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# The Effects Of Parenthood, Gender, and Gender Ideology On The Support For Paid Parental Leave

Amira Allen

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THE EFFECTS OF PARENTHOOD, GENDER, AND GENDER IDEOLOGY ON THE  
SUPPORT FOR PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

by

Amira Allen  
Bachelor of Arts, Elizabethtown College, 2015

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

Of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements


for the degree of


Master of Arts


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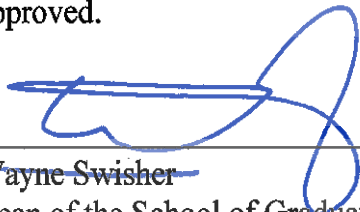
This thesis, submitted by Amira Allen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.


  
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Date

## PERMISSION

Title            The Effects of Parenthood, Gender, and Gender Ideology on the Support of Paid Parental Leave

Department    Sociology

Degree         Master of Arts

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Amira Allen  
April 11, 2017

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## ABSTRACT

In 2015, 61.4 percent of women and 94.5 percent of men with children three and under were in the labor force. Both working mothers and fathers report higher levels of stress balancing work and family life than they did twenty-five years ago, and many mothers and fathers would like to cut back on their work hours. The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) gives eligible employees of covered employers the option to take unpaid job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons, such as parental leave. Though FMLA applies to both parents, it is more common for maternity leave to occur than paternity leave. The FMLA is unpaid, and only applies to an estimated 59 percent of the labor force. Given that most other countries have more generous parental leave policies, this thesis will examine factors that are related to support for establishing paid parental leave in the United States. Guided by social role theory and using data from the 2012 General Social Survey ( $N = 1,101$ ), this thesis considers how parenthood, gender, and gender ideology are related to support of paid parental leave, while also taking into consideration control variables, including marital status, education, race, employment status, and age. The findings show that 84 percent of the sample support paid parental leave, women are more supportive of paid parental leave than men, and individuals that have an egalitarian gender ideology are more supportive of paid parental leave than individuals that have a traditional gender ideology. Results also indicate that parenthood is not significantly related to support for paid parental leave. Implications, limitations, and areas for potential research are discussed.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This study examines if parenthood, gender, and gender ideology are associated with individuals' support for paid parental leave. In this chapter, I will introduce the topic of this study, including the goals and contributions of this thesis. I will also give a brief overview of the next four chapters.

#### *Background to the Problem*

In the U.S., approximately 61.4 percent of women and 94.5 percent of men with children age three and under work in the labor force (U.S. Department of Labor 2016). Working parents typically experience stressors as they manage work and family responsibilities, such as mothers feeling forced to choose between careers and parenting (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2011). Working parents also face challenges parenting, such as finding infant care and the dilemma of bonding with their newborns or returning to work early (Allen 2003). Dual-career families suffer from a speed-up of work and family life, especially mothers (Hochschild 2012). In dual-career families, there are more challenges managing work and family, since these couples are taking care of two jobs along with family responsibilities. Women, then, often end up working another shift, because they work outside of the home, then return home to do a second shift of unpaid work, including childcare and housework. Both working mothers and fathers report higher levels of stress balancing work and family life than they did twenty-five years ago, and parents of young children are more likely to report constantly feeling pressed for time (Coontz 2005; Craig and Mullan 2010). Given these patterns, many U.S. mothers and fathers would benefit from

generous parental paid leave programs. Previous studies demonstrate many benefits associated with paid parental leave, including job security, wage replacement, job flexibility, and increased maternal employment (Ray, Gornick and Schmitt 2010; Wilkinson and Radley 1997).

### *Family Medical Leave Act*

To help workers meet work-family needs, in the U.S., the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was enacted in 1993. However, it took some time for this law to be passed. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 (PDA) was the first policy related to leave to be implemented in the U.S. The PDA “prohibits discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions” (U.S. Department of Labor 2016). The PDA does not require employers to provide paid leave to their employees, but if they do provide paid leave or disability benefits, they must provide these benefits for conditions associated with pregnancy and childbirth (Gault et al. 2014). In 1984, the FMLA was drafted, and by 1985 the first version of the FMLA was introduced to the House of Representatives. This first draft of the FMLA allowed for 18 weeks over a two-year period for unpaid parental leave and the law applied to employers with five or more employees; this draft was reintroduced every year until it was passed in 1993 (Goss 2013; Joshi et al. 2015). The FMLA was vetoed twice by President Bush in 1990 and 1992 because he did not believe that the federal government should require companies to offer specific benefits (Holmes 1990; United States Senate 2017). In 1990, the veto message was presented before the House, and the House sustained the veto; in 1992, the Senate overrode the veto and the House sustained the veto (United States Senate 2017). In order to increase the political prospects of FMLA, changes had to be made, such as reducing the length of leave and increasing the minimum number of employees (Joshi et al. 2015).

In 1993, the current version of the FMLA was signed into law by President Clinton. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2016), “the FMLA gives eligible employees of covered employers the right to take unpaid job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave.” These family and medical reasons include the need to care for a newborn or newly adopted child, to care for a seriously ill family member, or to deal with one’s own serious health condition. In order to be eligible for the leave, an employee must have worked 1,250 hours in the previous year for an employer that employs at least 50 workers within a 75-mile radius of where the employee requesting leave reports to work (Grossman 2004).

