

Who Opts Out? Labor Force Participation among Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White Mothers in 20 Occupations

Liana Christin Landivar

Industry and Occupation Statistics Branch
Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division
U.S. Census Bureau¹

Maryland Population Research Center
University of Maryland, College Park

Abstract

Although most mothers are currently in the labor force, mothers' labor supply varies by race and ethnicity. However, most of the discourse on mothers' employment, particularly recent media coverage and research on mothers opting out of the labor force, focuses on the experiences of White women in managerial and professional occupations. I address the lack of diversity in the opt-out discussion by comparing the prevalence of opting out of the labor force and scaling back on work hours among Asian, Black, Hispanic and White mothers in 20 occupations using data from the 2009 American Community Survey. Although mothers of all racial and ethnic backgrounds are more likely to opt out when they have young children, opting out is more prevalent among White mothers. Racial and ethnic disparities are particularly salient when examining work hours. White and Asian mothers are more likely to scale back compared with Black mothers who do not appear to scale back at all when they have children. This study provides evidence to suggest that the opt-out discourse surrounding mothers' employment has not been sufficiently nuanced and that policy solutions that are based on the experiences of

¹ The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.

women in managerial and professional occupations are likely to fall short of meeting the needs of most women.

I. Introduction

In recent years, mothers' employment has garnered considerable media and academic scrutiny. Lisa Belkin (2003), in a popular article published in *The New York Times*, claims that women are increasingly opting out of the fast track to stay at home with their children, framing these decisions in the context of "choice." Several recent books and articles address this claim by detailing the experiences and challenges of mothers in managerial and professional occupations. However, an important limiting factor to this research is its focus on affluent, educated, mostly White, married women (e.g., Epstein et al. 1999; Blair-Loy 2003; Stone 2007). These insightful studies provide admirable detail on the work-family time bind, however, their generalizability remains limited due to their small sample sizes and their exclusive focus on women in managerial and professional occupations whose experiences may not be representative of all women.

Joan Williams (2010) critiques the lack of diversity in the opt-out debate and the disproportionate focus on managerial and professional workers because women in these occupations may not face the same employment barriers that working class women face. Working class women have less access to employment flexibility, are more likely to work nonstandard work hours, are at increased risk of mandatory overtime, have lower earnings, lack employment benefits, and are less likely to work off-site. These structural employment differences merit expanding the opt-out discussion to a much wider range of women to have a fuller grasp of the work-family challenges and potential solutions. To the extent that women are

occupationally segregated by race and ethnicity, these structural employment inequalities will further manifest themselves as racial and ethnic disparities in women's employment.

This study addresses the lack of diversity in the opt-out discourse by comparing the prevalence of opting out of the labor force and scaling back on work hours among Asian, Black, Hispanic and White mothers in 20 occupations.² These 20 occupations represent the full spectrum of occupations – from managerial and professional occupations to service, office, construction, and production occupations. Data come from the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS), the largest household survey in the United States. The ACS provides sample sizes that are large enough to carry out a nationally representative study of mothers' employment by race and ethnicity in 20 occupations. I find that opting out is more prevalent among White mothers than among Asian, Black, and Hispanic mothers. Racial and ethnic disparities are particularly salient when examining work hours. White mothers are significantly more likely to scale back than Hispanic mothers when they have preschool children, particularly in managerial and professional occupations.³ Black mothers do not appear to scale back when they have preschool children. Employment flexibility and household resources play an important role in these disparities. White mothers are disproportionately likely to be in an occupation where they may be able to negotiate working a reduced schedule. Higher family income may also provide White and Asian women with the option to cut back on their work hours.

² Federal surveys now give respondents the option of reporting more than one race. Therefore, two basic ways of defining a race group are possible. A group such as Asian may be defined as those who reported Asian and no other race (the race-alone or single-race concept) or as those who reported Asian regardless of whether they also reported another race (the race-alone-or-in-combination concept). The body of this paper (text and figures) shows data using the first approach (race alone). Use of the single-race population does not imply that it is the preferred method of presenting or analyzing data. The Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches. In the analyses presented here, "White" refers to the non-Hispanic White population. The term "non-Hispanic White" refers to people who are not Hispanic and who reported White and no other race. The Census Bureau uses non-Hispanic Whites as the comparison group for other race groups and Hispanics. Because Hispanics may be any race, data in this report for Hispanics overlap with data for racial groups.

³ Asian mothers are not statistically different from White and Hispanic mothers.

I examine how gender, race, ethnicity, and class influence the labor supply of Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White mothers of preschoolers with an intersectional framework. First, I examine trends in women's labor force participation by race and ethnicity. Second, I situate this study within intersectional theory. After a discussion of my research questions and choice of data and methods, I provide a descriptive overview of the likelihood of opting out and the degree of scaling back among Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White women. I assess whether differences in human capital and household composition or occupational segregation explain differences in labor supply. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of current family policies and occupational segregation on the mothering and work experiences of non-White women.

II. Trends in Women's Labor Force Participation by Race and Ethnicity

Although most mothers are currently in the labor force, patterns of mothers' labor force participation vary by race and ethnicity. Recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that 62 percent of Black women, 60 percent of White women, and 59 percent of Hispanic women were employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011). There has been some convergence over time, but the differences are longstanding trends and are greater among mothers. Using decennial census data since 1970, Spain and Bianchi (1996) show that Asian and Black mothers have high rates of labor force participation, followed by White women, and Hispanic women who are the least likely to be in the labor force. Although the dominant discourse on motherhood focuses on an "idealized model of motherhood, derived from the situation of the white, American, middle-class," this model has not always been attainable or desirable by all women (Glenn 1994, p.3). Black mothers have traditionally had higher rates of labor force participation and have challenged the social construction of work and family as conflicting roles (Collins 1994).

