ABSTRACT

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Motherhood wage penalties, which refer to the income loss experienced by women after having children, have been extensively documented by family and work scholars. Though several key aspects of motherhood penalties have been explored, findings on racial effects have been nuanced; additionally, recent shifts in work patterns and family formation behaviors call for revisiting this phenomenon with contemporary data. In this article, I explore motherhood penalties by race and marital status using data from the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, extending Glauber's (2007) model to include cohabiting individuals. Findings illustrate a wage penalty of about 11% for white women with at least three children, and no significant penalties for Black mothers. Further, wage penalties for cohabiting appear to function similarly to marriage for white women, with a penalty of about 5% compared to their non-cohabiting counterparts. These results suggest that motherhood penalties are shifting for younger cohorts of women.

Motherhood Penalties by Race and Marital Status

by
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INTRODUCTION

Cultural norms and organizational structures both contribute to ongoing discrimination against women within workplaces; part of this discrimination is predicated upon their social and familial roles as mothers (Budig and England 2001; Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007). The motherhood wage penalty refers to the income loss experienced by women after they become parents. Mothers are presumed less reliable, competent, and committed (Correll et al. 2007), which influences hiring practices, rates of pay, promotion, and retention. The motherhood penalty also contributes to the larger pay gap between men and women and can partially explain the persistent poverty in female-headed households (Budig and England 2001).

Since Budig and England (2001) coined the term in their initial analysis of this phenomenon, research has explored multiple aspects of this wage penalty, including job characteristics (Anderson, Binder, and Krause 2003; Yu and Kuo 2017), social class (Budig and Hodges 2010; England 2005b), timing of motherhood (Miller 2011; Taniguchi 1999; Amuedo-Dorantes and Kimmel 2005), and transnational comparisons (Aisenbrey, Evertsson, and Grunow 2009; Gangle and Ziefle 2009). Findings have largely centered human capital measures and normative discrimination against mothers as key predictors of motherhood penalties, especially because American occupational and time norms are not compatible with cultural expectations of mothers. Further, the largest motherhood wage disadvantages have been documented among the most socially advantaged women – particularly white, married women in middle- and upper-middle-class jobs (Glauber 2007; England 2016; Winkle and Fasang 2020), illustrating a relationship between the norms of motherhood, marriage, and class.

Likewise, studies of race and motherhood penalties have tended to show more severe wage penalties for white mothers – who tend to work higher-paying jobs – overall, indicating a

racial component within work-based outcomes for mothers (Glauber 2007; Winkle and Fasang 2020). Glauber (2007) examined motherhood penalties by race and marital status interactions using data from the 1979 NLSY, finding consistent wage penalties for both marriage and motherhood among white women in the sample, while for Black women – who typically experience marriage premiums – only those who were married with at least two children paid motherhood wage penalties. While this illustrates the unique racial outcomes for women with similar marital and/or motherhood statuses, these results were derived from individuals born in the 1960s, who entered the workforce in the mid-1970s. Since that time, jobs and families have changed dramatically: employers have embraced new production methods, resulting in rising job insecurity, lower wages, and more reliance on part-time jobs (Kalleberg 2009; Wilmers 2018). This period has also witnessed shifts in family formation behaviors, including rises in cohabiting and delayed childbirth (Martin 2021). Researchers have begun to use the more recent NLSY 1997 data to examine wage gaps. Winkle and Fasang (2020) focus on parenthood more generally to examine effects on wage over the life course, finding that only white women with three or more children suffer consistent motherhood penalties. This contrasts with Glauber's (2007) finding that white women pay a motherhood penalty regardless of number of children. Black mothers, however, pay wage penalties that are concentrated for 5-10 years around age 30 and later attenuate (Winkle and Fasang 2020), a finding that also contradicts Glauber's (2007) analysis with older data. This study, however, does not use Glauber's (2007) strategy of analyzing interaction effects with marital status.

In this study, I draw from the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97) to analyze variations by race and family configuration, including cohabitation, among contemporary women. I begin by investigating Glauber's (2007) model pertaining to race and

marital status to determine whether findings hold for individuals born approximately 20 years later. I also extend the model to attend to the influence of cohabitation – which has becoming increasingly common – to investigate whether it incurs penalties in a manner consistent with marriage, or operates somewhat differently based on the values, norms, and social rewards surrounding marriage.

Controlling for job-related variables, education, age, and number of children, I find a wage penalty of about 11% for white women with at least three children, while finding no significant penalties for Black mothers. This contradicts both of Glauber's (2007) key findings, in which all white women and married Black mothers with at least two children pay motherhood penalties. By marital status alone, white women appear to experience marriage premiums while there are no significant differences for Black women, another finding that contradicts Glauber (2007) and may reflect changes in both family formation patterns and economic trends. Further, I find that cohabiting appears to function similarly to marriage in terms of wage penalties for women, indicating a penalty of about 5% compared to their non-cohabiting counterparts.