According to Klerman, Daley, and Pozniak (2013), about 17 percent of worksites are covered by the FMLA. Altogether, in 2012, 59 percent of employees were covered and eligible to take leave under the FMLA. Many people take leave under the FMLA for parental and other caregiving reasons, such as caring for a new child or ill family member (Gault et al. 2014). In 2012, about 22 percent of employees who took leave did so for pregnancy or a new child (Klerman et al. 2013; U.S. Department of Labor 2012). Another 55 percent of employees taking leave, did so for their own illness, and about 18 percent took leave for health conditions of a spouse, child, or parent (Klerman et al. 2013). However, many employees find it problematic to use these benefits or have no access to leave, and only a small portion of employers voluntarily provide paid leave to mothers and fathers (Gault et al. 2014). It is estimated that in 2012, 35 percent of worksites offered paid maternity leave, while only 20 percent of worksites offered paid paternity leave (Klerman et al. 2013).

### *Paid Parental Leave in Sweden versus the U.S.*

The U.S. is the only country out of the 41 countries represented in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that does not mandate paid leave for new parents (Livingston 2016). Parental leave in Sweden is vastly different from leave in the U.S., because their policy is generous and gender neutral (Ray et al. 2010), therefore, it is useful to describe their policy in comparison to the U.S. Observing Sweden's policy for paid leave allows us to see how their citizens benefit from this policy, and how having paid leave could look in the U.S., if it becomes mandated.

Although they are both highly industrialized countries, the U.S. has no national paid leave mandate, while Sweden has universal paid leave. Sweden is the model country for paid parental leave, because of the time given to parents, financial benefits, and gender neutrality in benefit provision. The parental leave benefit in Sweden is a social policy that was enacted in 1974. New parents have a total of 480 days of benefits that are paid per child (Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2017). There are three different levels of parental benefits: one is based on the amount of income an individual has, and the other two provide an individual with a fixed amount per day. Parental benefits can be paid as a full, three-quarter, half, a quarter or an eighth benefit (Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2017). The amount of parental benefits an individual can take per day depends on how much they work in relation to the normal full-time working hours in their occupation. For example, an individual can receive three-quarters of the parental benefits if they are working up to one-quarter of normal working hours, or one-eighth of the parental benefit if they are working up to seven-eighths of normal working hours (Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2017). In Sweden, a portion of parental benefits are reserved for fathers, meaning they are required to take time off, and additional financial benefits are given to families

who share parental leave (Ray et al. 2010), thereby enhancing gender equality. Overall, Sweden has more generous parental leave options in comparison to the U.S., as do all other industrialized nations.

In the U.S., the FMLA is the only national parental leave policy. However, the leave mandated by it is unpaid. There are currently five states (California, Rhode Island, New York, Hawaii, and New Jersey) that mandate paid leave for pregnancy and childbirth, for which employees receive at least partial wage replacement while on leave (Gault et al. 2014). Additionally, California, Washington, Rhode Island, and New Jersey have established family leave insurance programs to provide wage replacements for workers who take leave to care for a new child (Gault et al. 2014). In addition, some U.S. businesses offer paid leave to their employees (Livingston 2016). For example, companies, such as Amazon and Netflix, offer at least five months of paid leave for new parents (O'Connor 2016). In the U.S., many large companies are making strides in providing paid leave, which is beneficial to some employees trying to manage work and family.

Paid parental leave gives new parents the ability to take care of their children without the worry of financial security. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (2007) finds that paid leave for fathers helps promote gender equality in the workplace and in the home, because it shortens leaves for mothers, thereby increasing their job tenure and potentially their wage growth. Enacting paid parental leave for both parents also allows fathers to care for their children and women to participate in the labor force, enabling men and women to combine work and family. Although paid leave is dominated by leave for mothers, leave reserved specifically for fathers is now available in 31 of the 41 countries represented in the OECD (Livingston 2016).

Since there is no national paid leave mandate in the U.S., this research will examine support for establishing paid parental leave in the U.S., using data from the 2012 General Social Survey.

Existing evidence suggests there is broad support for paid parental leave policies in the U.S. For example, a Fortune-Morning Consult poll found that 74 percent of registered voters (78 percent of women and 70 percent of men) said they supported requiring employers to offer paid parental leave for new parents (Gordon 2016). Another poll from Huffington Post/YouGov found that 67 percent of Americans support paid maternity leave, and 55 percent support paid paternity leave (Edwards-Levy 2015). Despite such support for paid parental leave, little research examines what shapes these attitudes toward paid parental leave.

The goal of this thesis is to provide a quantitative analysis of support for paid parental leave in the U.S. It is important to study attitudes toward paid parental leave in order to better understand why there is support (or lack of support) for this policy, and to help guide initiatives in the U.S. aimed at educating people about paid parental leave. Knowing more about what shapes attitudes about paid parental leave helps us to determine what factors need to be addressed to help increase support for paid parental leave. Overall, implementing paid parental leave can help redefine gender roles, promote gender equality in the workplace and family, and help individuals better manage work and family.

Guided by social role theory, this thesis will examine the relationships between parenthood, gender, gender ideology, and support for paid parental leave to see if these variables impact support. Gender and parenthood are social roles that people hold that are linked to sociopolitical attitudes according to social role theory. Social role theory also recognizes that gender ideologies are important in explaining attitudes. Scholars have previously studied how the division of household labor and gender equality are related to paid parental leave in European

countries, but there is a lack of research about the factors that shape these attitudes and support for paid parental leave in the U.S. This thesis will contribute to the work and family literature about parental leave by filling this gap in the literature.

### *Overview of Thesis*

In Chapter Two, an overview of previous research and literature on the topic will be provided, as well as an outline of the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter Three will describe the method of this thesis, including the data source, sampling strategy, and measurement of the variables. In Chapter Four the results of the analysis will be presented. Finally, in Chapter Five, a discussion of the implications, limitations, and suggestions for areas of future research will be provided.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Guided by social role theory, this thesis examines the relationships between parenthood, gender, gender ideology, and support for paid parental leave. This chapter begins with a summary of previous research on parental leave, followed by an overview of social role theory. This is followed by a review of the existing literature relating to the research question and proposed hypotheses.

