financially, highlighting a gender-based difference in attitudes towards the division of financial responsibilities.

Income did not significantly influence attitudes toward equal financial support provision. This implies that attitudes towards sharing financial responsibilities were consistent across different income levels. The relationship between education and attitudes towards financial support provision was not statistically significant. Thus, it cannot be asserted that individuals with higher education levels were more or less likely to support equal financial responsibilities between parents compared to those with less education. Marital status did not significantly affect attitudes about equal financial support provision. Whether respondents were married, never married, or divorced/separated/widowed, their views on sharing financial responsibilities were similar. Work status did not significantly impact attitudes about equal financial support provision. Both working and non-working individuals had similar attitudes toward sharing financial responsibilities. Race did not significantly affect attitudes about

financial support provision. Respondents from different racial backgrounds shared similar views on the responsibility for financial support. However, the highly statistically significant p -value (0.000) reinforces the confidence in this finding, affirming that age is a crucial factor influencing parental attitudes towards the division of financial responsibilities. The odds ratio of 1.021 suggests that for each additional year in the parent's age, the odds of supporting unequal financial support, where the father provides more, increase by 2.1%. Since the odds ratio is greater than 1, it indicates that as parents get older, they are more likely to endorse the view that fathers should provide more financial support compared to equal sharing of financial responsibilities.

The logistic regression analysis in Table 8 reveals that gender, and age are significant factors influencing attitudes toward equal financial support provision. Females are less likely than males to support the opinion that fathers should provide more financial support, indicating a potential disparity in gendered expectations and experiences regarding financial support. Older parents are more likely to support the idea that fathers should provide more financial support compared to the opinion that both parents should share financial responsibilities equally.

In contrast, income, marital status, work status, and race did not show significant effects on attitude about financial support provision. This suggests that while gender, and age play crucial roles, other socio-demographic factors do not markedly differentiate attitudes toward sharing financial responsibilities. The results emphasize the importance of addressing gender-based differences and considering the impact of age-related perspectives in discussions and policies to promote equal sharing of financial responsibilities within families.

Table 8. Logistic Regression Analysis and 95% Confidence Interval of Gender, Income, Education, Marital Status, Work Status, Race, Age, and Financial Support.

Financial Support	Odds ratio	95% CI
Gender (ref = male)		
Female	0.513***	0.377-0.7
Income (ref = less than \$49,999)		
\$50,000 to \$89,999	1.236	0.84-1.818
greater than \$90,000	0.722	0.469-1.11
Education (ref = less than college degree)		
College degree	0.74	0.525-1.044
Marital Status (ref=Married)		
Never married	0.985	0.646-1.503
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	0.957	0.641-1.43
Working Status (ref=Not working)		
Working	1.004	0.698-1.446
Race (ref = Other)		
White	1.109	0.78-0.576
Age parent	1.021***	1.009
Constant	0.3***	0.132-0.686

*** p<.01, ** p<.05, *p<.1

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 Hypotheses Discussion

Reflecting on this study's hypotheses, the study results reveal that the data presents substantial evidence that indicates that public attitudes towards men's and women's roles in children's lives indeed differ significantly across different sociodemographic characteristics. Despite significant strides towards gender equality and more egalitarian views, traditional gender roles of parents remain deeply ingrained, as the logistic regression analysis underscores the significant role that gender plays in shaping attitudes about childcare responsibilities. Specifically, the data reveals that gender is a robust predictor of attitudes towards childcare provision, with notable differences between male and female respondents. Female respondents are consistently less likely to endorse the view that mothers should bear a disproportionate share of childcare responsibilities compared to their male counterparts. In contrast, males show a greater propensity to support traditional gender roles, wherein mothers are expected to take on a larger share of childcare duties (Craig and Mullan 2011; Lareau 2011).

This gender disparity reflects broader societal norms and expectations surrounding caregiving roles. Research indicates that women are more likely to advocate for an equitable distribution of childcare responsibilities, driven by their experiences and expectations of gender equality (Gerson 2017; Sayer 2018). Women often perceive shared childcare as a reflection of fairness and modern gender norms, which aligns with their increasing involvement in the workforce and the evolving standards of family life (Bianchi et al. 2020; Harkness and Yoon 2014).