Over the course of the 20th century, the likelihood of employment shifted from less privileged groups to those with higher levels of human capital. The most highly educated women have benefitted from increased market opportunities incentivizing employment. This shift in likelihood of employment to women with higher educational attainment is an important contributing factor to racial and ethnic disparities in women's employment rates (England et al. 2004). Some of the differences in labor force participation rates have also been attributed to differences in household structure and composition. For instance, a larger proportion of Black and Hispanic households are mother-only households (Kreider and Elliott 2009; Casper and Bianchi 2002). Mothers in mother-only households are more likely to be employed (Kreider and Elliott 2009), perhaps out of economic necessity to sustain the household. On the other hand, Hispanic mothers have higher fertility rates (Spain and Bianchi 1996), have children at a younger age (Fram and Kim 2008), and start their children in center-based child care at later ages than White, Black, or Asian mothers (Fram and Kim 2008). These factors combined may depress Hispanic women's labor supply.

There are also differences in how the presence of a child affects mothers' work hours. Omori and Taana Smith (2010) find that having a child reduces White mothers' work hours by about 3 hours per week but it does not affect work hours among Black and Hispanic mothers. Occupational segregation may account for some of these disparities in work hours. Black and Hispanic mothers are disproportionately likely to be in service occupations, while White and Asian mothers are disproportionately likely to be in managerial and professional occupations. Managerial and professional occupations typically require more human capital investment resulting in higher opportunity costs for labor force exit and tend to have more schedule flexibility, which may accommodate scaling back (Hilgeman 2010). To the extent that

occupations are racially and ethnically segregated, scale-back options may be more restricted for Black and Hispanic women.

III. Theoretical Background

Research on mothers' employment patterns needs to consider women's intragroup diversity, as cultural, familial, and structural forces shape women's mothering experiences and expectations. Women's experience of mothering and labor force participation is deeply intertwined with their gender, racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds. The occupational opportunities available to them, household financial, domestic, and interpersonal support, and human capital attainment play vital roles in shaping if and when women have children and how they reconcile labor supply with carework. These various facets affecting women's mothering and labor supply are best understood in an intersectional framework. Intersectionality provides the framework to analyze how multiple identities intersect and interact, recognizing variation in advantage and power among women (Baca Zinn and Dill 2001).

When analyses of mothers' employment are not sufficiently nuanced by race, ethnicity, and class, significant constraints may be overlooked. This has important practical applications. For instance, some studies have argued for pushing for work-family benefits in elite occupations, in hopes that gains made in those occupations would then be extended to the working class (Worley and Vannoy 2001). It could be argued that any gains in work-family policy are beneficial to working women, but there is the strong possibility that because of significant structural differences in employment, gains made at the forefront may not trickle down to working class occupations as expected. This study seeks, not only to "give voice" to working class and non-White women, but to draw out the implications of neglecting to include a diverse

sample of women in the opt-out debate (Choo and Ferree 2010). The overemphasis on the experiences of White, middle- to upper-middle class women will result in undercoverage of work-family issues and will not yield solutions that benefit all women. This study shows that because of the significant variation in occupational concentration and in personal and household resources, research and policy responses need to consider the range of potential opportunities and constraints facing women of different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds.

IV. Research Questions and Contributions

This study is among the first to examine racial and ethnic differences in opt-out and scale-back patterns by major occupational groups. Most recent studies on opting out are based on the experiences of White women in managerial and professional occupations, limiting their generalizability to working class, non-White women. This study builds upon compelling qualitative studies of women's work-family experiences that explicitly call for the extension of their research to include non-White women and more "typical" workers (Blair-Loy 2003, Stone 2007). I provide such analyses here, by testing their claims using a nationally representative sample. I address the following questions:

1. Are White and non-White women equally likely to opt out of the labor force when they have preschool children?
2. Do White and non-White women scale back on hours of work when they have preschool children?
3. To what extent does human capital, household composition, and occupational segregation account for differing opt-out and scale-back patterns?

V. Data

Data for this study come from the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is the largest household survey in the United States and the large sample permits analyses of women's employment by race, ethnicity, and occupation with statistical precision. The sample consists of women ages 18-54 who are currently employed or who have had a job in the last five years ($N = 67,043,294$). Occupational information is gathered for the person's current job, if the person is employed, or her last job if she is not employed but had a job in the last five years. This provides the data necessary to examine work hours and labor force participation of women who are either presently employed or who were recently in an occupation but have since left the labor force.

To measure human capital I include educational attainment and earnings. Measures of household composition and family resources include presence and age of own children, marital status, and family income. Control variables include age, presence of a person 65 years and older in the household, school enrollment, industry, and class of worker. Because a larger percentage of Asian and Hispanic women are born outside of the United States and recency of migration may affect employment patterns, I include period of entry in the models. Descriptive statistics and reference categories for all variables in the models are provided in Table 1.

VI. Methods

To account for the nested structure of the data and the complexity of the analyses, I use hierarchical logistic models and hierarchical linear models to assess labor force participation rates (opting out) and work hours (scaling back) across 20 occupations. Models include 20 occupations to be able to explore differences at a more detailed occupational level while still

retaining a large enough sample size within each racial and ethnic group. I run separate models by race and ethnicity to be able to ascertain differences between mothers and non-mothers of the same racial and ethnic background and to more readily isolate the “child effect” on work hours and labor force participation among otherwise similar women.