#### *Previous Research on Parental Leave*

Parental leave offers parents job protection and financial support during leave from work to care for a new child (Ray et al. 2010). Workers, especially women, can benefit from paid parental leave policies. According to Blau and Kahn (2013) parental leave can increase labor force participation rates of women by giving them the right to keep their jobs after taking leave. Further, Ruhm (1997) found that women receiving maternity leave are out of work less time, because they are taking shorter leaves and receive higher wages than women who do not receive maternity leave from their employers. Parental leave also gives new mothers time to care for their child and arrange for childcare once they return to work, thereby decreasing work interruptions associated with pregnancy and childbirth (Gault et al. 2014). Other evidence suggests that expanding paid leave is likely to reduce government spending on public assistance and increase labor force participation (Gault et al. 2014).

Previous studies also find benefits associated with fathers taking parental leave. For example, fathers who take parental leave with the arrival of a new child help reduce family stress



and experience greater father-infant bonding (Gault et al. 2014). Fathers who take at least two weeks of paternity leave are also more likely to be involved in child-care activities in the first months of their children's lives compared to fathers who do not take leave (Huerta et al. 2013).

Despite the many benefits of paid parental leave, there are some drawbacks, particularly for women. For example, statistical discrimination, or gender inequality based on stereotypes against women, can occur with more generous leave policies, because employers anticipate women taking advantage of these opportunities (Blau and Kahn 2013). In other words, employers may decide not to hire women because they fear they will have to pay for them to take maternity leave in the future. Having long paid parental leave policies can also encourage woman to take part-time jobs, lower-level positions, or to stay out of the labor force longer (Blau and Kahn 2013).

European countries have some of the most generous parental leave policies in the world. According to the International Labour Organization (2010), the majority of member states in the European Union provide at least 14 weeks of paid maternity leave with a job guarantee, with workers receiving at least two-thirds of their wages. Therefore, research examining attitudes toward parental leave typically focuses on European countries. In Germany, men who are younger than their partners or less educated are more likely to take parental leave in comparison to their counterparts (Geisler and Kreyenfeld 2011). A study by den Dulk and de Ruijter (2008) in the U.K and Netherlands found that managers' attitudes toward short-term care leave are generally positive for women requesting leave and employees in non-supervisory positions compared to men and supervisors. It was also found that full-time parental leave (three months) is considered disruptive; managers tend to find taking such leave as a sign of weak commitment and it can be damaging to an individual's career. However, managers in jobs that require higher

levels of education tend to have more positive attitudes toward requests for full-time parental leave (den Dulk and de Ruijter 2008). Relatedly, Allen and colleagues (2014) found that having a family-supportive supervisor facilitates positive parental leave outcomes by reducing family interference with work time, thereby allowing individuals to better manage work and family life with minimal interruption. Because prior literature emphasizes attitudes toward parental leave from managers (den Dulk and de Ruijter 2008), it is important to examine factors predicting attitudes among the general public. Examining such attitudes allows us to (1) understand why individuals support or do not support this policy, and (2) identify ways to implement this policy at the national level. Examining attitudes allows us to understand why people do not support this policy prior to advocating for its passage. Using social role theory as a framework, this study looks at paid parental leave by examining how parenthood, gender, and gender ideology shapes attitudes toward support. Social role theory provides a framework for examining these variables.

### *Social Role Theory*

Social role theory was developed to help researchers understand gender differences and similarities in social behavior (Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann 2000). Social role theory assumes that the social roles we occupy influence our attitudes. Specifically, social role theory observes the role of gender in shaping sociopolitical attitudes, while also recognizing the importance of other roles. This theory takes into account the extent that men and women of society are differently placed in the social structure, and how various mediating processes work together to make men and women differ psychologically, which in turn facilitates performance of typical roles (Eagly et al. 2004). The concept of the social role of gender refers to the “role performances of men and women that reflect the sexual division of labor by sex and gender hierarchy of the society” (Eagly 2013: 10).

Social role theory helps to tie the three independent variables (parenthood, gender, and gender ideology) of this study together because of its focus on how social roles may influence social attitudes: “sex-related attitudinal differences emerge both from the direct effects of sex-typed occupational and family roles on individual occupants of these roles and from culturally shared expectations that apply to women and men in general” (Eagly et al. 2004: 796). According to social role theory, women’s caring responsibilities prompt gender gaps in sociopolitical attitudes, and these gaps are represented in other groups with caring responsibilities, such as mothers and fathers (Eagly et al. 2004). Therefore, gender and parental status may shape attitudes toward family-friendly policies like paid parental leave. Because these groups (women and parents) experience gaps in sociopolitical attitudes due to their caregiving responsibilities, their attitudes may be more supportive of paid parental leave, acknowledging its benefits.

Gender ideology refers to the attitudes an individual holds toward roles of men and women in society. Social role theory also incorporates gender ideology because “gender roles are reflected in ideologies that legitimize gender inequality as natural and inevitable” (Eagly et al. 2004:796). That is, gender ideologies provide a justification for gender inequalities and shape people’s behaviors and attitudes. Therefore, gender ideologies will likely influence people’s attitudes toward paid parental leave. Gender ideologies may lead to supporting or not supporting paid parental leave, depending on whether an individual views gender inequality as natural and inevitable. Overall, social role theory assumes that parenthood and gender are social roles that influence attitudes about paid parental leave, while also linking gender ideology to attitudes.