In the next section, I discuss the theoretical background of the motherhood wage penalty. I then describe the data and outline my analytic strategy, noting key control variables. Finally, I present my empirical findings that point to wage penalties for both motherhood and certain marital statuses, synthesize these findings with recent economic and family trends, and discuss avenues for future research beyond the analytic approaches employed within this article.

BACKGROUND

Parenthood requires a workload that is invisible, devalued, or both, generally related to domestic labor. However, theories of care work argue that raising a child disproportionately exploits women (England 2005a). Mothers, along with others who do care work for children,

theoretically produce a "product" – a responsible, thoughtful, productive adult – and society relies on these well-formed individuals. Yet mothers are not compensated for this work and will never know many of the people who benefit from their labor (Budig and England 2001). Further, scholars have argued that care work is devalued more broadly because of its association with women, generally women of color (England 2005a).

This gendered pattern is reflected most directly within the nuclear family model, which places women as the primary caregivers in households and could explain why the motherhood penalty is typically worse for married women (Budig and England 2001; Glauber 2007). White, middle-class marriage norms, particularly in the nuclear family model, encourage an "intensive mothering" model requiring the utmost dedication to children (Hays 1996; Dow 2016); this affects wages both directly and indirectly by reducing commitments to work and access to opportunities at work (Correll et al. 2007; Rosette, Ponce de Leon, Koval, and Harrison 2019). Because cultural ideologies are embedded in the lack of structural support for parents in the US (Boeckmann, Misra, and Budig 2014), norms surrounding motherhood influence women's choice of work, continuity of employment, and career focus, which also encapsulate the gendered nature of work partially responsible for the pay gap (England 2005b).

Employers also discriminate against women (including non-mothers) based on norms regarding motherhood and associated stereotypes. Women, and especially mothers, are viewed as less competent, less committed, and worthy of lower pay (Rosette et al. 2019; Correll et al. 2007). Additionally, the meanings attached to motherhood and the definition of a "good" employee are not compatible – nor were they designed to be (Correll et al. 2007). Parents who "opt out" of the labor market for family demands fare significantly worse in hiring prospects and wage penalties (Weisshaar 2018). Yet even mothers who "prove" themselves committed and

competent – usually by limiting family commitments in favor of work responsibilities – are seen as less likable and more hostile, highlighting the normative discrimination embedded in workplace structures (Benard and Correll 2010).

The Motherhood Wage Gap

The link between motherhood and wages is among the most well-documented phenomena in gender and work literature. Controlling for employment experience and work interruptions, Budig and England (2001) found a wage penalty of about 5 percent for women that increased with each child, coining the term *motherhood penalty*. Subsequent studies have measured variations in the motherhood penalty by earnings (Budig and Hodges 2010; England 2005b), by job aspects (Anderson, Krause, and Binder 2003; Yu and Kuo 2017), and even by country (Aisenbrey, Evertsson, and Grunow 2009; Gangle and Ziefle 2009). The penalty is persistent, with little change over time despite apparent increases in equality (Avellar and Smock 2003; England 2005b; Jee, Misra, and Murray-Close 2019). Further, delaying motherhood can increase earnings nearly ten percent per year, with college-educated and professional women enjoying the largest advantage in delayed motherhood (Miller 2011; Taniguchi 1999). These older mothers also have a reduced or non-existent motherhood penalty (Amuedo-Dorantes and Kimmel 2005).

More specific research has examined the motherhood penalty as it varies by wage level and skill. Anderson, Binder, and Krause (2003) posit that medium-skill workers – operationalized as high school graduates – suffer most because they tend to work jobs with regular office hours, which results in less schedule flexibility. Some scholars, in contrast, argue that the motherhood penalty is most severe for low-wage women but persists at all levels (Budig and Hodges 2010); it is worth noting that this has been challenged, with Killewald and Bearak

(2014) finding that it is women closer to the median of the wage distribution paying the largest penalties. England et al. (2016) argue that highly skilled, highly paid women have the most severe wage penalty, but it should be noted that this effect is not distinct when controlling for experience. In contrast, Glauber (2018) posits that the motherhood wage penalty was eliminated for high-earning women, but not for low-earning women, within the last decade.

Overall, findings surrounding the motherhood penalty are mixed and have focused on a variety of factors spanning both individual characteristics (Budig and England 2001; Anderson et al. 2003; Glauber 2007; Taniguchi 1999) and work-related factors (Yu and Kuo 2017; Budig and Hodges 2010; England et al. 2016; Glauber 2012; Stone and Hernandez 2013; Yu and Hara 2021; Baumle 2009; Kmec 2011). Other findings have shown that motherhood penalties vary by parity and only persist for mothers with 3 or more children (Kahn et al. 2014), while meta-analyses of motherhood penalties have illustrated stability over time (Jee, Misra, and Murray-Close 2019; Leonard and Stanley 2020). There is a general agreement that increases in human capital investment have likely reduced the wage gap between mothers and childless women more recently (Jee et al. 2019; Yu and Kuo 2017).