On the other hand, men are more inclined to support traditional views where mothers are primarily responsible for childcare. This tendency may stem from enduring societal norms and stereotypes that associate women with nurturing roles and men with financial provision (Sayer, Bianchi, and Robinson 2004; Twenge, Campbell, and Foster 2003). Moreover, men's support for traditional gender roles can be influenced by less direct experience with caregiving, as well as the societal expectation for women to prioritize childcare (Pew Research Center 2013).

The divergence in attitudes between genders can be attributed to various factors, including the differing impacts of gender socialization, expectations, and personal experiences. For instance, research suggests that women, having traditionally shouldered more caregiving responsibilities, are more attuned to the need for balance and shared responsibilities (Friedline, Masa, and Chowa 2015). Conversely, men, who have historically been less involved in day-to-day childcare, may be less likely to challenge traditional roles or advocate for an equitable division of responsibilities (Raley, Mattingly, and Bianchi 2006).

Analysis of hypothesis two highlights a significant gender disparity in attitudes about financial support within the family, with females demonstrating a markedly different perspective compared to males. Specifically, females are significantly less likely to support the idea that fathers should provide a greater share of financial support compared to males. Instead, women are more inclined to endorse egalitarian arrangements, where financial responsibilities are shared equally between partners (Craig and Mullan 2011; Lareau 2011). Despite advancements in gender equality and an increasing number of women entering and succeeding in the workforce, traditional attitudes about financial roles persist among males,

while females increasingly support egalitarian views (Glauber 2008; Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Several factors contribute to this divergence.

Firstly, societal norms and expectations continue to portray men as the primary earners, a role that is often reinforced through familial expectations and societal narratives (Cunningham 2008). Secondly, women, even those who contribute significantly to the family income, may still perceive their financial role as supplementary to that of men (Brines 1994). Moreover, the data suggests that women's support for egalitarian financial roles may also be rooted in practical considerations. For instance, women who take on greater childcare responsibilities might endorse equal financial roles as a practical division of labor that allows them to balance professional and caregiving duties (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang 2012). Conversely, men may support traditional financial roles, viewing themselves as the primary providers, which aligns with long-standing societal, enduring stereotypes, and familial expectations. This persistent opinion among males could be attributed to entrenched cultural norms that emphasize male financial responsibility (Gornick and Meyers 2003; Pew Research Center 2013).

Moreover, men's support for traditional financial arrangements can also be influenced by workplace norms and policies that reinforce these roles. For instance, workplaces that emphasize career advancement and long hours may inadvertently support traditional gender roles by discouraging men from fully participating in shared financial responsibilities (Harkness and Yoon 2014). As a result, men may be less likely to challenge traditional financial roles and more inclined to support views that align with conventional expectations. Conversely, men's traditional perspectives may gradually change as societal

norms continue to evolve and as more workplaces adopt policies that support gender equality and shared responsibilities (Evertsson and Duvander 2019; Michel 2011).

Institutional level support, such as gender-neutral parental leave policies and workplace flexibility, can play a crucial role in reshaping these attitudes and promoting more egalitarian financial arrangements (Plantenga, Remery and Camilleri-Cassar 2009). By addressing structural barriers and fostering an environment that supports equal financial contributions, institutions can help align attitudes with contemporary values of gender equality and shared responsibility.

For hypothesis three, the data confirms a significant relationship between parents' age and their attitudes towards the provision of childcare, even after controlling for gender, income, education, marital status, work status, and race. The findings indicate that older parents are more likely to support the idea that mothers should provide more childcare compared to the opinion that both parents should share childcare responsibilities equally. That means older parents are more likely to support traditional views on childcare responsibilities, whereas younger parents tend to advocate for more egalitarian arrangements (Craig and Mullan 2011; Lareau 2011). This generational difference suggests that attitudes towards childcare responsibilities evolve with age and experience.

This tendency reflects the traditional views held by older generations, who may adhere more closely to established gender roles within the family structure. These attitudes likely stem from the societal norms and expectations that were prevalent during their formative years, which often emphasized the mother's primary role in child-rearing (Sayer, Bianchi, and Robinson 2004; Twenge, Campbell, and Foster 2003). As a result, older parents may be less influenced by contemporary movements towards gender equality in

parenting roles, maintaining a preference for traditional divisions of childcare responsibilities (Craig and Mullan 2011; Lareau 2011). Older parents may also have internalized the benefits of traditional parenting responsibilities through their own experiences or through societal changes they have observed over time (Pew Research Center 2013).