Individual characteristics in both sets of analyses are grand-mean centered, with the exception of parental status. Estimates can be interpreted as the odds ratio of being in the labor force for a woman without children who is at the mean on all characteristics in the hierarchical logistic models or the average work hours for a woman without children who is at the mean on all characteristics in the hierarchical linear models. To estimate the effect of parenthood, one would add the effect of having a preschool- or school-aged child to the estimate.

The hierarchical logistic models used to assess labor force participation rates are based on the full sample of women ages 18-54 who have been employed in the past 5 years. Because earnings are only collected for the past 12 months, I create a predicted earnings measure based on age, educational attainment, 4-digit occupation, race, and ethnicity that is applied to women whose most recent job was between 1 and 5 years ago. While the predicted earnings measure yields a slight underestimate among Black, Hispanic, and White women (see Table 1), sensitivity analyses do not yield large differences in results.⁴ The hierarchical linear models used to assess work hours are based on a subset of women, those employed in the last year, because work hours are only available for the current or most recent job held in the past 12 months. As the models are already restricted to the past 12 months, predicted earnings are not necessary for these analyses.

⁴ The larger discrepancy for Asian women may be due to their smaller sample size. I expect a lower mean for predicted earnings to the extent that women who have not been employed in the past 12 months may have lower earnings potential, on average. Results are robust to the exclusion of predicted earnings.

VII. Results

Results indicate that White mothers are the most likely to opt out of the labor force when they have preschool children (see Tables 2 and 3). Asian, Black, and Hispanic mothers are less likely to opt out (see Figure 1). Racial and ethnic disparities appear to increase when examining work hours (see Figure 2). White and Asian mothers show a much greater degree of scaling back, particularly in managerial and professional occupations.⁵ Hispanic mothers scale back very little if they are in the labor force (marginally more in managerial and professional occupations).⁶ Black mothers do not appear to scale back when they have children, even among Black mothers in managerial and professional occupations.

White mothers are nearly 3 times as likely to opt out of the labor force when they have preschool children, compared to Hispanic mothers who are twice as likely to opt out and Asian and Black mothers who are 1.6 times as likely to opt out. Having a school-aged child does not appear to affect the labor force participation of mothers, except for a small increase among Asian mothers. Results suggest that women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds opt out at higher rates when they have young children and then reenter the labor force as their children get older, working fewer hours. Having preschool- and school-aged children appears to reduce working hours by a similar magnitude. While women with school-aged children are about as likely to work as non-mothers, mothers work shorter hours, on average, regardless of the age of their children. The magnitude of scaling back differs by race and ethnicity. White mothers scale back the largest number of hours – about 3 hours per week when they have preschool children. Asian

⁵ Estimates for White and Asian mothers are not statistically different.

⁶ Estimates for Asian and Hispanic mothers are not statistically different.

mothers scale back about 2 hours, while Hispanic mothers scale back about 1 hour.⁷ Black mothers do not appear to scale back when they have children (see Table 4).

Human Capital Attainment

Differences in human capital attainment explain some of the variability in opting out and scaling back. Asian women are disproportionately likely to obtain a college degree or higher level of education which is associated with a higher risk of opting out of the labor force among Asian women. Conversely, higher levels of education increase labor force attachment among Black, Hispanic, and White women. Higher levels of educational attainment are associated with scaling back among all women. Because women with higher levels of education are more likely to be in a managerial and professional occupation, they may have greater access to employment flexibility and other employer benefits enabling them to reduce their work hours.

Higher earnings are associated with lower odds of opting out and working longer hours. To the extent that Black and Hispanic women earn significantly less than their Asian and White counterparts, this may provide less of an incentive to remain in the labor force or work longer hours. However, Black women appear to remain in the labor force and maintain their work hours despite lower earnings. Asian and White women face greater opportunity costs for opting out and scaling back because they would forego larger salaries. However, the results indicate that White women are the most likely to opt out. Though racial and ethnic differences in labor supply are larger without controlling for earnings, additional factors are at work. Next I will consider the effects of migration, household composition, and occupational segregation.

⁷ Work hours among Asian mothers are not statistically different from White or Hispanic mothers.

Migration

Among the groups studied here, Asians and Hispanics have the largest percentage of international migrants.⁸ International migration may result in less country-specific human capital and more language barriers, both of which may depress women's labor force participation. Based on results in Tables 3 and 4, international migration appears to reduce labor force attachment among Asian women, particularly among recent migrants, while international migration increases labor force attachment among Hispanic women after they have been in the U.S. for more than 5 years. The negative effect of migration on Asian women's labor force participation generally diminishes the longer they have been in the U.S. This may be partially explained by expanded social networks (e.g., links established with immigrant communities) and a change in human capital skills among more recent entrants. Recent migrants, particularly those arriving from South East Asia, have entered with fewer job skills, are more occupationally segregated, and experience higher levels of poverty (Võ 2001).

Recent Hispanic migrants also have slightly higher odds of opting out than native-born Hispanics, though the trend quickly reverses among those who have been in the U.S. for more than 5 years. In an excellent analysis of Hispanic women's labor force participation, Kahn and Whittington (1996) found that even though the returns to education among foreign-born women are weaker and the language barriers can be substantial, foreign-born Hispanics have higher rates of labor force participation despite these limitations. Self-selection into migration and lower household income may encourage Hispanic women to enter and remain in the labor force.

⁸ Because of significant diversity among Asian and Hispanic subgroups (e.g., immigration status, reason for migration, region of migration, access to social networks and immigrant communities, entrepreneurship, human capital), finer categorizations would be ideal to reflect such diversity. However, the sample is not sufficiently large to examine subgroups by detailed occupation.

Household Composition

Hispanic women are the most likely to have preschool- and school-aged children in the household, which contributes to reduced labor force participation among Hispanic women.