RACE, FAMILIES, AND MOTHERHOOD PENALTIES

Scholars have also documented variations by race, family formation behaviors, and marital status. Though racial outcomes have varied by study, the most apparent differences are between white and Black mothers (Glauber 2007), which appear to partially reflect differences in family formation behaviors and socioeconomic standing. Previous research has indicated that Black women experience a marriage wage premium that grows steadily throughout the years, even when controlling for childbearing and work experience. This contrasts the experience of white women, who suffer a consistent marriage penalty (Glauber 2007). However, Dow (2016)

found that her sample of middle-to-upper-class Black mothers adopt *integrated mothering*, which includes ideals and practices such as financial independence, working as a duty, and an extended childrearing system. Because Black women have historically been viewed as laborers, not mothers, work has been an integral part of Black motherhood in ways that are not reflected in white mothers (Branch 2011; Dow 2016), which could explain the established marriage premium (Glauber 2007). Overall, Black women are significantly less likely to be married than white women and may rely less on their partners due to the persistent incarceration and reduced labor market outcomes of Black men (Cheng 2016). Further, hegemonic ideals of motherhood center white women and reward conformity to nuclear family arrangements, which have often been unattainable for Black women, especially those in the working class (Branch 2011). Therefore, while Black women may have a marriage premium, their likelihood of marriage is greatly reduced, and this "premium" still places their income well below white women (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021).

In addition to being less likely to marry, Black women are significantly more likely to be single mothers than white women and have slightly more children, on average (Reid 2002). Family circumstances are typically closely related to labor market activity for women (England 2005b) and these racial patterns in family dynamics could help further explain differences in the motherhood penalty by race. While research has also suggested that Black women bring more economic resources to the household than white women (Cheng 2016), this is because Black women have *had* to work, both because their male partners were rarely able to financially support them (Branch 2011:97; Reid 2002). Thus, work and motherhood are not separate ideologies for Black women (Dow 2016), but family needs may inform the *type* of work these women access. At the family level, Black households are most likely to be headed by women

regardless of marital status (2019 American Community Survey). Historical trends have set a precedent for racial differences in both labor market activity and family formation that has carried over into current systems of oppression (Branch 2011), especially since households headed by women are at significant risk of poverty (National Women's Law Center 2021; US Census Bureau 2020). Given the differences in family formation behaviors, including likelihood of marriage, number of children, and work-family balance, marital status and number of children are key explanatory factors in motherhood wage penalties as they vary by race. Further, rates of cohabiting in lieu of marriage have increased steadily in the last several decades and overall rates of marriage have declined (Sassler and Lichter 2020).

Existing literature indicates that among married and single women alike, race shapes wage penalties tied to motherhood, but findings have been highly nuanced. Previous research has suggested that Black women suffer less of a motherhood penalty than white women, regardless of marital status (Glauber 2007), perhaps because they generally earn less to begin with. For example, Glauber (2007) finds that for white women, all married, unmarried, and some divorced mothers pay a wage penalty, while for Black women, only married mothers with more than two children pay wage penalties. This implies the existence of racial differences despite shared marital statuses, with white mothers generally paying more of a motherhood wage penalty. As established, however, there have been dramatic shifts in jobs and families that would impact younger cohorts of women, including increased job insecurity and reliance on part-time work, stagnated wages, delayed childbirth, and increased rates of cohabiting (Kalleberg 2009; Wilmers 2018; Martin 2021; Horowitz, Graf, and Livingston 2019).

Some studies suggest that the wage penalties for Black mothers have grown over time, perhaps surpassing that of white mothers (Pal and Waldfogel 2016; Cheng 2016). In an

exhaustive intersectional study of parenthood penalties and premiums, Winkle and Fasang (2020) find that the only group who experience larger penalties over the life course than black or Hispanic women are white mothers with three or more children. While white women's penalties seem to be more consistent (Winkle and Fasang 2020), they also tend to work higher-paying jobs and thus have more to "lose," highlighting an important context within findings. This provides insight on racial differences in parenthood premiums or penalties with contemporary data, but does not consider the role of marital status, which varies greatly by race (Glauber 2007; Cheng 2016). Conversely, given that Black women are more likely to work lower-level jobs (Reid 2002; Branch 2011) and that economic shifts have made employment increasingly insecure (Kalleberg 2009), Black women's motherhood penalties may have remained consistent or become smaller, reflecting lower starting wages.

Racial differences in the marriage penalty may also be influenced by differences in family formation, including change over time. While cohabitation rates are fairly consistent by race, it has become an increasingly common alternative to marriage, with most adults aged 18-44 having cohabitated at some point in their lives (Horowitz, Graf, and Livingston 2019). Marriage is still most prevalent among white individuals, yet declining overall, which could influence marriage premiums or penalties by racial group. In practice, cohabitation can function similarly to marriage – sharing a living space, combining finances or health insurance, raising children, etc. Thus, cohabiting could cause wage penalties similar to marriage. Given these key work and family formation shifts, a more contemporary analysis of motherhood penalties is necessary. I expect to find several shifts in marital and motherhood wage penalties, including a penalty for cohabitation.