In contrast, younger parents tend to exhibit a more progressive stance regarding childcare responsibilities. The data indicates a shift in attitudes among this demographic, revealing that younger parents are more likely to support the notion of shared financial responsibilities between both partners. This change aligns with the broader societal shift towards egalitarian views on gender roles and family responsibilities, reflecting the evolving expectations and norms that have emerged in recent decades (Gerson 2017; Harkness and Yoon 2014).

Younger parents are generally more receptive to the idea that both partners should contribute equally to the financial support of the family, which can be attributed to their exposure to diverse role models and a greater emphasis on shared responsibilities in contemporary discourse (Craig 2016; Sayer 2018). This generational shift demonstrates a significant departure from the traditional norms that emphasized the mother's role as the primary caregiver, highlighting a broader transformation in how caregiving roles are perceived and enacted within families today (Smith 2019; Bianchi et al. 2020). This shift can be attributed to younger parents being more exposed to modern values promoting gender equality, both in the workplace and at home (Pew Research Center 2013). Additionally, these attitudes are shaped by increased societal emphasis on balancing work and family life, as well as evolving gender norms that challenge traditional roles (Harkness

and Yoon 2014). For instance, younger parents are more likely to support policies and practices that facilitate a more balanced division of childcare, such as parental leave and flexible work arrangements, which align with their preference for shared responsibilities (Smith 2019). This shift can be attributed to various factors, including increased gender equality in the workplace, higher levels of educational attainment, and changing societal expectations around parenting (Bianchi et al. 2020). Younger parents are also more likely to have grown up in environments where egalitarian values were promoted, leading them to challenge and move away from traditional views on childcare responsibilities (Pew Research Center 2013). As a result, their attitudes reflect a broader cultural evolution towards more equitable and shared parenting practices.

The data supports hypothesis four, indicating a significant relationship between a parent's age and their contribution to financial support for the family, even after controlling for other variables. The findings indicate that older parents are more likely to support the idea that fathers should provide more financial support compared to the opinion that both parents should share financial responsibilities equally. This inclination reflects the traditional gender roles that were more prevalent during their upbringing, where men were often seen as the primary breadwinners of the family (Hurd and Rohwedder 2013; Lusardi and Mitchell 2014). Such attitudes are reinforced by generational experiences and societal expectations that placed the financial burden primarily on fathers. As a result, older parents may be less receptive to contemporary shifts towards egalitarian financial responsibilities within the family (Friedline, Masa, and Chowa 2015). This adherence to traditional roles suggests a persistent influence of past societal norms on current attitudes about family financial dynamics (Raley, Mattingly, and Bianchi 2006).

In contrast, younger parents are more likely to support the idea that both parents should share financial responsibilities equally. This shift reflects contemporary societal norms that advocate for gender equality in both the workplace and the home (Pew Research Center 2013). Younger generations, who have grown up during a time of increasing gender parity, tend to embrace more egalitarian views on financial contributions within the family. This perspective is influenced by their exposure to modern values that promote shared financial and domestic responsibilities, as well as their experiences in dual-income households where both partners contribute economically (Nomaguchi and Milkie 2020). The trend towards equal financial responsibility among younger parents underscores the evolving nature of gender roles and the impact of societal changes on family dynamics (Raley, Mattingly, and Bianchi 2006).

5.2 Variables Discussion

Income was an essential variable in this research, providing a lens through which to view socio-demographic factors and its influence on attitudes toward parental roles. There was a correlation between higher income and more egalitarian views on both childcare and financial responsibilities (Hook 2006; Sayer, Gauthier, and Furstenberg, 2004). Bivariate analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship between income and attitudes towards financial support responsibilities. This suggests that income level influences how parents view financial roles within the family, with higher income associated with a greater likelihood of supporting equal financial responsibilities. However, despite its utility, the income variable was not a significant predictor in some analyses, such as bivariate and logistic regression analysis for attitudes about equal childcare provision. Moreover, attitudes towards childcare are also heavily influenced by societal and cultural

norms beyond economic considerations. For example, traditional gender roles and expectations about caregiving can shape attitudes about who should be responsible for childcare, irrespective of income levels (Sayer, Bianchi, and Robinson 2004; Gerson 2017).

