

Gender, Race, and Family: Is Self-Employment a Solution for Work and Family Conflict for all Women?

Extended Abstract - Working Paper

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Abstract

Research indicates that family responsibilities deter women's employment. Self-employment has been portrayed as a solution for women to integrate work and family demands. The "mumpreneurship" literature suggests that children increase female self-employment by encouraging mothers to create their own ventures to procure the independence and flexibility that wage labor lacks. Although mumpreneurship has been portrayed as a universal phenomenon, that is, applying to all women, most of the evidence has been based on data for white women or small qualitative studies. This study examines the extent to which the mumpreneurship thesis can be applied to racial/ethnic minorities and immigrant women in the U.S. using recent data from the Current Population Survey. We found that marriage and children encourage wage employment and self-employment for all men and native Black women, but discourage employment for all other women. We find strong evidence for the mumpreneurship thesis among native-born white mothers, for whom self-employment constitutes a preferred alternative over wage employment. For all other racial minority and immigrant women, children do not seem to facilitate female entrepreneurship. The findings suggest that mumpreneurship, as a strategy for combining work and family responsibilities, has been overstated, representing mainly the experiences of white women, but not so those of racial minority and immigrant women.

Background

The literature on work and family conflict indicates that family responsibilities have opposite effects on employment by gender, increasing men's attachment to the labor force, but decreasing it for women. Several studies have found evidence showing that marriage and children increase women's responsibilities at home, reducing their time investments in paid labor (Killewald and García-Manglano 2016; England, Garcia-Beaulieu, and Ross 2004). Prior studies have found that racial minority and immigrant women tend to assume an even larger share of housework and childcare than white women (Parrott 2014). Theory of occupational choice assumes that employment opportunities for wage workers and entrepreneurs with otherwise similar qualifications should be equal (Amit et al., 1995; Douglas and Shepherd, 2002; Evans and Leighton, 1989; Hamilton, 2000; Kihlstrom and Laffont, 1979; Kolvereid, 1996; Kolvereid and Isaksen, 2006; Lucas, 1978; van Praag and van Ophem, 1995). However, prior research indicates

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that the prevalence of self-employment varies significantly by race/ethnicity. The theory of intersectionality indicates that ethnic minority and immigrant women experience a double disadvantage in wage labor, being disadvantaged not only by gender, but also by their racial minority status (Donato, Piya, and Jacobs 2014; Browne 1999).

Self-employment has been portrayed as a solution for women to overcome the gender disadvantage in paid labor, providing the independence and flexibility that allow them to remain employed while attending family responsibilities (Ekinsmyth 2011; Fairchild 2010; Noseleit 2014). Yet, the concept of entrepreneurship has drawn from a male-dominated narrative, depicting the entrepreneur with traditional masculine characteristics, such as independence, power, decisiveness, daring, risk taking, and successful, a framework that poorly fits the images of women entrepreneurs, particularly those of mothers (Ahl 2006). Despite a large literature on women's self-employment, the ideal of entrepreneur still elicits the image of a self-made man. The literature on *mumpreneurship* breaks apart from the male-dominated framework, reconciling the ideas of doing business while caring for children. Mumpreneurship is a concept that refers to the increasing number of mothers who enter self-employment as a strategy to integrate the roles of care taker and economic provider (Nel, Maritz, and Thongprovati 2010; Noseleit 2014; Morokvasic 1984).

The phenomenon of *mumpreneurship* has received substantial evidence, and thus, it has been portrayed as a universal phenomenon, applying to all women (Nel, Maritz, and Thongprovati 2010; Noseleit 2014; Morokvasic 1984). However, most of the evidence has relied on small qualitative studies, or data for white women. Little is known about the extent to which the mumpreneurship thesis can be applied to ethnic minorities and immigrant women (see Taniguchi 2002 for an early seminal study). Does self-employment also represent a solution for work and family conflict for racial minority and immigrant women? We address this question using recent nationally representative data. This study investigates whether marriage and children encourage self-employment among men and women from different racial/ethnic backgrounds and migration status living in the U.S.