THE CURRENT STUDY

In this study, I assess whether prior findings regarding implications of race and family structure for the motherhood wage penalty hold in analysis of more recent data, and how findings are impacted in models accounting for cohabitation. I use data from the 1997 NLSY to examine the effects of marital status and number of children on the wages of Black and white women, using two key models. The first model differentiates among married, never married, and previously married women, while the second model considers married, previously married, cohabiting, and never married, non-cohabiting individuals.

Data

I draw data from Rounds 1 through 18 of the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth dataset (NLSY97), instead of the 1979 NLSY often used in previous work. Doing so captures a representative sample of a contemporary cohort, more accurately reflecting recent shifts in work and family arrangements and allowing for a re-examination of racial motherhood penalties. The NLSY97 is a representative national probability sample that measured responses annually for Rounds 1-15 and biannually thereafter, providing a longitudinal source for examination of many social variables. Women in the sample range from age 12 to 16 at the time of the first round, putting them at ages 30 to 34 in Round 18. There are challenges associated with a contemporary analysis, mostly because the women in this sample are in their early-to-mid-thirties in the most recent year available, which does not capture the experiences of women who became mothers after that age. However, as Yu and Kuo (2017) note, previous findings using the NLSY79 remained relatively consistent even when spanning over a decade between data (Glauber 2012). It is thus reasonable to assume that the following findings are a fair estimate of any motherhood penalties faced by the women in this sample. Fixed-effect regression

models are standard for examining the motherhood wage penalty because they control for unobserved heterogeneity. I limit the sample to women only, excluding those who are unemployed or self-employed. I also exclude Hispanic women from the sample, focusing exclusively on Black and white women. Of the 4,385 women interviewed, my analysis includes 3,418 respondents, for a sample of 62,563 person-year observations.

Measures

Table 1 illustrates the proportion of women in each marital status – married, never married, cohabiting, and previously married. Since key differences in the sample are based on race and being married, Table 2 shows the means and standard errors of each variable separated both by race and marital status. The outcome variable in the present analysis, *log hourly wage*, is the natural log of respondents' hourly compensation at their current or most recent employee-type job. Using this hourly compensation variable accounts for forms of income, such as tips, that may not be captured by hourly wage alone, providing a more holistic estimate. Likewise, taking the natural log of hourly income controls for skewness and allows for interpretation of percent changes. The main predictor variable is motherhood, captured by the presence of biological children under the age of 18 in the household and analyzed categorically within the regression models (*1 child, 2 children, 3 children, and 4 children*).

Table 1. Proportion of Women in Marital Status and Race Categories: NLSY 1997-2018

Variables	**All Women** M (SE)	**White** M (SE)	**Black** M (SE)
Married	0.30 (.002)	0.38 (.002)	0.16 (.002)
Divorced, separated, widowed	0.05 (.048)	0.05 (.001)	0.05 (.001)
Never married	0.50 (.002)	0.40 (.002)	0.68 (.003)
Cohabiting	0.15 (.001)	0.17 (.002)	0.12 (.002)
White	0.66 (.002)		
Black	0.34 (.002)		
N of person-years	62,563	40,065	22,498
N of persons	3,418	2,252	1,166

Marital status is categorized differently by model. In models replicating the analysis conducted by Glauber (2007), respondents are classified as either *married, never married,* or single (*divorced, widowed, or separated*). Models extending this study to account for cohabitation, add a fourth category (*cohabit*), which accounts for all individuals, including those who have been married, who are not married but live with a romantic partner. In those models, *never married* includes individuals who marked themselves as never married and not cohabiting.

Overall, approximately 50% of women have never married and are not cohabitating, while 30% are married. This is a key difference from Glauber's (2007) analysis of the NLSY79, in which most women (55%) were married, possibly reflecting generational differences in family formation behaviors in addition to the younger ages of the women in this sample – the women in Glauber's (2007) sample range from ages 17 to 47, while all women in the current analysis are under the age of 40. Among Black women, 68% report being never married and not cohabiting, while only 40% of white women report the same. Likewise, 38% of white women are married compared to only 16% of Black women, illustrating racial variation in family patterns that has been established in previous research (Reid 2002; Cheng 2016).