White women are the least likely to have a preschool child or a person over the age of 65 in the household. This may present fewer competing demands for their time, as results indicate that having children and persons over the age of 65 in the household increases the odds of opting out among White women. Living with a person over the age of 65 may suggest greater caregiving responsibilities among White women compared with Asian women who are more likely to be employed if they live with someone over the age of 65. Asian women, perhaps through an expanded notion of family, may be able to rely on kin for the provision of childcare, as having an elder in the household may facilitate the employment of Asian women.

Asian and White women are more likely to be married and to live in households with much higher family income, both of which may facilitate the option to opt out and scale back. Opt-out odds are higher for married women among all except Black women. Scaling back is only marginally associated with marital status. Higher family income is associated with higher odds of opting out and with working reduced hours among all women. Being married appears to facilitate the decision of whether or not to be employed, while family income is associated with whether and how much women work. On both counts, Black women have fewer options, as they are the least likely to be married (only 28 percent are married) and have the lowest average family income (\$58,000) compared with Asian women at the high end of the distribution with 62 percent married and family income of \$108,800.

In sum, Black women have the least access to household resources to facilitate opting out or scaling back. Hispanic women also lack access to household resources to facilitate such options, which reduces their odds of opting out or scaling back, but are also disproportionately likely to have children which increases the odds of opting out and scaling back. White women have greater access to household resources but fewer caretaking responsibilities to create demand for opting out or scaling back. Finally, Asian women have the greatest access to household resources and the presence of a person over the age of 65 appears to be an asset, enabling them to remain employed.

Occupational Segregation

Women remain highly racially and ethnically segregated across occupations. White and Asian women are disproportionately likely to be employed in managerial and professional occupations, while Black and Hispanic women are overrepresented in service and production occupations. In addition to the disparity in earnings across these occupations, the disparity in workplace benefits, schedules, and flexibility may be an important reason why employment patterns differ by race and ethnicity. Managerial and professional occupations are more likely to have flexible hours and telework options and enjoy greater access to health and parental leave benefits (Hilgeman 2010; Boushey 2008). Employers invest more into recruiting and training managerial and professional employees, and are more likely to offer incentives for their retention. This may provide women in these occupations with some ability to negotiate for reduced work hours.⁹ Here, I show that Asian and White women in managerial and professional occupations are more likely to be able to scale back (see Figure 2), and their overrepresentation

⁹ Although see Blair-Loy 2003, Stone 2007, and Epstein et al. 1999 indicating that women in managerial and professional occupations face intense pressure to work full-time schedules and may feel “pushed out” of the labor force if they do not live up to organizational expectations of full-time work commitment.

in managerial and professional occupations may explain some of the racial and ethnic disparities in scaling back.¹⁰

Service and production occupations, with an overrepresentation of Black and Hispanic hourly workers, provide little employee flexibility and are more likely to require on-site work. Irregular and unpredictable schedules make obtaining child care difficult (Enchautegui-de-Jesus 2009) and workers may not be eligible for parental leave or other benefits that would increase compatibility between work and family obligations. If employees are eligible for benefits, they may be subject to a substantial waiting period, and high turnover may keep them ineligible for benefits for long periods of time (Lambert 2009). Because these occupations require less extensive training, employers may be less inclined to offer benefits and work schedule flexibility to retain workers. This lack of flexibility may extend to women's ability to negotiate reduced hours. As my results indicate, scaling back is, indeed, less common in non-managerial and professional occupations.

Nonstandard work schedules are also more common in non-managerial and professional occupations. Recent work by Harriet Presser and Brian Ward (2011) indicates that Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to work nonstandard and non-day schedules. Although this creates family strain and marital instability, Blacks and Hispanics may be able to share caretaking with a spouse or partner by working full-time at different hours or on different days. These findings would be consistent with lower rates of opting out and scaling back among Black and Hispanic mothers but cannot be measured here because of a lack of information on work schedules.

¹⁰ Although Asian and White women are more likely to scale back, reductions in work hours are small and they typically retain full-time schedules.

VIII. Discussion

Although having a preschool child increases all women's odds of opting out, only a minority of women opt out of the labor force. Those who do opt out are more likely to be White. Among women remaining in the labor force, some scale back on work hours when they have children under 18 in the household. Scaling back is limited in number of hours (3 hours or less per week) and is restricted to particular subgroups — primarily Asian and White women in managerial and professional occupations.

These labor supply differences may be bolstered by differences in levels of human capital, household resources, and occupational distribution. Furthermore, these variables do not have the same effect across racial and ethnic group. Take for example educational attainment. While higher levels of educational attainment reduce the odds of opting out among Black, Hispanic, and White women, higher levels of educational attainment is associated with increased odds of opting out among Asian women. This indicates that we cannot assume a similarity of effect of human capital and household composition across racial and ethnic groups. Factors that may increase labor supply for Hispanic women may decrease labor supply among Asian women (see Table 2). We also need to consider that labor supply is not linear and factors that reduce opting out may not be the same factors that reduce scaling back. For instance, while having a school-age child does not appear to increase the odds of opting out, it does significantly reduce hours of work among Asian, Hispanic, and White women.

Overall, Black women exhibit remarkably strong labor force attachment. At the other end of the spectrum, White women's labor supply is the most sensitive to the presence of children. White women are much more likely to opt out and to scale back hours of work when they have

children. Asian women are less likely to opt out than White women but take advantage of human capital, household resources, and the greater flexibility of managerial and professional occupations to scale back. Hispanic women, with greater caretaking demands and lower earnings, may find it more difficult to remain in the labor force. However, if they remain employed, they are less likely to have the flexibility to scale back on hours of work in the occupations in which they are most strongly represented.