### *Parenthood and Parental Leave*

Parenthood is an important social role that people may enact. Parents, especially new parents, report strain managing work and family, and parents of young children are among the most time stressed (Jacobs and Gerson 2004). Indeed, time-based conflict is a major stressor that many parents encounter. Time-based conflict occurs when multiple roles compete for a person's time, and the time spent in one role interferes with the ability to complete responsibilities in another role (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). Pressures from time-based conflict lead to role overload and other negative outcomes, such as anxiety (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985).

Children also change the way men and women allocate their time between work and family, because money is needed to take care of children, and housework demands increase with children (Craig and Mullan 2010). In the face of these increased expectations, Strazdins and Loughrey (2007) found that parents who do not take time off from the workforce are subject to time strain that can negatively affect their health and well-being. With more mothers working, households find it harder to make time for unpaid work, such as household labor, which has historically been the job of mothers (Craig and Mullan 2010).

Family-friendly policies, such as parental leave, can help alleviate time-based conflict and other stressors experienced by parents. According to Allen and colleagues (2014), a policy that allows working parents to take time off in order to care for a child helps to reduce chronic work-family conflict. Some countries provide universal social support, while others, such as the U.S., regard taking care of children as a private responsibility (Craig and Mullan 2010). Because of this, parents may choose to make compromises in order to improve their family life and meet their childcare responsibilities in ways that can harm their careers (Albion 2004). Further, according to social role theory those with caring responsibilities, such as parents, experience

gaps in sociopolitical attitudes (Eagly et al. 2004). In other words, those who enact the role of parenthood may have different attitudes than those who do not. Based on social role theory, and the previous research illustrating that parents are more likely to experience the stressors paid parental leave can help alleviate, and hence recognize the benefits of paid parental leave, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>1</sub>: Parents will be more likely to support paid parental leave than nonparents.

### *Gender and Parental Leave*

According to social role theory, gender is an important social role in predicting attitudes. Gender is also a key predictor of how individuals allocate their time to paid and unpaid work (Craig and Mullan 2010). Typically, social norms presume that men are to be the primary breadwinners and women are to have responsibility for the family and household, however, these roles vary across countries (den Dulk and de Ruijter 2008). For instance, a study by Calasanti and Bailey (1991) found that Swedish men are more favorable of gender equality, and have spouses who contribute more to total household income compared to U.S. men. Regardless of country, mothers often experience greater conflict in allocating time between paid work and unpaid work, although the level of such conflict does vary globally (Craig and Mullan 2010). Further, having children generally leads to a more traditional distribution of paid and unpaid work, as men upon becoming fathers hardly change their time allocations, whereas upon becoming mothers, women experience an increase in household labor to take care for the needs of children while often still working outside of the home (Coltrane and Adams 2008; Craig and Mullan 2010; Crompton 2006). Care is usually assigned to women because men are more committed to market work, can earn more than women, or because individuals believe this is the correct way to divide labor (Craig and Mullan 2010). Even when employed, mothers do more

childcare than fathers, and married women perform more household labor than their husbands (Craig and Mullan 2010; Greenstein 2000). These time use patterns may help explain why social theory states that women's caring responsibilities produce gender gaps in sociopolitical attitudes (Eagly et al. 2004), and the U.S. Department of Labor (2012) found that women are more likely to take leave than men and are also more likely to have unmet need for leave.

These differential time allocations and stressors associated with parenthood, might lead to men and women viewing family-friendly policies differently. For example, Albion (2004:292) found that males associate work-life balance with flexible work options that provide flexible hours and conditions with the loss of pay, whereas females used reduced hours and ad hoc leave as a way to achieve work-life balance. Indeed, a study by Coltrane, Miller, Dehaan, and Stewart (2013) found that men who reduce work hours for family reasons see a fifteen percent reduction in their earnings, while they see an eleven percent reduction in earnings for taking time off for nonfamily reasons. Given these patterns, why do fathers choose to take leave or not take leave? A study examining paternity leave found that fathers who did not take leave wanted to be home for more time after birth but were concerned about reactions from superiors and colleagues, whereas fathers that took leave did so because of a personal orientation toward shared parenting (Rehel 2013). This creates stigma for fathers who take time off for their families, making them potentially less likely to acknowledge family-friendly policies, such as parental leave, as beneficial.

As predicted by social role theory, women also typically have more liberal political views, making them more likely to support liberal policies, such as parental leave (Pratto, Stallworth, and Sidanius 1997). As such, women are more likely to support social equality and social welfare programs, and favor programs that help the disadvantaged and promote equality

compared to men (Eagly et al. 2004; Pratto et al. 1997). Based on social role theory, and the previous research illustrating that mothers tend to have responsibility for caregiving and are more likely to need parental leave and support related policies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>2</sub>: Women will be more likely to support paid parental leave than men.

### *Gender Ideology*

According to social role theory there may be linkages between people's gender ideologies and sociopolitical attitudes. Gender ideology refers to an individual's level of support for a division of paid work and family responsibilities based on the idea of separate work and family spheres (Davis and Greenstein 2009). An individual's gender ideology ranges from traditional to egalitarian. A person with a traditional gender ideology favors a male breadwinner and female homemaker structure, whereas someone with an egalitarian gender ideology favors both partners being considered equals and sharing the two roles equally (Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard 2010).

According to Greenstein (1995), gender ideology functions as a lens through which inequalities in the division of household labor, or other dynamics, are viewed. It is relevant to this thesis because gender ideologies might shape how individuals view paid-leave policies. Men and women with similar gender ideologies are expected to share the same views about paid parental leave. Individuals with egalitarian gender ideologies, regardless of gender, will be supportive of both parents being actively involved in parenting, which paid parental leave encourages. According to Sundstrom and Duvander (2002) if both parents have egalitarian gender ideologies, they are more likely to share parental leave. Traditional notions of gender

roles in society are reproduced when employers do not offer caregiving leave equally to men and women, and when men are discouraged from taking time off for childcare (Gault et al. 2014).