Table 2. Sample Statistics by Race & Marital Status: NLSY 1997-2018

	White M (SD)				Black M (SD)			
Variables	Married	Never married	Divorced, separated, widowed	Cohabiting	Married	Never married	Divorced, separated, widowed	Cohabiting
Average hourly wage	23.37 (37.40)	12.91 (20.79)	18.36 (15.69)	17.23 (35.65)	21.82 (42.94)	12.67 (20.80)	17.92 (11.61)	14.43 (13.98)
1 child	0.24 (.004)	0.09 (.002)	0.25 (.011)	0.22 (.005)	0.22 (.008)	0.22 (.003)	0.25 (.015)	0.27 (.009)
2 children	0.30 (.004)	0.03 (.001)	0.30 (.011)	0.14 (.004)	0.31 (.008)	0.13 (.003)	0.27 (.015)	0.19 (.008)
3 children	0.12 (.003)	0.01 (.001)	.09 (.007)	0.06 (.003)	0.17 (.007)	0.08 (.002)	0.23 (.014)	0.14 (.007)
4+ children	0.05 (.002)	.005 (.0005)	0.03 (.004)	0.02 (.001)	0.12 (.006)	0.04 (.002)	0.11 (.011)	0.09 (.006)
Average work exp., in years	11.25 (4.4)	11.12 (4.39)	10.66 (4.74)	10.88 (4.43)	11.4 (4.12)	10.29 (4.64)	10.88 (4.2)	10.14 (4.62)
Part time work	0.28 (.004)	0.51 (.004)	0.25 (.011)	0.33 (.006)	0.20 (.007)	0.34 (.004)	0.25 (.015)	0.27 (.009)
Average job tenure (in weeks)	198.4 (195.8)	91 (116)	190.6 (210.5)	129.3 (151.6)	191.1 (198.9)	108.9 (141.6)	168.7 (189.3)	128.7 (151.7)
Education: High school diploma	0.38 (.004)	0.51 (.004)	0.43 (.012)	0.45 (.006)	0.47 (.009)	0.52 (.004)	0.44 (017)	0.52 (.01)
Education: Bachelor's	0.28 (.004)	0.17 (.003)	0.13 (.008)	0.18 (.005)	0.18 (.007)	0.09 (.002)	0.13 (.012)	0.10 (.006)
Average age	30.2 (5.06)	22.7 (5.35)	31.5 (4.71)	27.1 (5.55)	30.6 (5.01)	25.5 (6.25)	31.9 (4.17)	27.6 (5.48)
N of person-years	13,145	15,511	1,665	6,334	3,046	14,182	838	2,504

Table 2 displays sample statistics by race and marital status. Following Glauber (2007), I include a number of control variables relating to employment and wages, including work experience, occupation, job tenure, part-time work, age, and educational attainment. *Work experience* is defined by average number of weeks worked per year from 1997-2018. *Occupation* is defined by the 2002 US Census code and respondents are divided into 12 categories (see Table 3 for complete descriptive statistics). *Job tenure* is reflected by number of weeks worked in respondents' current employee-type position. *Part-time work* is measured by a dummy variable indicating that the respondent less than 35 hours per week (the reference category is full-time work of 35 hours or more per week), *age* is measured in years, and *education* is categorized by highest degree earned – none, GED, high school diploma, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, PhD, and professional degrees.

Table 3. Occupational Categories by Race: NLSY 1997-2018.

Occupational Categories	US Census Codes	White M(SD)	Black M (SD)
Manager, executive, upper-level administration	10-950	0.08 (.001)	0.05 (.001)
Scientists, engineer, technician	1000-1960	0.02 (.001)	0.009 (.001)
Social worker, teacher, educational employee	2000-2060, 2200-2550	0.08 (.001)	0.07 (.002)
Law, legal support	2100-2150	0.01 (.0004)	0.005 (.0005)
Entertainment, media, athletics	2600-2960	0.04 (.001)	0.01 (.0008)
Healthcare work, funerals	3000-3650, 4300-4460	0.08 (.001)	0.09 (.002)
Food prep, serving, cleaning	4000-4250, 7800-7850	0.13 (.002)	0.10 (.002)
Office, administration, sales, service	4500-5930	0.32 (.002)	0.36 (.003)
Farming, fishing	6000-6130	0.004 (.0003)	0.006 (.0002)
Construction, maintenance, production	6200-7750, 7900-9750	0.05 (.001)	0.04 (.001)
Military, protective service	9800-9840, 3700-3950	0.01 (.0004)	0.02 (.001)
Unemployed	0	0.18 (.002)	0.23 (.002)
N of person-years		40,843	22,719

Analytic Strategy

I begin by applying a portion of Glauber's (2007) model to analyze motherhood penalties by race and marital status with more contemporary data from Rounds 1-15 of the 1997 NLSY. I then introduce changes to the model to attend to cohabitation, examining motherhood wage penalties for women who live with a romantic partner but are not married, to explore potential variation in wage penalties based on increasing rates of cohabiting (Sassler and Lichter 2020). Given these parameters, I estimate two separate two-way fixed models. Model 1 is expressed in the following form:

$$ln(compensation_{it}) = y_0 + y_1 NumberChildren_{it} + y_2 NeverMarried_{it} + y_3 DivorcedSeparatedWidowed + y_4 NeverMarriedxNumberChildren_{it} + y_5 DivorcedSeparatedWidowedxNumberChildren_{it} + y_6 WorkExperience_{it} + y_7 PartTimeWork_{it} + y_8 JobTenure_{it} + y_9 ProfessionalOccupation_{it} + y_{10} Education_{it} + y_{11} Age_{it} + y_{12} Year_{it}$$

where the outcome is the logged hourly compensation of person *i* (1, 2, 3…n) at time *t* (here measured by years 1997-2018); y_0 is the intercept; y_1 is the coefficient for motherhood, captured by number of live-in biological children under age 18; y_2 is the coefficient for never married individuals; y_3 reflects the coefficient for divorced, separated, or widowed individuals; y_4 is the interaction term for never married individuals and number of children; y_5 represents the interaction between number of children and divorced, separated, or widowed individuals; y_6 is the coefficient for work experience, measured by weeks worked per year; y_7 is the coefficient for part-time work, captured with a dummy variable; y_8 represents job tenure in weeks; y_9 is the coefficient for occupation; y_{10} reflects education level, measured ordinally; y_{11} is age in years; and y_{12} reflects sample year.