However, from the bivariate analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship between educational status and attitudes towards financial support responsibilities. This suggests that education level influences how parents view financial roles within the family, with higher education associated with a greater likelihood of supporting equal financial responsibilities. Furthermore, the influence of education was not always consistent across all analyses. For instance, it did not significantly affect attitudes about childcare provision from bivariate and logistic regression analysis. This inconsistency might be due to the homogenization of educational categories (e.g., less than college vs. college degree), which can mask variations within each group. Furthermore, education's impact might be intertwined with other variables, such as income and race, complicating the analysis (Davis and Greenstein 2009).

The racial variable was included to ensure that the analysis accounted for demographic diversity. While the bivariate and logistic regression analysis found no significant differences in attitudes toward childcare and financial responsibilities across racial groups, this could be due to the binary categorization of race into “White” and “Other,” which oversimplifies the complexity of racial identities and their sociocultural implications and might not capture the diverse experiences and attitudes within each racial category (Raley, Mattingly, and Bianchi 2006).

The bivariate analysis highlights that marital status significantly impacts attitudes towards financial support responsibilities but not childcare responsibilities. The logistic

regression analysis also shows no significant relationship between marital status and attitudes towards childcare and financial responsibilities. Married individuals are less likely to support equal financial contributions compared to their unmarried and divorced/separated/widowed counterparts, which may reflect traditional views on financial roles within marriage. In contrast, attitudes towards the distribution of childcare responsibilities appear consistent across marital statuses, indicating that other factors, such as cultural norms or personal values, may play a more critical role in shaping these attitudes (Sullivan 2010).

Lastly, working status was also relatively unimpactful on logistic regression analysis, as the study found that working individuals were only slightly more likely to support equal sharing of both childcare and financial responsibilities (Gerson 2010). Interestingly, bivariate analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship between working status and attitudes towards financial support responsibilities. This suggests that working status does influence views on the distribution of financial responsibilities, with those who are working more likely to support equal financial contributions compared to those who are not (Stone, 2007).

5.3 Theoretical Considerations

In beginning to connect the findings discussed in this paper to the broader sociological discourse, it becomes clear that the research presented provides detailed insights into the evolution of parental and the conceptualization of family dynamics and gender norms. If I return to the foundational text for this research, Risman's theory of Gender as a Social Structure, which emphasizes that gender operates at three levels:

individual, interactional, and institutional then, with this theory in mind and with the research conducted, I can bridge the gap between this foundational notion and those within broader fields of sociology.

At the individual level, gender influences how parents perceive and perform their roles in childcare. Research shows that women are more likely to assume primary responsibility for childcare due to deeply entrenched societal expectations (Hochschild and Machung 2012). Women often internalize these norms, leading them to prioritize caregiving roles even when they are also engaged in paid work (Risman 2004). This internalization can result in a "second shift" for women, where they manage both professional responsibilities and extensive childcare duties (Hochschild and Machung 2012). Conversely, men may internalize norms that prioritize their roles as breadwinners, leading to less engagement in childcare and domestic tasks (Coltrane 2000).

At the interactional level, gender norms are negotiated and enacted through daily interactions within families. Studies reveal that even in dual-income households, women often take on a disproportionate share of childcare responsibilities due to traditional expectations (Gornick and Meyers 2003). These roles are maintained through interactions between partners, where gendered expectations influence decisions about who performs specific tasks. For instance, discussions and negotiations about childcare responsibilities often reinforce traditional roles, with women frequently taking on more childcare duties despite their professional commitments (Lee 2022). The negotiation of these roles can be influenced by both partners' adherence towards traditional gender roles.