An egalitarian gender ideology shapes the way individuals view their responsibilities and commitment to work, family, and community (Voydanoff 2007). Men with egalitarian gender ideologies tend to spend more time performing child-care, and do a greater share of household labor (Davis and Greenstein 2009), and couples in countries with more generous parental leave policies tend to have more egalitarian divisions of household labor (Fuwa and Cohen 2007). A study by Kaufman and Uhlenberg (2000) found that men with gender egalitarian ideologies decreased their work hours when they became fathers. On the other hand, men with traditional gender ideologies increased their work hours. Sundstrom and Duvander (2002) found that in couples in which the mother earns more, fathers use more leave— a family situation reflecting an egalitarian gender ideology. Further, Glauber and Gozjolko (2011) found that white men with traditional gender ideologies substantially increased their paid work time after becoming fathers, while white men who expressed more egalitarian gender ideologies had a less substantial increase in time spent in paid work. Therefore, men with egalitarian gender ideologies may be more likely to see themselves benefitting from paid parental leave.

Altogether, individuals with egalitarian gender ideologies are more likely see the benefits of paid parental leave, while individuals with traditional gender ideologies may not recognize the importance of paid parental leave. This study does not look at how gender ideology interacts with other variables, as it is expected to have a direct relationship with attitudes towards paid parental leave and to influence men and women in similar ways. Gender ideologies are assumed to shape the roles that people enact, and therefore also the sociopolitical attitudes that people hold. Based on social role theory and the previous research indicating that gender ideology



provides a lens through which parental leave may be viewed, and an egalitarian gender ideology increasing the likelihood of taking parental leave, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>3</sub>: Individuals with more egalitarian gender ideologies will be more likely to support paid parental leave than individuals with more traditional gender ideologies.

#### *Background factors*

There are also several background factors that this thesis takes into account when analyzing support for paid parental leave. These factors include marital status, education, race, employment status, and age. Marital status is a social role that people hold. It is considered because single mothers are less likely to be covered by leave laws and less able to afford unpaid leave in comparison to married mothers; married fathers are less likely to take leave than men in non-marital unions (Geisler and Kreyenfeld 2011; Han, Ruhm, and Waldfogel 2009). Single parents, in general, are more likely to need such leave, therefore they may be more supportive of paid parental leave. Education is considered because highly educated mothers and fathers are more likely to take leave because they are often covered by federal and state laws and can afford unpaid leave (Han et al. 2009), therefore individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to support paid parental leave. Race is included because non-Whites are more likely to report needing leave (Gerstel and McGonagle 1999). Social role theory assumes that disadvantaged groups, such as racial minorities, have attitudinal differences compared to advantaged groups (Eagly et al. 2004), therefore they will be more likely to support paid parental leave. Employment status is a social role that people hold and is considered because many high-income countries provide workers with the option to combine part of the paid parental leave entitlement with paid employment (Fagan and Hebson 2006), therefore employed people are more likely to recognize the benefits of paid parental leave. Age is taken into account because

younger workers perceive work-family provisions as entitlements to help them combine work and family (Lewis and Smithson 2001), therefore younger individuals may be more likely to support parental leave.

#### *Summary and Organization of the next Chapter*

This chapter provided background on various aspects of parental leave. Based on social role theory and existing literature, three hypotheses were proposed. There is little previous research on support for paid parental leave, particularly in the U.S. The goal of this thesis is to contribute to this gap in the literature and provide evidence of what factors are related to paid parental leave attitudes. In Chapter Three the method used in this thesis will be described, as well as information about the dataset. In addition, the operationalization of the variables and the analytical strategy utilized to answer the research question will be explained.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

The purpose of this thesis is to utilize a quantitative approach to examine the relationships between parenthood, gender, gender ideology, and support for paid parental leave. This chapter provides a discussion of the method used to analyze the research question. The chapter begins with a detailed description of the data used, followed by an overview of the measurement of the variables. The final part of the chapter provides a discussion of the analytical strategy that will be used to address the research question.

#### *Data*

The data for this research were obtained from the 2012 wave of the General Social Survey (GSS), conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. The GSS started monitoring social change with its initial survey in 1972, focusing on attitudinal and basic demographic questions. Since 1994, the GSS is completed every other year and uses a national full probability sample of respondents who are eighteen years of age or older, non-institutionalized, and English or Spanish speaking United States citizens. It is conducted through in-person interviews that last approximately 90 minutes. The GSS uses multistage sampling designs, such as cluster, stratification, and probability proportionate to size procedures in order to capture a sample representative of the United States. In 2002, the GSS switched to computer assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), and in 2008 the GSS started a transition from a replicating cross-sectional design to a design that uses rotating panels (Smith et al. 2013). The

2012 wave of the GSS surveyed 1,974 individuals, with a response rate of 71.4 percent. After deleting missing cases, the sample size for this study is 1,101 individuals.

### *Measures*

#### *Dependent Variable*

*Support for paid parental leave* was measured with one item that asked respondents, “Consider a couple who both work full-time and now have a newborn child. One of them stops working for some time to care for their child. Do you think there should be paid leave available and, if so, for how long?” (General Social Survey 2012). For this study, the first part of the question will be examined. This variable was recoded as (1) = yes and (0) = no.