Model 2 follows a highly similar form, only adding a coefficient for cohabiting individuals and an additional interaction term for cohabiting and number of children. Since the NLSY97 oversampled some minority groups, I also estimate robust standard errors throughout the models.

FINDINGS

Results of Model 1 diverge from findings derived from the earlier wave of the NLSY. Prior research has indicated that white women tend to suffer marriage penalties while Black women have marriage premiums (Glauber 2007). However, results from the younger cohort of women in the NLSY97 illustrate no significant wage penalties or premiums for Black women by marital status alone. White women who have never been married or are single, contrary to

previous findings, appear to pay wage penalties of about 7% and 10%, respectively ($p<.05$). This contradicts Glauber's (2007) findings that white women pay a marriage penalty and may reflect outcomes reflected to both lower marriage rates and the general stagnation of paid wages, as I discuss below. Within Model 1, there are no clear motherhood penalties for Black women from these findings alone; however, only white women with at least three children pay a wage penalty, contradicting Glauber's (2007) findings where a consistent penalty was observed for white women. Further, as previous literature may suggest, the strongest association with wages for mothers are not tied to number of children, but to job-related variables: work experience, hours worked per week, job tenure, and professional occupations. Compared to those in managerial, executive, or upper-level administrative roles, both Black and white women in office or service positions pay a significant wage penalty, while white women in teaching or educational positions pay a penalty. Notably, the occupations with significant wage differences tend to reflect both feminized work and male-dominated jobs. Part-time white workers pay a wage penalty of about 4% compared to full-time workers ($p<.01$); for Black workers, the penalty is approximately 6% ($p<.001$). Education results in a wage premium of about 12% for both white and Black women ($p<.001$), while age creates a wage premium of about 5% for both groups ($p<.001$).

Table 4. Fixed-Effects Regressions of Women's Log Wages by Interactions Among Race, Number of Children, and Marital Status: NLSY 1997-2018.
**p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001*

	White	**Black**
Variables	b (SE)	b (SE)
1 child	0.03 (.022)	0.0008 (.064)
2 children	0.03 (.026)	0.005 (.07)
3 children	-0.10* (.04)	-0.06 (.085)
4+ children	-0.07 (.067)	-0.12 (.087)
Never married	-0.07*** (.02)	-0.07 (.058)
Divorced, separated, widowed	-0.10* (.039)	-0.09 (.10)
Interaction variables:		
Never married X 1 child	0.002 (.031)	0.01 (.064)
Never married X 2 children	-0.03 (.036)	-0.003 (.07)
Never married X 3 children	0.13* (.06)	0.004 (.083)
Never married X 4+ children	0.09 (.10)	0.05 (.082)
DSW X 1 child	0.04 (.053)	0.05 (.108)
DSW X 2 children	-0.003 (.06)	0.05 (.116)
DSW X 3 children	0.11 (.062)	0.18 (.124)
DSW X 4 children	0.09 (.105)	0.17 (.145)
Controls:		
Work experience	0.002*** (.000)	0.001** (.000)
Part time work	-0.04** (.013)	-0.06*** (.013)
Job tenure	0.0002*** (.000)	0.0003*** (.000)
Education	0.12*** (.007)	0.12*** (.01)
Age	0.05*** (.009)	0.05*** (.01)
Constant	-11.04* (4.53)	-8.56 (5.55)
R2	0.43	0.4
N of person-years	28,975	14,971
N of persons	2,188	1,128

These results illustrate that white women with at least three children suffer a wage penalty of about 10% compared to their non-parent counterparts. Interestingly, the only significant interaction term indicates a wage *premium* of about 13% for never married white women with at least 3 children. This suggests that the interaction of *never married* and *3 children* results in a wage increase for white women, whereas there are no comparable outcomes for Black women.

Table 5 illustrates findings from Model 2, which includes individuals who are unmarried and cohabiting. Again, white women who have never been married pay a wage penalty of about 9%, while cohabiting unmarried respondents pay a penalty of around 5% ($p<.05$). For Black women, those who are divorced, separated, or widowed pay a wage penalty of around 19% ($p<.05$), but no other marital status is associated with wage penalties or premiums; these findings suggest that a marriage premium still exists for Black women even in a contemporary sample. Motherhood penalties in this model are notably less significant than in Model 1 – even when controlling for cohabiting individuals and adding an interaction term with number of children, there are no penalties for white or Black mothers based on marital status and number of children alone. Interestingly, two interaction terms – *cohabiting X 3 children* and *previously married X 3 children* – result in wage premiums for white and Black mothers, respectively ($p<.05$). Job-related variables, again, seem to be the strongest predictors of wage outcomes for these women, particularly professional occupations and part-time work. For both groups of women, education also remains a significant predictor for wage outcomes, and age is associated with an approximate 5% wage premium for each year ($p<.001$). Overall, findings suggest that motherhood penalties for the NLSY97 cohort are comparatively lower than their NLSY79 counterparts (Glauber 2007).