Data and Methods

We use data from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS) for the years 2015, 2016, and 2017. The CPS is a nationally representative survey of the U.S. labor force. The sample is restricted to the civil population aged 18-60 who are not retired and not part of the arm forces. By contrast to prior studies that have treated self-employment as a dichotomy outcome, investigating whether individuals are either self-employed or employed for wages, we treat employment as having one of three potential outcomes, analyzing the probability that individuals are self-employed, wage employed, or not employed at the time of the survey. To analyze this outcome, we use weighted multinomial regression models.

Our independent variables are gender and race/ethnicity and nativity status by country of origin, where native-born whites are the reference group. We investigate the relationship between marital status, number of young children (younger than 5 years old) and older children (5 years or older), and employment status. We control for socioeconomic and demographic variables including, education, family income, spouse self-employment status, percent of co-ethnics living in the same metro area who are self-employed, urban residency, U.S. region, age and age squared, survey year, and, for the foreign born, the number of years living in the U.S.

Preliminary Results

Fig 1. Employment status by race/ethnicity: Native-born women

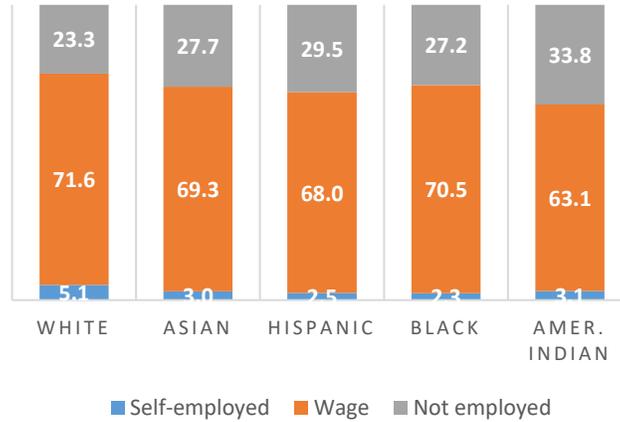
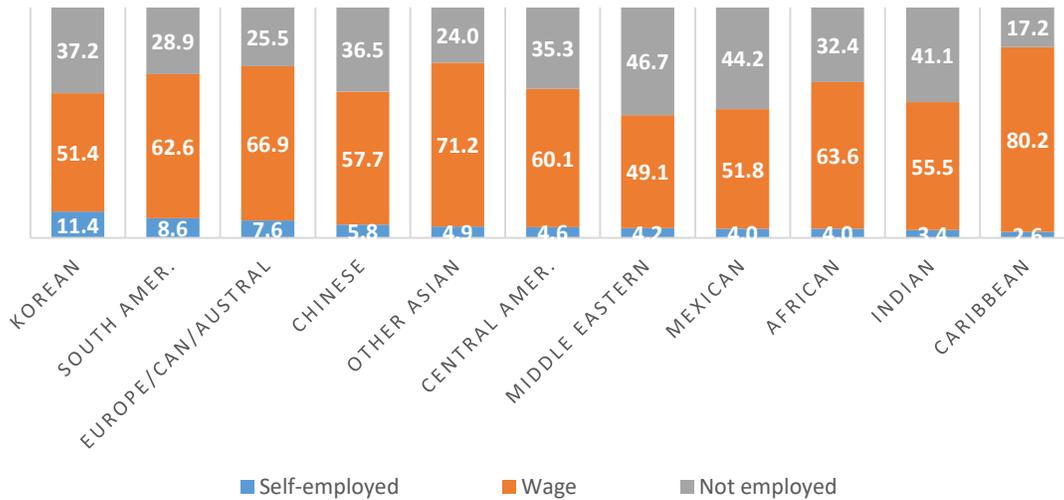


Fig 2. Employment status by race/ethnicity: Foreign-born women



We found that marriage and children encourage employment for men, but deter employment for women from all races and ethnicities, except for native Black women. The results in Tables 3 and 4 indicate that self-employment constitutes a preferred alternative over wage employment for white mothers, allegedly because it offers more flexibility to integrate work and family responsibilities, as argued in the mumpreneurship literature. However, we did not find evidence that children encourage self-employment among racial minority and immigrant women. The findings suggest that mumpreneurship as a strategy to combining work and family responsibilities has been overstated, applying mainly to white women, but not to racial minority and immigrant women.