#### *Independent Variables*

The analysis includes three main independent variables: parenthood, gender, and gender ideology. *Parenthood* was recoded as (0) = does not have children and (1) = has children of any age. *Gender* was recoded as (0) = man and (1) = woman. *Gender ideology* is an index with seven items and a Cronbach’s Alpha of .709. Respondents indicated the extent of their agreement with the following items: (1) a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work, (2) a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works, (3) all in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job, (4) a job is alright, but what most women really want is a home and children, (5) being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay, (6) a husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family, and (7) both the husband and the wife should contribute to the household income. The items were coded as (1) = strongly agree, (2) = agree, (3) = neither disagree nor agree, (4) = disagree, and (5) = strongly disagree. Items one and seven were reverse coded, and the items were then added together and divided by seven. Lower scores indicate

having a more traditional gender ideology, and higher scores indicate having a more egalitarian gender ideology.

### *Control Variables*

The analysis also takes into account five control variables including marital status, education, race, employment status, and age. *Marital status* was recoded as (0) = not married and (1) = married. *Education* was coded as (0) = less than high school, (1) = high school, (2) = junior college, (3) = bachelor, and (4) = graduate. *Race* was recoded as (0) = white and (1) = non-white. *Employment status* was recoded as (0) = not employed and (1) = employed. *Age* was coded in years.

### *Analytic Strategy*

The purpose of this thesis is to examine factors predicting the support of paid parental leave. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, will be used to look at the distribution of the individual variables. At the bivariate level, crosstabulation (for parental status and gender) and a correlation (for gender ideology) will be used to examine the relationships between the independent variables and dependent variable. A logistic regression will be used to determine how each variable is related to the likelihood of an individual supporting paid parental leave, by using two models. Model 1 includes just the control variables, and Model 2 adds the independent variables.

### *Summary and Organization of the Next Chapter*

This chapter began with a detailed description of the dataset that will be used to examine the research question. This was followed by the measurement of the variables included in this thesis. The final part of the chapter provided a discussion of the analytical strategy that will be utilized to answer the research question. Chapter Four will discuss the findings of this thesis.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This study examines the associations between parenthood, gender, and gender ideology and support for paid parental leave. This chapter presents the findings. First, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, will be provided. Second, the results from the from the crosstabulation and correlation analyses will be provided. Lastly, the results from the binomial logistic regression will be presented. The chapter will also discuss whether the results provide support for the hypotheses.

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. The majority of the sample (83.8 percent) support having paid parental leave. Of the respondents that support paid parental leave, many respond that there should be six months of leave available (26.7 percent), the leave should be divided equally between the mother and father (37.1 percent), and both the government and employer should help pay for the leave (50.4 percent). Seventy-two percent of the sample have children, and 56 percent are women and 48 percent are men. The mean score is 3.42 ( $SD = 0.67$ ) for gender ideology, indicating that the respondents, on average, have fairly egalitarian gender ideologies.

For the control variables, forty-five percent of the sample is married. The mean score for education is 1.59 ( $SD = 1.21$ ), indicating that the respondents, on average, have at least a high school education. Only twenty-five percent of the sample is non-white, and the majority of the sample (96 percent) is employed. The mean age is 47 years old ( $M = 46.85$ ;  $SD = 17.46$ ).

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics* (N = 1,101)

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Paid Parental Leave <sup>a</sup>	0,1	0.84	--
Parenthood <sup>b</sup>	0,1	0.72	--
Gender <sup>c</sup>	0,1	0.56	--
Gender Ideology	1-5	3.42	0.67
Marital Status <sup>d</sup>	0,1	0.45	--
Education	0-4	1.59	1.21
Race <sup>e</sup>	0,1	0.25	--
Employment Status <sup>f</sup>	0,1	0.96	--
Age	18-89	46.85	17.46

<sup>a</sup>1= supports paid parental leave. <sup>b</sup>1= has at least one child. <sup>c</sup>1= women. <sup>d</sup>1= married. <sup>e</sup>1= non-white. <sup>f</sup>1= employed.

### *Crosstabulation*

Table 2.1 presents the bivariate relationship between parenthood and support for paid parental leave. Results in this table show that of those who do not have children, 85 percent support paid parental leave, while approximately eighty-three percent of those with at least one child share this view. However, the bivariate relationship between parenthood and support for paid parental leave is not significant,  $X^2(2, N = 1,101) = 0.727, p = .394$ .

Table 2.1 *Paid Parental Leave Support by Parenthood* (N = 1,101)

<b>Paid Parental Leave Support</b>	<b>Parenthood (Percent)</b>	
	Does Not Have Children (n = 313)	Has Children (n = 718)
Yes	85.0	82.9
No	15.0	17.1

Note:  $\chi^2 = 0.727; p = .394; df = 1$

Table 2.2 shows the bivariate relationship between gender and support for paid parental leave. Results indicate that 87 percent of women support having paid parental leave, while only 79 percent of men share this view. The relationship is statistically significant,  $X^2(2, N = 1,101) = 12.552, p = .000$ .

Table 2.2 *Paid Parental Leave Support by Gender* (N = 1,101)

Paid Parental Leave Support	Gender (Percent)	
	Men (n = 480)	Women (n = 621)
Yes	79.0	87.0
No	21.0	13.0

Note:  $\chi^2 = 12.552$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $df = 1$

### *Correlation*

A bivariate correlation between paid parental leave and gender ideology was performed. The results show a weak, positive relationship between support for paid parental leave and gender ideology ( $r = .149$ ;  $p = .000$ ), indicating that those with a more egalitarian gender ideology report greater support for paid parental leave.

### *Logistic Regression*

Table 3 presents the results of the logistic regression. All of the control variables are entered in Model 1, and the independent variables are added in Model 2. The results for Model 1 indicate the model is significant,  $X^2(5, N = 1,101) = 55.58$ ,  $p = .000$ . Two control variables are significant: race and age. The results show that non-white individuals are predicted to be more likely to support paid parental leave compared to whites. The results also indicate that as age increases, the predicted odds of supporting paid parental leave decreases.