The institutional level highlights how gender is structured and reinforced by broader social institutions. Institutional practices such as workplace policies and public

services significantly impact the division of childcare and financial responsibilities. For example, inadequate parental leave policies and a lack of flexible working arrangements often result in women shouldering a larger share of childcare responsibilities (Budig and England 2001). Similarly, tax policies and social welfare programs can reinforce traditional financial roles by providing more support to families with a male breadwinner (Williams 2000). These institutional arrangements perpetuate gendered expectations and limit opportunities for a more equitable distribution of responsibilities. Additionally, organizational culture plays a critical role in reinforcing or challenging the traditional gender roles of parents. Workplaces that value long hours and face time over productivity can disadvantage parents, particularly mothers, who may need to balance professional and caregiving responsibilities. Such cultures can perpetuate the notion that committed employees are those without significant caregiving duties, thereby marginalizing parents, especially women. Organizational cultures that do not actively support and normalize men's involvement in caregiving can also reinforce traditional gender roles, making it difficult for fathers to take on more equitable caregiving roles (Hochschild 1997; Williams 2000).

Furthermore, the economic implications of institutional policies and structures are profound. Women who face career interruptions due to inadequate parental leave or rigid work structures may experience a significant lifetime earnings gap compared to their male counterparts. This earnings gap can have long-term financial repercussions, affecting women's ability to save for retirement and achieve financial independence. Additionally, the concentration of women in lower-paying, part-time, or flexible jobs can exacerbate economic disparities between genders. Even though is merely an assumption but is

supported by empirical evidence, demonstrating how institutional policies and workplace structures can perpetuate gender inequality (Budig and England 2001; Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007).

Effective policy interventions are essential for addressing these structural inequalities. Governments and organizations can implement policies that provide adequate parental leave for both parents, promote flexible working arrangements, and create supportive organizational cultures that value work-life balance. Such policies can help to distribute childcare responsibilities more equitably between parents, reduce career penalties for women, and challenge traditional gender roles. Research suggests that when both parents are encouraged and supported to take parental leave and participate in childcare, it leads to more balanced and equitable outcomes in both family and professional spheres (Gornick and Meyers 2003; Ray et al. 2010).

The financial responsibilities within families are similarly structured by gender. Risman's theory helps explain how institutional and societal expectations maintain traditional financial roles. Men are often expected to be the primary earners, while women's financial contributions are frequently perceived as supplementary (Bianchi 2011). Institutional factors such as pay gaps, gendered job segregation, and policies that favor single-earner households reinforce these roles (Smith et al. 2021). These structures not only perpetuate gendered financial responsibilities but also impact the broader economic stability and career advancement of women (Budig and England 2001).

Furthermore, the study's insights into the role of sociodemographic factors and education in shaping gender roles of parents resonate with power dynamics. Bourdieu (1984) contends that social structures and practices perpetuate existing power dynamics

and inequalities. This study found that higher educational attainment and income levels were associated with more egalitarian views on parenting, which suggests that access to resources and opportunities can influence individuals' capacity to challenge traditional gender roles. However, it also highlights the structural barriers that lower-income families face, which can constrain their ability to adopt more equitable parenting practices. As such, the intersection of gender with class must be considered as multiple axes of inequality that cannot be separated from the whole.

In addition to these theoretical frameworks, the study's findings reflect broader societal trends toward increasing recognition of gender diversity and inclusivity. The evolving roles of parents during the pandemic illustrate a shift toward more flexible and negotiated gender identities, challenging the rigid binary framework that has historically governed gender relations. However, the study also highlights the limitations and resistance to these changes, as the persistent expectation for women to bear the primary burden of caregiving, despite their increased participation in the workforce, reflects the enduring power of patriarchal structures. This dual burden can be understood through the concept of the "second shift," as articulated by Hochschild and Machung (2012), which refers to the additional labor that women perform at home after completing their professional workday. The pandemic exacerbated this dynamic, as the space between work and home became blurred, intensifying the demands on working mothers.

The concept of the "stalled revolution," as articulated by Bianchi (2000), remains relevant in understanding the slow and uneven progress toward gender equity in household labor. Despite women's significant strides in the professional realm, the domestic sphere has been slower to adapt, with women still shouldering a disproportionate share of

childcare and household duties. The case of the pandemic is evidence of this, as external social pressures were necessary to catalyze change, even in partnerships with an ethos of equality.

Risman's (2004) theoretical model, which suggests that housework and childcare are divided based on resource possession, power dynamics, and availability, provides a useful framework for interpreting this study's findings. The increased participation of fathers in childcare, as highlighted in the study, may reflect shifting power dynamics within households, influenced by women's rising economic contributions. This realignment of roles is further supported by the findings of Craig and Mullan (2011), who noted that paternal involvement is higher in families where mothers are employed. These shifts suggest that economic factors and workplace dynamics are critical in shaping parental roles, reinforcing the need for policies that support work-life balance and parental leave.

