



Motherhood & competitiveness

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SODI, September 2018



Introduction

- 0 The “**motherhood gap**” (MG) refers to the differences in labor-market outcomes between **mothers and non-mothers**.
- 0 It accounts for **56% of the gender gap in the USA** (Juhn and McCue 2017), **60% in Sweden** (Angelov et al. 2016) and **80% in Denmark** (Kleven et al. 2018).
- 0 “**The greatest barrier to economic equality is children**” (Fuchs, 1988, p. 147).



Introduction

Traditional explanations for the MG:

- 0 Differences in human capital
 - 0 Division of labor in couples
 - 0 Discrimination
- 0 Traditional explanations, however, cannot explain **a substantial fraction of the gap** (e.g., Blau and Kahn 2017, Juhn and McCue 2017).

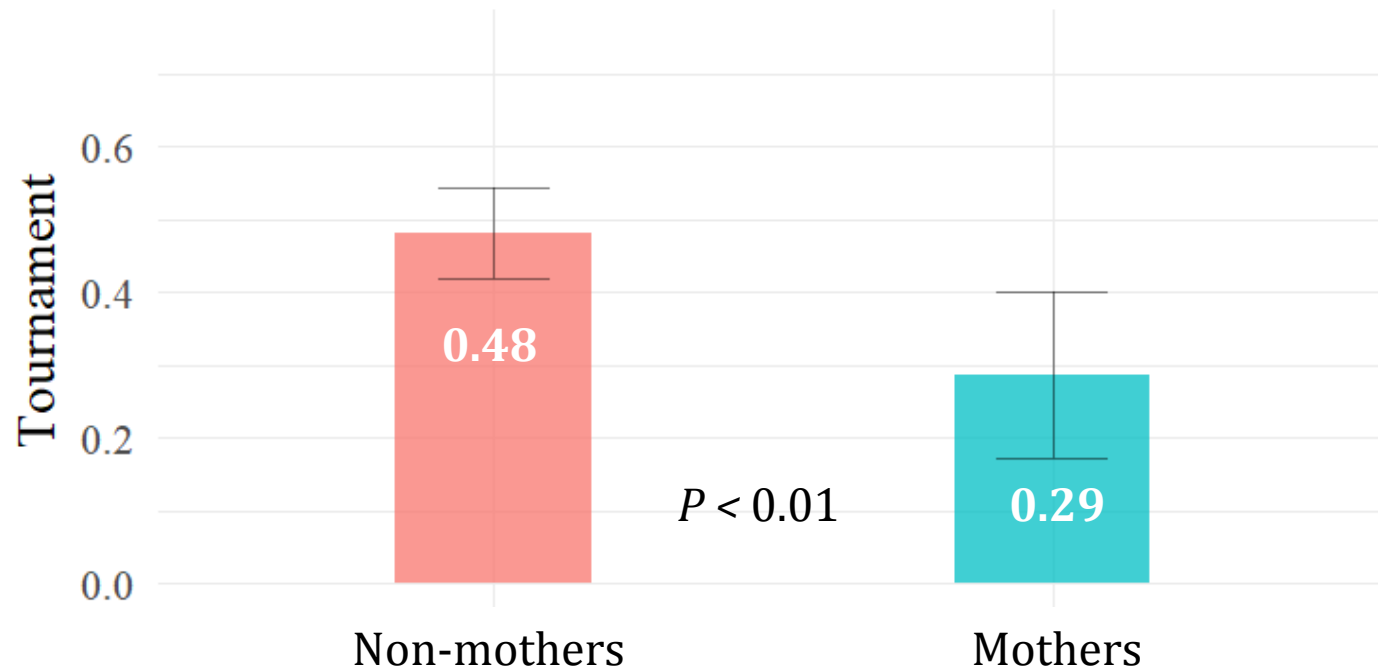
Research question

- 0 Do mothers avoid competing for compensation?
- 0 Evolutionary theories: competition has a reproductive cost for *mothers* – reduced likelihood of offspring survival (Rosvall 2013, Campbell 2013).
- 0 Social theories: gender norms – the father is the main ‘breadwinner’, whereas the mother is the main ‘caregiver’ (e.g., Bertrand et al. 2015).

Research strategy

- 0 Two studies measuring attitudes toward competition using the design developed by Niederle and Vesterlund (2007).
- 0 **Study 1:** We employ a sample of university students in which there is a **high fraction of mothers**: Emirati women ($N=306$).
- 0 This permits us to compare women at **similar stages in their lives** and from **similar socioeconomic backgrounds**.
- 0 We use a **classroom experiment** to control for the experimental environment and **avoid self-selection**.