Model 2 adds the independent variables (parental status, gender, and gender ideology). The results indicate the model is significant,  $X^2(8, N = 1,101) = 82.50$ ,  $p = .000$ , and five of the variables (gender, gender ideology, education, race, and age) are significant in predicting the odds of supporting paid parental leave. Parenthood is associated with a positive increase in the odds of supporting paid parental leave while controlling for the other variables, but this relationship is not significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is not supported. While controlling for the



other variables gender is significant, and the results indicate women are predicted to be 1.59 times as likely to support paid parental leave than men. This finding supports Hypothesis 2.

Table 3. Binomial Logistic Regression for Log Odds of Supporting Paid Parental Leave

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coefficient	Odds Ratio	Coefficient	Odds Ratio
Parenthood	---	---	.20	1.22
Gender	---	---	.46**	1.59
Gender Ideology	---	---	.49***	1.63
Marital Status	-.17	.85	-.15	.86
Education	-.06	.94	-.12**	.89
Race	.60**	1.82	.57*	1.77
Age	-.03**	.97	-.03***	.50
Employment Status	-.77	.46	-.70	.97
-2 log likelihood	931.718		904.795	
$X^2$	55.58***		82.50***	
Cox & Snell $R^2$	.049		.072	
	df = 5, N = 1,101		df = 8, N = 1,101	

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

Gender ideology positively and significantly increases the predicted odds of supporting paid parental leave net of the other variables. This finding indicates that a one-unit increase in gender ideology is associated with a 1.63 increase in the predicted odds of supporting paid parental leave. This finding supports Hypothesis 3.

In Model 2, three control variables are also significant: education, race, and age, with race being the most predictive of support for paid parental leave. The findings indicate that as education level increases, the predicted odds of supporting paid parental leave decreases. The results show that non-white individuals are predicted to be more likely to support paid parental leave compared to whites. The findings also indicate that as age increases the predicted odds of supporting paid parental leave decreases. The Cox and Snell  $R^2$  increased from .049 in Model 1 to .072 in Model 2, indicating that Model 2 is a better fit.

### *Summary and Organization of the Next Chapter*

This chapter presented the findings of this research. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviation, were described. The results from the crosstabulation indicate that parents and women are more supportive of paid parental leave than nonparents and men. According to the correlation matrix, individuals with egalitarian gender ideologies are more likely to support paid parental leave. The results of the logistic regression indicated that gender and gender ideology significantly increase the predicted odds of supporting paid parental leave, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3.

Chapter Five will present a summary of the results, relating the findings back to the literature about parental leave. The contributions of this research to the current literature will be outlined, along with its implications for support for paid parental leave. The chapter will end with a discussion of the limitations of the research and how future research should explore support for paid parental leave.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter a summary of the results will be presented, relating the findings to the literature about support for paid parental leave. A discussion will be provided about how this thesis contributes to the current literature, as well as the implications this research has for paid parental leave support. Lastly, the limitations of the research will be presented and areas potential future research related to paid parental leave will be explored.

#### *Discussion*

Guided by social role theory, this study examined if parenthood, gender, and gender ideology were associated with individuals' support for paid parental leave. Three hypotheses were created and tested using binomial logistic regression with data from the 2012 wave of the GSS. The study also took into account five control variables: marital status, education, race, employment status, and age. The findings indicate that gender and gender ideology significantly increased the predicted odds of supporting paid parental leave. For the control variables, education, race, and age were significant in predicting support for paid parental leave in Model 2.

Parenthood was not significantly related to support for paid parental leave in this study. This finding was interesting given that previous research by Albion (2004) found that family-friendly policies and flexible work options help to alleviate stressors experienced by parents. Indeed, households with children are more likely to take leave than households without children (U.S. Department of Labor 2012). The crosstabulation found that a slightly higher percentage of nonparents were supportive of paid parental leave compared to parents. Nonparents may be more

supportive because they believe they will need paid parental leave in the future, whereas parents may have already figured out how to manage work and family responsibilities without such leave. Another possible explanation for this finding centers on this study's inability to take in account the different types of parents, such as single parents, married parents, or divorced parents. Overall, though, there was broad support for paid parental leave. This means that both parents and nonparents support this policy, which may reflect the cultural norm of intensive parenting. Intensive parenting values the close involvement of parents in their children's lives, which is made easier by paid parental leave.

This study found that women were more likely than men to support paid parental leave. This finding is consistent with previous research that has found women are more likely to have liberal attitudes and support women's policies and social welfare programs (Pratto, Stallworth, and Sidanius 1997). Another explanation for this finding may be that women are more likely to take leave than men, therefore they are more likely to recognize the importance and benefits of paid parental leave. Because women are more likely to take leave, women are more supportive of paid parental leave, seeing it as a source of support for caregiving.

Gender ideology was found to be associated with a significant increase in the predicted odds of supporting paid parental leave, indicating that individuals with more egalitarian gender ideologies are more likely to support paid parental leave than individuals with traditional gender ideologies, regardless of gender. Past research suggests that if both parents have egalitarian gender ideologies, they are more likely to share parental leave (Sundstrom and Duvander 2002), therefore these individuals may be more likely to support paid parental leave, because they recognize its benefits. Previous research by Voydanoff (2007) found that gender ideologies shape the way individuals view their responsibilities and commitments to work, family, and

community. Because individuals with an egalitarian gender ideology are more likely to equally divide household labor, including child-care (Davis and Greenstein 2009), they may be more likely to support paid parental leave. Individuals with egalitarian attitudes may view paid parental leave as a tool that allows parents to be actively involved in child-care activities.