IX. Conclusions

Mothers' labor supply differs by racial and ethnic group and can be bolstered or depressed based on personal and household characteristics, as well as occupational segregation. White women have higher odds of opting out and scale back the most hours when they have preschool children. Black women, on the other hand, are much less likely to opt out and do not scale back when they have children. Asian and Hispanic women lie at the middle of the spectrum. Asian women are less likely to opt out than White women but scale back a similar number of hours. Hispanic women are also less likely to opt out than White women and are unlikely to scale back very much if they remain in the labor force. These patterns of labor supply are associated with women's earnings potential, availability of household resources, and occupational structure, providing varying levels of work-family support.

Prior studies on opting out examine the choices and constraints of White women in managerial and professional occupations (Epstein et al. 1999; Blair-Loy 2003; Stone 2007). The results presented here illustrate that opting out and scaling back differ significantly by occupation and by race and ethnicity. Furthermore, important human capital attributes, such as level of education, do not have the same effect on mothers' labor supply for women of all racial

and ethnic backgrounds. Stone (2007) acknowledges that the results of her study are of limited generalizability and calls for studies to fill in the gaps. I agree with her conclusion and use the results presented here to show that it is critical that we extend our analyses to be able to appropriately generalize findings to the non-White population. In addition to further refinement of analyses by race and ethnicity, we must pay attention to the influential role of occupation on women's labor supply behavior. Occupational setting plays a crucial role in shaping White and non-White women's access to work-family benefits. Studies that focus on women in managerial and professional occupations will likely understate many of the day-to-day challenges women experience. Challenges such as lack of parental or sick leave, unpredictable schedules, or unavailability of child care at nonstandard hours.

The results of this research have practical implications. Because work-family challenges differ by occupation, work-family solutions need to address the specific needs of women in different occupations. Strategies that are based on the experiences of more privileged women may not reflect the reality experienced by the majority of women and may not be applicable to their worksites, limiting their effectiveness. The growing employer-employee interest in telework and flexible schedules may be easier to achieve in some occupations over others, potentially creating a gap in coverage for employer work-family policy between those who have access to these benefits and those who do not. This may lead to different employee work-family responses, such as scaling back or opting out in the absence of, or in response to, available work-family policies. These differing responses may create a multitude of positive and negative unintended consequences which should be evaluated. Further compounding occupational differences is the presence of significant racial and ethnic occupational segregation. White, Asian, Black, and Hispanic mothers are concentrated in different occupations. To the extent that

occupations lend themselves to different work-family strategies, this may compound racial and ethnic disparities in women's employment and career options and trajectories in the absence of equitable work-family policy solutions. I show that research on mothers' labor supply and work-family policy proposals need to consider potential differences by race, ethnicity, and class and adopt an intersectional approach.

References

- Baca Zinn, Maxine and Bonnie Thornton Dill. 2001. "What Is Multiracial Feminism?" Pp. 17-19 in Gender Mosaics: Social Perspectives, edited by Diana Vannoy. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company.
- Belkin, Lisa. 2003. "The Opt-Out Revolution." *The New York Times*, October 26.
- Boushey, Heather. 2008. "Family Friendly Policies: Helping Mothers Make Ends Meet." *Review of Social Economy* 66(1): 51-70.
- Blair-Loy, Mary. 2003. Competing Devotions: Career and Family among Women Executives. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2011. *The Employment Situation – August 2011*. Available online: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>.
- Casper, Lynne M. and Suzanne M. Bianchi. 2002. Continuity and Change in the American Family. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Choo, Hae Yeon and Myra Marx Ferree. 2010. "Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research: A Critical Analysis of Inclusions, Interactions, and Institutions in the Study of Inequalities." *Sociological Theory* 28(2): 129-149.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1994. "Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing About Motherhood." Pp. 45-65 in Mothering: Ideology, Experience and Agency, edited by Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Enchautegui-de-Jesus, Noemí. 2009. "Challenges Experienced by Vulnerable Hourly Workers: Issues to Consider in the Policy Conversation." Pp. 207-217 in Work-Life Policies, edited by Ann C. Crouter and Alan Booth. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.
- England, Paula, Carmen Garcia-Beaulieu, and Mary Ross. 2004. "Women's Employment among Blacks, Whites, and Three Groups of Latinas: Do More Privileged Women Have Higher Employment?" *Gender & Society* 18(4): 494-509.
- Epstein, Cynthia Fuchs, Carroll Seron, Bonnie Oglensky, and Robert Sauté. 1999. The Part-Time Paradox: Time Norms, Professional Life, Family, and Gender. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fram, Maryah Stella and Jinseok Kim. 2008. "Race/Ethnicity and the Start of Child Care: A Multi-level Analysis of Factors Influencing First Child Care Experiences." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 23:575-590.

- Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 1994. "Social Constructions of Mothering: A Thematic Overview." Pp. 1-29 in Mothering: Ideology, Experience and Agency, edited by Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hilgeman, Christin. 2010. "Parenthood and Women's Work Hours in 92 Occupations." U.S. Census Bureau working paper. Available upon request.
- Kahn, Joan R. and Leslie A. Whittington. 1996. "The Labor Supply of Latinas in the USA: Comparing Labor Force Participation, Wages, and Hours Worked with Anglo and Black Women." *Population Research and Policy Review* 15:45-73.
- Kreider, Rose M. and Diana B. Elliott. 2009. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2007." Current Population Reports, P20-561. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.
- Lambert, Susan J. 2009. "Making a Difference for Hourly Employees." Pp. 169-195 in Work-Life Policies, edited by Ann C. Crouter and Alan Booth. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press.
- Omori, Megumi and Danielle Taana Smith. 2010. "Working and Living: The Effects of Family Responsibilities and Characteristics on Married Women's Work Hours in the USA." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* Winter: 43-55.
- Presser, Harriet B. and Brian W. Ward. 2011. "Nonstandard Work Schedules Over the Life Course: A First Look." *Monthly Labor Review* 134(7): 3-16.
- Spain, Daphne and Suzanne M. Bianchi. 1996. Balancing Act: Motherhood, Marriage, and Employment Among American Women. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Stone, Pamela. 2007. Opting Out? Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Võ, Linda Trinh. 2001. "Asian American Women: Immigration, Labor Force Participation, and Activism." Pp. 279-289 in Gender Mosaics: Social Perspectives, edited by Diana Vannoy. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company.
- Williams, Joan C. 2010. "The Odd Disconnect: Our Family-Hostile Public Policy." Pp. 196-219 in Workplace Flexibility: Realigning 20th Century Jobs for a 21st Century Workforce, edited by Kathleen Christensen and Barbara Schneider. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Worley, Jennifer Campbell and Dana Vannoy. 2001. "The Challenge of Integrating Work and Family Life." Pp. 165-173 in Gender Mosaics: Social Perspectives, edited by Diana Vannoy. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Women 18-54 by Race and Ethnicity

	Asian		Black		Hispanic		White, Non-Hispanic	
Total (weighted)	3,245,560		8,815,735		9,426,257		43,861,356	
Percent ¹	4.9		13.4		14.1		65.4	
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.
Percent opting out ²	13.2	0.20	11.4	0.13	13.2	0.12	13.3	0.06
Usual weekly work hours ³	37.0	0.07	36.8	0.04	35.6	0.04	35.8	0.02
<i>Individual characteristics</i>								
Age	36.6	0.04	35.8	0.02	34.6	0.02	36.8	0.01
Marital status:								
Married	61.8	0.28	28.0	0.19	46.1	0.18	53.5	0.09
Not married [ref]	38.2	0.28	72.0	0.19	53.9	0.18	46.5	0.09
Educational attainment:								
High school or lower [ref]	22.8	0.24	37.3	0.18	52.7	0.18	28.3	0.08
Some college	25.0	0.26	42.3	0.18	32.1	0.16	38.0	0.08
College degree or higher	52.1	0.29	20.5	0.16	15.1	0.13	33.7	0.08
Enrolled in school	17.0	0.18	20.4	0.18	15.2	0.12	16.8	0.05
Yearly earnings (\$)	36,730	473	25,275	96	21,000	79	30,299	48
Predicted earnings (\$)	22,586	82	23,282	47	20,239	39	29,350	23
Period of entry:								
U.S.-born [ref]	21.5	0.23	89.8	0.12	53.5	0.20	96.1	0.03
Less than 5 years ago	11.2	0.19	1.2	0.05	4.3	0.08	0.6	0.01
Five to 10 years ago	13.8	0.21	2.1	0.06	9.2	0.12	0.7	0.01
Ten to 20 years ago	25.6	0.27	3.4	0.08	16.1	0.15	1.4	0.02
More than 20 years ago	28.0	0.24	3.5	0.06	16.8	0.15	1.3	0.01
Class of worker:								
Private [ref]	79.7	0.22	77.1	0.18	80.5	0.14	77.4	0.06
Government	11.9	0.17	19.5	0.16	12.5	0.11	15.5	0.05
Self-employed	8.0	0.17	3.3	0.07	6.8	0.10	6.9	0.04
Industry:								
Agriculture	0.3	0.03	0.2	0.02	1.9	0.05	0.7	0.01
Construction	0.7	0.04	0.6	0.03	1.2	0.04	1.7	0.02
Manufacturing	9.8	0.16	5.7	0.10	8.8	0.09	6.3	0.04
Wholesale	2.5	0.09	1.1	0.04	2.4	0.07	1.9	0.02
Retail [ref]	11.6	0.17	12.6	0.15	13.7	0.12	13.1	0.05
Transportation and utilities	2.0	0.08	3.6	0.07	2.5	0.06	2.2	0.02
Information	2.2	0.08	2.4	0.06	1.6	0.05	2.1	0.02
Finance	7.9	0.15	6.9	0.10	6.3	0.08	8.0	0.04
Professional and scientific	11.6	0.16	8.8	0.11	9.9	0.11	10.2	0.04
Education and health care	29.8	0.26	36.6	0.20	26.1	0.16	33.7	0.06
Arts and food services	11.2	0.19	11.1	0.12	15.2	0.15	11.4	0.05
Other services	7.3	0.16	3.9	0.07	7.1	0.09	5.1	0.03
Public administration	2.9	0.08	6.5	0.10	3.2	0.06	3.6	0.02
<i>Household characteristics</i>								
Presence of person 65+	12.3	0.22	7.7	0.11	7.3	0.11	5.1	0.04
Presence and age of own children in household:								
Has at least 1 preschool-aged child (ages 0-5)	20.4	0.24	19.0	0.16	25.1	0.17	17.8	0.06
Has school-aged children only (ages 6-17)	26.7	0.26	28.6	0.20	31.7	0.18	26.6	0.06
No children under 18	52.9	0.31	52.4	0.21	43.2	0.21	55.6	0.07
Yearly family income (\$)	108,869	473	58,019	238	63,817	240	93,227	138

¹Race and ethnicity totals will not add up to 1.00 as the racial category "other" is excluded from display.

²Percentage of women who were employed at some point in the previous 5 years but are no longer employed.

