Timing Is Not Everything: How Age of Children Affects Women's Earnings in 20 Occupation Groups

Abstract

Even as mothers have increased their labor force participation over time, researchers consistently find that the wage gap between mothers and non-mothers is larger than the wage gap between men and women. Although mothers earn less than non-mothers, prior research shows that when women have their children plays a significant role in determining the magnitude of the wage gap. Using data from the 2013 American Community Survey, this poster will explore how the motherhood wage gap varies by occupation and age of children. Based on preliminary analyses, I expect to show that the wage gap between mothers and non-mothers varies significantly depending on their occupation. Furthermore, early fertility or fertility delay only translate into wage penalties or bonuses in select occupations. These preliminary findings suggest that the motherhood wage gap is occupation-specific and that fertility delay may only be effective in reducing the wage gap in select occupations.

Extended Abstract

Even as mothers have increased their labor force participation over time, researchers consistently find that the wage gap between mothers and non-mothers is larger than the wage gap between men and women, and describe this disparity as a "wage penalty" or "family gap" associated with motherhood. Studies find a 6 to 7 percent wage gap between mothers of one child and a 12 to 13 percent wage gap between mothers of multiple children and women without children (Anderson, Binder, and Krause 2003; Amuedo-Dorantes and Kimmel 2004).

However, the wage gap between mothers and non-mothers is sensitive to educational attainment, type of employment, and timing of children. Anderson, Binder, and Krause (2003) find no wage penalty among the least educated and most educated. Budig and England (2001) find a lower wage penalty among women in managerial and professional jobs. Amuedo-Dorantes and Kimmel (2004)

find no wage penalty among college-educated women, rather a wage premium among college-educated mothers with delayed fertility. Fertility delay has been linked to women's increased educational attainment, labor force participation, and continuity of employment (Livingston and Cohn 2010). More women today are college graduates postponing childbearing, giving them more time to establish a career and accumulate resources. Women in professional occupations also tend to have access to more extensive employment benefits, which may enable them to remain employed or return to the same employer following the birth of a child (Boushey 2008; Waldfogel 1998).

On one hand, fertility delay and access to more resources should enable women in professional occupations to maintain greater continuity of employment and experience a smaller wage penalty. On the other hand, women in professional occupations are often described as having extensive work-family conflict because of long hours of work and intense parenting and employer demands (Stone 2007; Blair-Loy 2003). Women in these occupations who scale back their work hours or re-enter after a career break may experience career penalties and a significant wage cut (Epstein el al. 1999). As such, the wage gap between mothers and non-mothers in professional occupations could be significant.

This research will examine variation in the wage gap between mothers and non-mothers in 20 occupation groups. Furthermore, the wage gap will be analyzed by the age and timing of women's children. The poster will display the average earnings gap between mothers and non-mothers in earnings per year and as a percent for 20 occupation groups, showing which occupations have a larger or smaller earnings gap. Additional figures will also display the wage gap by occupation and age of children. These figures will show which occupations are associated with an earnings penalty or earnings bonus based on the timing of children. This research will use data from the 2013 American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS provides detailed demographic, social, economic, and housing data obtained from final interviews of approximately 3.5 million households per year. Because of its large sample size, the

ACS can provide more reliable estimates of small or specific populations (e.g., mothers of preschoolers, occupation groups).

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