Table 3. Multinomial coefficients: Native-born women

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Amer. Indian
Wage worker (vs. not)					
Married	-0.287 *	-0.228 *	-0.447 *	-0.351 *	-0.156
Spouse self-employed	-0.094 *	0.093	-0.296 *	-0.039	-0.105
N children <5	-0.404 *	0.179 *	-0.224 *	-0.278 *	-0.101
N children 5+	-0.171 *	0.053 *	-0.073 *	-0.26 *	-0.055
Self-employed (vs. not)					
Married	-0.084 *	0.331 *	-0.376 *	-0.22	0.358
Spouse self-employed	1.217 *	1.058 *	1.505 *	1.729 *	1.238 *
N children <5	-0.168 *	0.254 *	-0.173	-0.516 +	0.347
N children 5+	-0.114 *	0.069	-0.129 *	-0.283 *	-0.117
Self-employed (vs. wage worker)					
Married	0.203 *	0.559 *	0.071	0.131	0.514
Spouse self-employed	1.311 *	0.965 *	1.801 *	1.769 *	1.343 **
N children <5	0.236 *	0.075	0.051	-0.238	0.448
N children 5+	0.056 *	0.016	-0.056	-0.023	-0.062
N	87540	18553	15887	3917	2903

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

Note: All models control for individuals' education, family income quartile, geographic region, % of co-ethnics self-employed, urbanicity, age, age², and survey year.

Source: Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC, CPS) 2015, 2016, and 2017. Women aged 18 to 60.

Table 4. Multinomial coefficients: Foreign-born women

Wage (vs. not)	Central			South			Middle		Other		Euro
	Mex.	Amer.	Carib.	Amer.	China	Korea	East	India	Asia	Africa	Can/Aus
Married	-0.976 *	-0.703 *	-0.501 *	-0.881 *	-0.74 *	-0.785 *	-0.451 *	-1.092 *	-0.568 *	-1.156 *	-0.729 ***
Spouse self-employed	-0.434 *	-0.135	-0.377	-0.234	-0.06	-0.448	-0.226	-0.077	0.301	0.575 +	-0.183
N children <5	-0.511 *	-0.376 *	-0.157	-0.572 *	-0.24	-0.349	-0.898 *	-0.321 *	-0.506 *	0.003	-0.563 ***
N children 5+	-0.174 *	0.001	0.094	-0.143 *	-0.066	-0.352 *	-0.261 *	-0.085	-0.119 *	-0.037	-0.132 **
Self-emp (vs. not)											
Married	-1.184 *	-0.538 *	-0.363	-1.275 *	-1.267 *	-0.884 *	-0.506	-0.613	-0.886 *	-0.807 *	-0.554 **
Spouse self-employed	1.157 *	1.3 *	-1.368	1.124 *	1.84 *	0.462	1.486 *	0.648	2.114 *	1.25 *	0.555 **
N children <5	-0.416 *	-0.537 *	-0.966	-0.576 *	-1.429 +	-1.517	-1.314 *	-0.288	-0.766 *	-0.299	-0.509 **
N children 5+	-0.185 *	0.042	0.275	-0.128	-0.278 +	-0.226	-0.314 *	0.272	-0.321 *	-0.192	0.004
Self-emp (vs. wage)											
Married	-0.208	0.165	0.137	-0.394 +	-0.526	-0.099	-0.055	0.479	-0.318	0.349	0.175
Spouse self-employed	1.591 *	1.435 *	-0.991	1.358 *	1.9 *	0.91 *	1.711 *	0.725 +	1.814 *	0.675	0.737 ***
N children <5	0.095	-0.161	-0.81	-0.003	-1.189	-1.168	-0.417	0.033	-0.26	-0.302	0.054
N children 5+	-0.011	0.041	0.182	0.015	-0.212	0.126	-0.052	0.357 *	-0.202 *	-0.155	0.136 +
N	9419	5089	1101	2189	1582	767	1614	1605	3504	1354	3158

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

Note: All models control for individuals' education, family income quartile, geographic region, % of co-ethnics self-employed, urbanicity, age, age², and survey year.

Source: Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC, CPS) 2015, 2016, and 2017. Women aged 18 to 60.

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