Table 5. Fixed-Effects Regressions of Women's Log Wages by Interactions Among Race, Number of Children, and Marital Status (includes cohabiting individuals): NLSY 1997-2018.
**p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001*

	White	**Black**
Variables	b (SE)	b (SE)
1 child	0.029 (.022)	0.004 (.065)
2 children	0.034 (.026)	0.006 (.07)
3 children	-0.09* (.039)	-0.06 (.09)
4+ children	-0.07 (.067)	-0.121 (.088)
Never married	-0.085*** (.02)	-0.07 (.058)
Divorced, separated, widowed	-0.073 (.039)	-0.19* (.10)
Cohabiting	-0.045* (.022)	-0.04 (.062)
Interaction variables:		
Never married X 1 child	0.03 (.04)	-0.001 (.065)
Never married X 2 children	-0.06 (.05)	-0.02 (.069)
Never married X 3 children	0.12 (.065)	-0.01 (.082)
Never married X 4+ children	-0.018 (.109)	0.02 (.084)
DSW X 1 child	0.02 (.064)	0.11 (.105)
DSW X 2 children	-0.05 (.061)	0.10 (.113)
DSW X 3 children	-0.0003 (.067)	0.27* (.124)
DSW X 4 children	0.104 (.139)	0.28 (.148)
Cohabiting X 1 child	-0.028 (.032)	0.023 (.069)
Cohabiting X 2 children	-0.012 (.044)	0.035 (.075)
Cohabiting X 3 children	0.13* (.055)	0.050 (.094)
Cohabiting X 4 children	0.097 (.094)	0.076 (.099)
Controls:		
Work experience	0.003*** (.0004)	0.001** (.0004)
Part time work	-0.041** (.012)	-0.06*** (.013)
Job tenure	0.0003*** (.000)	0.0003*** (.000)
Education	0.12*** (.007)	0.12*** (.01)
Age	0.04*** (.009)	0.05*** (.013)
Constant	-10.67* (4.51)	-8.95 (5.56)
R2	0.42	0.40
N of person-years	28,975	14,971
N of persons	2,188	1,128

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I employ fixed-analysis regression analysis using panel data from the NLSY1997 to examine racial differences within the motherhood wage penalty. This analysis adds to the literature on the motherhood penalty in two ways: first, by assessing outcomes for this younger group of women who have faced different labor market conditions than their older counterparts from the NLSY1979, including stagnant wages, precarious work, and reduced public assistance informed by neoliberal ideals (Kalleberg 2009; Wilmers 2018). Second and more importantly, these models highlight new differences in the presence and severity of the motherhood wage penalty by race. In line with Glauber (2007), I find that Black mothers pay less wage penalties than white mothers. However, within this more contemporary sample, only white mothers with at least three children pay a wage penalty. Further, job-related variables, as one may expect, appear to be the strongest predictors of wage-related outcomes.

Implications

Theoretically speaking, the very concept of a motherhood *wage* penalty reflects a framing of discrimination within capitalist measures, which does not fully illustrate the normative discrimination occurring against mothers within multiple arenas of social life. Nonetheless, these findings suggest that motherhood penalties may have shifted some for this younger cohort of women, potentially due to the stagnation of wages and reduction of the middle class that has steadily occurred since the 1970s (Wilmers 2018). Further, research has suggested that wage penalties for high-income mothers have all but disappeared (Glauber 2018), while the wages of low-income workers have been consistently suppressed such that motherhood wage penalties may not be apparent. Another factor to consider is the increase in women choosing to delay marriage and childbirth (Martin 2021) and the younger ages of the women in the NLSY97, both

of which may mitigate the severity of motherhood penalties. Regardless, certain wage penalties based on motherhood or marital status are evident, providing a contemporary analysis of younger women and illustrating an ongoing relationship between family formation behaviors and wage outcomes.

Limitations

First and foremost, a key limitation of this article lies within the ability of fixed-effects analysis to measure outcomes related to unchanging demographic variables, such as race. This form of analysis was developed to control for unobserved heterogeneity and omitted variable bias within panel data (Hill et al. 2020), which is why it has been the standard approach for measuring wage penalties based on motherhood. FE analysis is best suited for time-variant measures, such as motherhood, because it examines outcomes using the individual as a control, thus limiting variation to within-unit analysis. In standard FE models, groups or characteristics that remain unchanged are omitted from the analysis (Hill et al. 2020). This undeniably poses an issue for comparing motherhood penalties by race, explaining some of the nuance within previous literature. Time invariance omitted from FE models also causes issues with external validity and statistical power, as the models may draw conclusions from a limited subset of the sample group (Hill et al. 2020). These methodological limitations are certainly present in the current analysis, where motherhood penalties are assessed *within* racial categories, not between.