Social role theory takes into account the extent that men and women in society are differently placed in the social structure, and how various mediating processes work together to create various gender differences, which facilitates performance of their typical roles (Eagly et al. 2004). This theory helps to explain why gender and gender ideology were significant in predicting support for paid parental leave. According to social role theory, women's caring responsibilities prompt gender gaps in sociopolitical attitudes, and gender ideology is an important predictor of sex differences in sociopolitical attitudes (Eagly et al. 2004). Therefore, women and individuals with more egalitarian ideologies may be more likely to support paid parental leave, which was found in this study. Gaps in sociopolitical attitudes are linked to groups with caring responsibilities, such as parents (Eagly et al. 2004), however, these gaps are not specific to parental status, which is another possible explanation as to why parenthood was not significant in this study.

There were five control variables taken into account in this study: marital status, education, race, employment status, and age. Education, race, and age were significant in predicting the likelihood of support for paid parental leave. Individuals with lower education levels were more likely to support paid parental leave. This may be because individuals with lower levels of education are more likely to need paid parental leave. This study found that non-whites were more likely to support paid parental leave than whites. This finding might be explained by previous research indicating that non-whites are more likely to report needing leave

(Gerstel and McGonagle 1999; U.S. Department of Labor 2012). Therefore, non-whites may be more supportive of paid parental leave because mandating it may help meet their unmet leave needs. This study found that as age increases, the likelihood of supporting paid parental leave decreases. This finding is supported by prior research that has found that younger workers perceive work-family provisions as entitlements to help them combine work and family (Lewis and Smithson 2001).

### *Implications*

This study has important implications for government organizations and advocates for social change related to paid parental leave. Social policies that are family-friendly and support managing work and family are important. These policies promote strong bonds to work and family. Understanding why people support these policies is important, because it helps to identify ways to strengthen paid parental leave in the U.S. Knowing what shapes attitudes toward support for paid parental leave can lead to a better understanding of how to enhance the policy. This is because attitudes play an important social role in guiding social behavior and social interaction (Shavitt and Nelson 2002).

Paid parental leave offers many benefits for families. Paid parental leave for mothers and fathers might enhance the economy because people are more likely to work if they have paid time off for a new child. This study found broad support for paid parental leave, indicating that employees recognize the benefits of having this policy in place. Previous research by Grover and Crooker (1995) found that employees that had access to family-friendly policies were more likely to be committed to their organization. Therefore, it is important for employers to provide paid parental leave because it can be used to increase productivity and employee commitment to the employer.

Paid leave for fathers helps to promote gender equality in the workplace and in the home, because it shortens leaves for mothers, increasing their job tenure and potentially their wage growth (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2007). Paid parental leave also allows fathers to become more active in early childcare, and helps to make childcare more gender neutral. This study offers insight into what factors play significant roles in shaping attitudes towards support for paid parental leave. It is important to know what shapes attitudes because it can inform what advocates for paid parental leave should focus on, so they may know who to educate about the benefits of this policy.

#### *Limitations and Future Research*

There are some limitations of this research that should be taken into consideration. First, the dataset for this research is cross-sectional. Using a longitudinal sample may show more variation in support for paid parental leave, and allow stronger statements about causality. Second, this data is from 2012, and more recent data may reflect different views. Another limitation, was the phrasing of the question that was asked about paid parental leave attitudes. The GSS asks: “Consider a couple who both work full-time and now have a new born child. One of them stops working for some time to care for their child. Do you think there should be paid leave available and, if so, for how long?.” This study did not take into account how long respondents believe paid leave should be available. Also, only one question was asked for the dependent variable, and it did not delineate between mothers and fathers. Delineating between mothers and fathers could have led to more variation in responses from respondents. This research did not look at how gender ideology interacts with other variables, which may enhance understandings. It would be beneficial to see how gender ideology interacts with gender. For example, it would be useful to observe the attitudes of women with traditional gender ideologies

compared to women with egalitarian gender ideologies; it is expected that women with egalitarian gender ideologies may be more supportive of paid parental leave than women with traditional gender ideologies. Future research should also examine the interactions between parenthood and gender or parenthood and marital status. It would also be beneficial to examine the attitudes of mothers versus fathers, or married parents in comparison to single parents.

Future research should look in more depth at facets of paid parental leave, such as how long should leave be, or who should pay for the leave. For example, some individuals may support paid parental leave, but only for one month. There may also be disagreement about whether employers or the government should accrue the costs of implementing paid parental leave. Future research should also look at individuals who take leave (paid or unpaid) in the U.S. and examine their attitudes toward support for paid parental leave. This study used quantitative data which is helpful for making generalizations, however, future research should look at this topic qualitatively to help to better understand why people support or do not support paid parental leave based on personal accounts. Conducting interviews and focus groups will allow researchers to explore specific reasons as to why the majority of the attitudes towards paid parental leave are favorable, and why there are unfavorable attitudes.

### *Summary*

Guided by social role theory, this thesis examined the effects of parenthood, gender, and gender ideology on support for paid parental leave. The findings from this thesis suggest that gender and gender ideology are both related to support for paid parental leave. This study adds to the literature on work and family literature about parental leave, filling gaps in the literature. Specifically, most of the previous research examined the division of household labor and paid parental leave or paid parental leave in Europe. This thesis examined what factors are related to



attitudes toward supporting paid parental leave. It extends the understanding of who is more likely to support paid parental leave in the U.S. It is important to examine support for paid parental leave in the U.S. to shed light on how social policy can affect the choices men and women make trying to manage work and family.

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