³Usual weekly work hours of women who are currently employed or were employed in the past 12 months.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey

Table 2: Factors Associated with Opting Out and Scaling Back by Race and Ethnicity

	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
Likelihood of opting out	-	-	+	+
Amount of scaling back	+	-	-	+
Factors increasing labor force attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of school-age child • Presence of person 65+ in household • Earnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marital status (married) • Higher educational attainment • Earnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher educational attainment • International migration (more than 5 years ago) • Earnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher educational attainment • Earnings
Factors reducing labor force attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of preschool child • Marital status (married) • Higher educational attainment • International migration • Family income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of preschool child • Presence of person 65+ in household • Family income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of preschool child • Marital status (married) • Family income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of preschool child • Presence of person 65+ in household • Marital status (married) • Family income
Factors increasing work hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International migration • Earnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of preschool child • Earnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International migration • Earnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of person 65+ in household • Earnings
Factors reducing work hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of preschool child • Presence of school-age child • Higher educational attainment • Family income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of person 65+ in household • Higher educational attainment • Family income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of preschool child • Presence of school-age child • Marital status (married) • Higher educational attainment • Family income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of preschool child • Presence of school-age child • Higher educational attainment • Family income

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey

Table 3: Likelihood of Opting Out among Women 18-54 by Race and Ethnicity: Odds Ratios From Hierarchical Logistic Regression Models

	Model 1 ¹ Asian	Model 2 ¹ Black	Model 3 ¹ Hispanic	Model 4 ¹ White, Non-Hispanic
<i>Dependent variable: labor force participation (1= not in labor force)</i>				
Intercept	0.07*** (0.00)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.01)
Age	1.00*** (0.00)	1.01*** (0.00)	1.01*** (0.00)	1.01*** (0.00)
Presence of own children in household				
Preschool-age children	1.64*** (0.18)	1.65*** (0.13)	2.10*** (0.13)	2.73*** (0.13)
School-age children	0.79* (0.08)	1.01 (0.07)	0.96 (0.05)	1.02 (0.02)
Presence of person 65+ in household	0.76*** (0.00)	1.13*** (0.00)	1.01*** (0.00)	1.28*** (0.00)
Married	1.56*** (0.01)	0.89*** (0.00)	1.42*** (0.00)	1.28*** (0.00)
Education				
Some college	1.13*** (0.01)	0.87*** (0.00)	0.90*** (0.00)	0.88*** (0.00)
College degree or higher	1.33*** (0.01)	0.54*** (0.00)	0.81*** (0.00)	0.76*** (0.00)
Enrolled in school	2.01*** (0.01)	1.50*** (0.00)	1.46*** (0.00)	1.59*** (0.00)
Period of entry				
Less than 5 years ago	2.66*** (0.02)	0.88*** (0.01)	1.04*** (0.01)	2.24*** (0.01)
Five to 10 years ago	1.25*** (0.01)	0.64*** (0.01)	0.98*** (0.00)	1.09*** (0.01)
Ten to 20 years ago	1.13*** (0.01)	0.68*** (0.01)	0.87*** (0.00)	0.94*** (0.00)
More than 20 years ago	1.21*** (0.01)	0.60*** (0.01)	0.82*** (0.00)	0.88*** (0.00)
Class of worker				
Government	0.84*** (0.01)	0.97*** (0.00)	0.90*** (0.00)	0.81*** (0.00)
Self-employed	0.99 (0.01)	1.20*** (0.01)	1.03*** (0.00)	0.89*** (0.00)
Log of earnings	0.63*** (0.00)	0.76*** (0.00)	0.72*** (0.00)	0.69*** (0.00)
Log of family income	1.22*** (0.00)	1.15*** (0.00)	1.15*** (0.00)	1.21*** (0.00)
Industry (13)	Included ²	Included ²	Included ²	Included ²
Likelihood ratio chi-square	67.46	88.64	82.46	61.33
N (unweighted)	38,090	77,670	97,203	542,896

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests). Standard errors are in parentheses. These models are estimated using residual pseudo-likelihood estimation.

¹Random effects are allowed to vary by 20 occupations. Random effects included are intercept and presence and age of children. Coefficients for all 20 occupations are available upon request.

²Coefficients for 13 industries are available upon request.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey

Table 4: Weekly Work Hours among Women 18-54 by Race and Ethnicity: Hierarchical Linear Models Estimates

	Model 1 ¹ Asian	Model 2 ¹ Black	Model 3 ¹ Hispanic	Model 4 ¹ White, Non-Hispanic
<i>Dependent Variable: Usual weekly work hours</i>				
Intercept	36.97*** (0.26)	37.71*** (0.21)	37.28*** (0.28)	37.17*** (0.28)
Age	0.03*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	-0.03*** (0.00)
Presence of own children in household				
Preschool-age children	-1.67*** (0.32)	0.36* (0.14)	-0.72*** (0.14)	-2.66*** (0.25)
School-age children	-1.55*** (0.24)	-0.15 (0.08)	-0.72*** (0.13)	-2.01*** (0.18)
Presence of person 65+ in household	0.19 (0.16)	-0.33** (0.12)	-0.05 (0.11)	0.35*** (0.06)
Married	0.28 (0.15)	0.09 (0.08)	-0.18** (0.07)	0.09* (0.04)
Education				
Some college	-1.43*** (0.17)	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.34*** (0.08)	-0.34*** (0.04)
College degree or higher	-1.34*** (0.17)	-0.57*** (0.11)	-0.64*** (0.11)	-1.23*** (0.04)
Enrolled in school	-4.03*** (0.19)	-1.99*** (0.09)	-3.03*** (0.10)	-3.05*** (0.05)
Period of entry				
Less than 5 years ago	1.75*** (0.23)	-0.04 (0.30)	1.86*** (0.16)	1.94*** (0.20)
Five to 10 years ago	0.99*** (0.20)	-0.29 (0.22)	0.67*** (0.12)	0.41* (0.16)
Ten to 20 years ago	0.19 (0.17)	-0.24 (0.17)	0.53*** (0.09)	-0.08 (0.11)
More than 20 years ago	0.09 (0.17)	-0.57*** (0.16)	0.41*** (0.09)	-0.55*** (0.11)
Class of worker				
Government	0.03 (0.22)	-0.76*** (0.11)	-0.64*** (0.12)	0.65*** (0.05)
Self-employed	3.12*** (0.21)	2.61*** (0.19)	-0.53*** (0.13)	0.76*** (0.06)
Log of earnings	4.79*** (0.06)	4.59*** (0.04)	4.92*** (0.03)	5.41*** (0.01)
Log of family income	-0.22*** (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.12*** (0.01)	-0.35*** (0.01)
Industry (13)	Included ²	Included ²	Included ²	Included ²
Variance Components				
<i>Null model</i>				
Intercept	6.74**	7.79***	7.47**	11.85***
Residual	9188.44***	8533.09***	8771.51***	7677.15***
<i>Full model</i>				
Intercept	0.87**	0.71**	1.42**	1.53***
Residual	6909.92***	6331.85***	6399.71***	5273.9***
N (unweighted)	32,303	66,187	80,842	463,969