Selection into competition

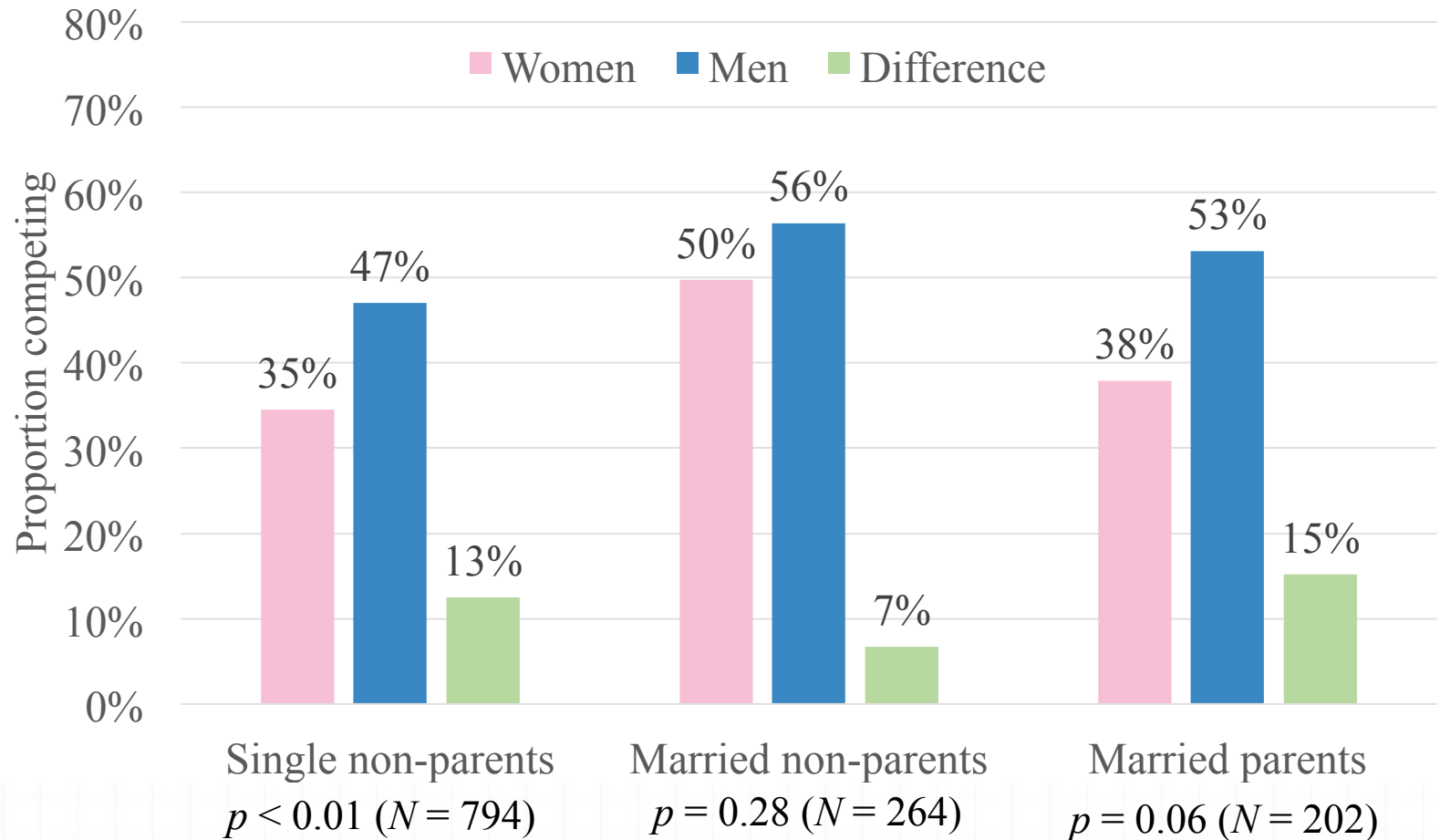


Errors show 95% confidence interval

Research strategy (cont'd)

- 0 **Study 2: replication** using an online experiment with **US and Canadian subjects** ($N=1,305$).
- 0 We also explore whether **fatherhood** is negatively associated with attitudes toward competition.

Selection into competition



Conclusion

- 0 We have provided the **first evidence** that motherhood is negatively associated with a willingness to compete.
- 0 We do not find evidence fatherhood has a similar effect.
- 0 Our findings have potentially **important policy implications**.
- 0 It could help explain the “**motherhood gap**” in labor markets.

Conclusion

- 0 Policies that target mothers may be more effective at closing the “gender gap” and promoting diversity than those targeting women in general.
- 0 More research is needed to understand the deeper reasons for the association between motherhood and the willingness to compete.



Thank you!