Beyond the general limitations of the methodology employed here, there are certain limitations within the variables presented. The measures for motherhood, gender, and race are imperfect and rely on categorical operationalization, which does not always adequately reflect lived experiences. Motherhood is operationalized based on the presence of biological children under the age of 18, which excludes stepchildren and adopted children. Gender reflects

biological sex and was only noted in the initial 1997 survey, which means that the women in the sample are all assumed to be cisgender. Further, the sample here consists only of white and Black women, which does not account for mixed-race individuals or other persons of color.

Future Research

This analysis and previous research both indicate that human capital measures and job factors mitigate the effect of the motherhood wage penalty (Budig and England 2001; Jee et al. 2014; Yu and Kuo 2017), but evidence suggests that Black women face structural disadvantage in the labor market beyond what is offset by individual achievements, including an increased likelihood of working seasonal or temporary jobs (Reid 2002; Branch 2011). Many of these structural disadvantages are upheld by the same human capital measures that offset wage penalties, such as job tenure. For example, a person who has held many jobs with low tenure at each would likely be offered lower starting wages. Having multiple jobs in a short period could also lead to lower likelihood of being hired, as employers may assume that the applicant will leave the job quickly. Job tenure is typically necessary for wage raises but is simultaneously more difficult to achieve in temporary or low-paying jobs. Though pay raises for longevity would be the 'fairest' approach to reward workers with more tenure, this and other human capital measures also *normalize* discrimination by compounding structural disadvantage. While faced with less of a documented motherhood penalty overall, Black women are also granted less access to mitigating factors, creating additional vulnerabilities for their labor market and wage outcomes. Future research on this topic should focus on these "multiple jeopardies" (King 1988) associated with Black motherhood penalties.

Further, intersectional perspectives have established that motherhood itself is raced (Collins 2004; Woodard and Mastin 2005; Rosenthal and Lorber 2016; Branch 2011; Dow

2016). Much of the racialized nature of motherhood is reflected in how mothers are viewed by others (Rosenthal and Lorber 2016). For Black women especially, these assumptions and responses are informed by controlling archetypes, which include "mammies," "sapphires," "jezebels," and "welfare queens" (Collins 2000; Woodard and Mastin 2005), specific stereotypes that do not exist for white women. Stereotypes are often exaggerations of social realities, and black women do have slightly higher rates of childbirth, the lowest rates of marriage, and historically obstructed labor market opportunities (Branch 2011) that have created needs for public assistance. However, the motherhood wage penalties that have primarily been documented among white women could reflect discrimination related to motherhood that occurs outside of formal employment or creates structural obstacles to employment.

Acknowledgement of these racial differences has informed feminist theories of gender, particularly in reference to the traditional masculinities model (Connell 1995). The concept of *hegemonic femininity* best captures this raced, gendered, and classed model of womanhood (Hamilton et al. 2019), where some women benefit from their position within the matrix of domination (Collins 2004) that contributes to the oppression of others. Viewing motherhood through this framework highlights that common negative stereotypes about motherhood are most closely associated with Black, working-class women: for example, Black pregnant women are more likely to be assumed single and in need of public assistance than their white counterparts (Rosenthal and Lobel 2016). Such biases influence occupational outcomes on multiple levels, including prior to employment. Stereotypes are often used in hiring processes as a cheaper alternative to formal filtering processes. From this perspective, Black women are viewed as lazy, belligerent, aggressive, and mothers are assumed to be single (Ortiz and Roscigno 2009). Brown and Kennelly (1999) found that potential employers held racist stereotypical beliefs about Black

women and single motherhood, assuming future work-family conflicts *despite actual family status.* Further, Branch (2011) argues that employers believe Black women to be unreliable, inconsistent, or lacking "soft skills" (6) necessary for the service economy – the standards of which are based on hegemonic feminine norms not extended to Black women (Hamilton et al. 2019). Thus, Black women may be further subject to adverse occupational outcomes not fully represented by motherhood wage penalties. These precursors to motherhood wage penalties are difficult to capture with statistical methods but represent an important avenue for future research.

Conclusion

The present study provides a current analysis of motherhood wage penalties by race and marital status, highlighting recent family trends and structural changes. I utilize fixed-effects panel analysis to measure the wage outcomes associated with motherhood, various marital statuses, and the interaction terms of each for white and Black women. Both models explain roughly forty percent of the variation around the average wage, suggesting that there are contributing factors beyond those captured within this analysis of gendered and raced marital and motherhood penalties.

This work contributes to existing research in several important ways. First, using a contemporary cohort as the unit of analysis illustrates the persistence of a motherhood wage penalty among younger women. Additionally, this analysis incorporates cohabiting as a predictor variable, accounting for potential shifts in living arrangements tied to declining rates of marriage. Most importantly, these models indicate an ongoing wage penalty only for white women with at least three children, indicating a potential shift in contemporary motherhood penalties that should be pursued in subsequent research.

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