However, beyond the social creation of these gender norms, the study's findings also prompt critical reflections on the role of policy and institutional support in shaping gender dynamics. The disparities in parental roles observed during the pandemic highlight the importance of policies such as parental leave, flexible working arrangements, and affordable childcare in facilitating more equitable gender relations. Countries with robust family support policies, such as those in Scandinavia, tend to exhibit more balanced gender norms in both the private and public spheres. This suggests that policy interventions are crucial in supporting the renegotiation and promoting gender equity in parental roles (Haas and Hwang 2008).

5.4 Practical Implications

This paper carries significant practical implications for both societal practices and institutional policies, particularly in the domains of gender equity and family support systems. A key takeaway from this research is the clear need for policies that support a more equitable distribution of parental responsibilities (Bianchi 2011; Gornick and Meyers, 2003). In light of the persistent traditional gender roles of parents that continue to designate mothers as primary caregivers and fathers as financial providers, there is a compelling argument for the development of family-friendly workplace policies (Coltrane 2000). Such policies would include flexible working hours, comprehensive parental leave for both mothers and fathers, and remote working options (Haas, Hwang, and Russell 2010; Koslowski, Blum, and Moss 2020). Countries that have implemented such policies, like Sweden, have seen significant cultural shifts towards more equitable parenting roles, as fathers in Sweden are not only more involved in day-to-day childcare activities but also take on a larger share of household duties, leading to a more balanced distribution of labor within the home (Ekberg, Eriksson, and Friebel 2013; Duvander and Johansson 2012). These measures would enable parents to share childcare duties more equitably, mitigating the strain on mothers who often bear the disproportionate burden of caregiving while balancing professional obligations (Hochschild and Machung 2012). The promotion of such policies is not just beneficial for individual families but also has broader societal benefits, potentially leading to increased workplace productivity and overall societal well-being (Bianchi 2011; O'Brien and Moss 2010).

Further, educational and social programs play a crucial role in promoting gender equality in parenting and thus show the necessity of educational initiatives that aim to

dismantle deeply entrenched gender stereotypes (Blair-Loy 2003; Coltrane 2000). These programs should target not only parents but also children from a young age, instilling values of equality and shared responsibility (Bianchi 2011; Haas, Hwang, and Russell 2010). Schools and community centers can serve as pivotal platforms for these educational endeavors, offering workshops and courses that emphasize the importance of both parents being actively involved in all aspects of family life (Gornick and Meyers 2003). Teachers and educators should also be trained to address these topics sensitively and effectively, ensuring that all students understand the importance of gender equity in all aspects of life, including within the family unit (Sadker and Sadker 2010). Additionally, campaigns can be employed to shift public perceptions and normalize the idea of fathers as equally competent and essential caregivers (Hochschild and Machung 2012), while social programs, such as subsidized childcare and after-school programs, can provide additional support to families (Koslowski, Blum, and Moss 2020).

Policies that support affordable and accessible childcare are equally critical, as when high-quality childcare is available and affordable, it reduces the pressure on parents, particularly mothers, to take extended career breaks or reduce their working hours (O'Brien 2009). This can have a profound impact on gender equality in the workforce, enabling more women to pursue career advancements and contribute to the economy (Gornick and Meyers 2003). Additionally, accessible childcare options can provide children with early educational opportunities, setting them up for future success (Esping-Andersen 2009). Thus, a multifaceted approach that includes mandatory paternity leave, tax incentives for shared childcare, and affordable childcare services can create a more equitable society and address gender disparities both at home and in the workplace, fostering a culture of equality

and benefiting individuals, families, and the wider economy (Ekberg, Eriksson, and Friebe 2013; Haas and Hwang 2019).

Beyond the policy changes that can be established, the implications of this research also call for a deeper examination of the societal structures that perpetuate traditional gender roles of parents. Cultural norms and representations of gender roles need to be critically evaluated and challenged. Culture plays a powerful role in shaping public perceptions and attitudes, and thus, awareness outlets should be encouraged to portray diverse and equitable family models. This includes showcasing fathers as active and competent caregivers and mothers as successful professionals (Kimmel 2017; Schroeder and Schmitt 2015).