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests). Standard errors are in parentheses. These models are estimated using restricted maximum likelihood estimation.

¹Random effects are allowed to vary by 20 occupations. Random effects included are intercept and presence and age of children. Coefficients for all 20 occupations are available upon request.

²Coefficients for 13 industries are available upon request.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey

Figure 1: Opting Out by Occupation for Women With a Preschool Child and Employed in the Last 5 Years Compared to Women Without Children

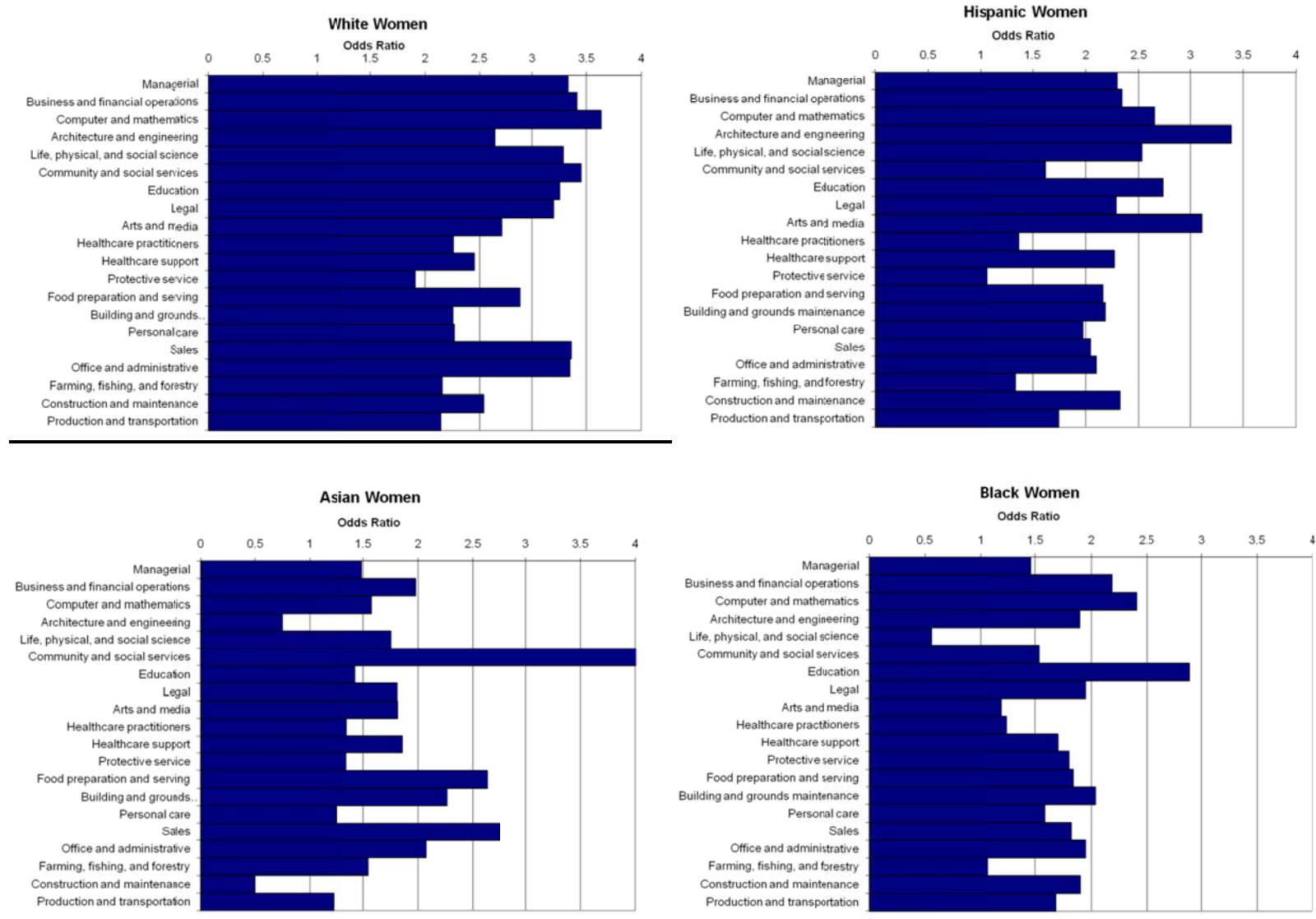


Figure 2: Scaling Back by Occupation for Women With a Preschool Child and Employed in the Last Year Compared to Women Without Children