From a broader perspective, the findings of this study highlight the need for a cultural shift towards valuing caregiving as a fundamental societal function. Caregiving should be recognized as a vital contribution to the economy and society, deserving of respect and support (Folbre 2001). This shift in perspective requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society, including government, businesses, educational institutions, and organizations

Finally, policies and programs must be inclusive and considerate of the diverse experiences and challenges faced by different groups. For instance, low-income families may require additional financial support and access to affordable childcare, while older parents may benefit from different types of support tailored to their unique needs (Gornick and Meyers 2003; O'Brien 2009). By adopting a holistic approach, all families, regardless of their background, can have access to the resources and support they need to thrive (Duncan and Brooks-Gunn 1997).

5.5 Future Research

Future research on the changing dynamics of parental roles, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, offers a plethora of opportunities for expanding our theoretical and practical understanding of gender, family, and social structures. To advance this field, it is crucial to engage in longitudinal studies that track the evolution of parental responsibilities over time. Such studies can provide valuable insights into how temporary disruptions, like those induced by the pandemic, may result in lasting changes in family dynamics (Granja et al. 2022). By following families over several years, researchers can observe whether the increased paternal involvement in childcare and the balancing act between work and family responsibilities by mothers continue to persist or revert to pre-pandemic norms (Kramer and Kramer 2021). This longitudinal approach will also allow for the examination of the long-term effects on children's development and family cohesion, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the impacts of these shifts (Sarkadi et al. 2020).

Cross-cultural comparisons present another possibility for future research. Societal norms and policies vary significantly across different cultural contexts, influencing how gender and parental responsibilities are perceived and enacted (Esping-Andersen 2016). Comparative studies between countries with different cultural attitudes towards gender and varying levels of policy support for families, such as parental leave and childcare services, can shed light on the conditions that facilitate or hinder equitable parenting (Gornick and Meyers 2003). For instance, while this study has looked at Northern European countries as a comparison, the US is composed entirely differently, with various peoples and cultures having different expectations of household gender equality (Williams 2000). This

comparative analysis can thus also reveal the adaptability of gender theories in diverse cultural settings and inform global policy recommendations (Bettio et al. 2012).

In addition, as this is a post-COVID analysis, the rapid advancement of technology and its integration into daily life and modern parenting should not be overlooked. Future research should explore how digital tools and remote work environments impact family dynamics and gender roles. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of remote work, blurring the boundaries between professional and personal life (Chung et al., 2020). Investigating how families navigate these blurred boundaries can provide insights into the sustainability of work-from-home models and their implications for gender equity in both the workplace and the home (Kramer and Kramer 2021).

Moreover, the economic dimension of parenting roles deserves deeper exploration. Future studies should investigate how economic stability and insecurity influence the division of labor within households. The economic fallout from the pandemic has disproportionately affected lower-income families, potentially exacerbating traditional gender roles as economic pressures force families to revert to conventional breadwinner-caregiver models (Brenan 2020). Analyzing these economic impacts can reveal critical insights into the resilience of gender norms under financial stress and inform policies aimed at supporting vulnerable families (Gornick and Meyers 2003).

Lastly, another important avenue for future research is the psychological and emotional well-being of parents navigating these evolving roles. The stress associated with balancing work and family responsibilities can have significant mental health implications, often leading to anxiety, depression, and burnout (Kawakami et al. 2021). Investigating the psychological impact of increased paternal involvement and the dual burden carried by

working mothers can contribute to a more holistic understanding of family dynamics (Craig and Mullan 2011). This includes examining how societal expectations and workplace policies influence parental stress and coping mechanisms. Furthermore, this research can inform the development of robust support systems and targeted interventions designed to promote the mental well-being of parents, thereby enhancing overall family health (Kelan 2018).

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6. Conclusion

With the unprecedented global event of the COVID-19 pandemic precipitating a shift in the gender equity in parental roles within the family, this paper sought to deconstruct this evolution, particularly focusing on the division of childcare and financial responsibilities amid this modern societal transformation. The pandemic provided a unique perspective to observe these shifts, as it required families to adapt to the new realities of remote work and home-based education. This concluding chapter will thus synthesize the key findings, articulate their significance, and delineate this research's contribution to the broader sociological discourse on attitudes towards parental roles in providing childcare and financial responsibilities, offering a detailed and comprehensive analysis.

The General Social Survey (GSS) dataset provided a robust framework for analyzing public attitudes towards parental responsibilities. The comprehensive analysis of demographic variables such as gender, age, education, income, marital status, and work status allowed for a better understanding of how these factors interact to shape family dynamics, and the use of logistic regression analysis further elucidated the significant predictors of attitudes about childcare and financial responsibilities, reinforcing the critical role of gender and age in these attitudes. Gender, in particular, emerged as a significant predictor of attitudes about childcare and financial provision, with females are significantly less likely to believe that mothers should provide more care compared to males. And females are significantly less likely to believe that fathers should provide more financial

support compared to males. This finding indicates a potential disparity in gendered expectations and experiences regarding childcare and providing for the family financially.

Also revealed from the study were significant variations in attitudes toward gender norms based on age, education, and income. Older generation parents, for instance, are more likely to believe in traditional roles on parenting compared to younger parents who embrace egalitarian views. This generational shift reflects broader societal changes towards more progressive gender roles in parenting. The implications of this research extend beyond the immediate context of the pandemic and contribute significantly to the broader sociological understanding of public attitudes towards parenting roles in childcare and financial responsibilities. By providing empirical evidence of how external circumstances can disrupt and reshape family dynamics, the study underscores the fluidity and variability of gender expressions and roles. Furthermore, this research highlights the importance of supportive policies and cultural shifts in promoting gender equality. Government policies that encourage paternal leave and flexible work arrangements can facilitate a more equitable sharing of responsibilities. Cultural attitudes that value and normalize shared caregiving can further accelerate progress toward gender equality in the family, and the findings suggest that policy interventions should not only target workplace practices but also aim to shift cultural norms that perpetuate gendered divisions of labor.

The findings of this study make clear the intricate interplay between gender, age, and societal expectations in shaping parental responsibilities. The pandemic served as a catalyst, magnifying existing trends while also exposing both advancements and enduring inequalities in gender roles of parents. One of the primary revelations is the marked increase in paternal involvement in childcare. This shift is significant as it challenges the

traditional notion and supports egalitarian ideology, which has historically emphasized male dominance in public and professional spheres while relegating caregiving to women. The literature suggests a gradual but meaningful renegotiation of gender ideologies, wherein nurturing and caregiving are increasingly integrated into the male identity. This renegotiation is pivotal, as it not only disrupts entrenched gender scripts but also paves the way for a more equitable distribution of labor within the family. The increased involvement of fathers in childcare, observed during the pandemic, is evidence of this and signifies a potential paradigm shift in traditional gender roles of parents. Fathers taking on more caregiving responsibilities reflects a departure from the conventional patriarchal model, where men are primarily seen as breadwinners. The pandemic-induced changes in family dynamics are a clear manifestation of this egalitarian nature of gender—fathers adapting to caregiving roles and mothers managing the dual burden of work and household responsibilities exemplify how external pressures can challenge entrenched norms and create opportunities for alternative configurations of gender equality in parenting roles.

However, despite these positive developments, my research underscores that the burden of childcare and household responsibilities continues to fall disproportionately on mothers. Even as fathers have increased their participation in caregiving, mothers remain primarily responsible for both professional duties and domestic tasks. This persistent inequality suggests that while gender norms are evolving, deep-seated societal norms and expectations still exert a strong influence. The concept of a “stalled revolution,” as described by previous scholars, remains pertinent, indicating that progress toward gender equality within the family is slow and uneven and that the resilience of these traditional

norms necessitates continued efforts to promote gender equity in both public and private spheres.

In total, this research offers valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of parental attitudes within the family on providing childcare and financial support, highlighting both progress and persistent inequalities. By situating these findings within broader theoretical frameworks and societal contexts, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of public attitudes of parenting roles in contemporary society, accentuating the importance of continued efforts to challenge traditional norms, support diverse family structures, and promote policies that facilitate gender equality. Through such efforts, we can move closer to achieving a more equitable distribution of responsibilities and a more inclusive understanding of family dynamics. The implications for policy, practice, and future research are thus profound, and the need for ongoing vigilance and proactive measures are necessary to support gender equity in all facets of family life.

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