



Divisions of Business and Family Responsibilities Among Women & Men Copreneurs in the Czech Republic & U.S.

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Focus, Definitions and Significance

- ▶ Compare divisions of labor and responsibilities in the business and family lives of copreneurs in the Czech Republic and United States
- ▶ Copreneurs: Romantic couples who own and operate businesses together
- ▶ Small businesses = firms with less than 100 employees
- ▶ Small businesses comprise significant components of the economy of both the CR and US and family businesses comprise a significant component of the small business sector.
- ▶ Copreneur couples provide a good point for starting to analyze the embeddeness of all businesses within the family.

Our Framework for Analysis

- ▶ Gender and entrepreneurial identities as ongoing constructions (West & Zimmerman 1987; Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio 2005).
- ▶ These identities emerge in social interactions located in the business, home and larger societal context.
- ▶ We examine how business, family, and gender are produced in these interactions.
- ▶ Recognize that businesses of all types are embedded in the context of families (Aldrich and Cliff 2003) but wish to use copreneur case studies to highlight the interplay between work-family dynamics

Why compare the Czech Republic & U.S?

- ▶ Different histories of business - Czech hiatus on privately owned businesses during Communism
- ▶ Gender relations - Mandatory history of work for Czech women during Communism
- ▶ Today, more generous State paid parental leave policies in CR than in US
- ▶ US: long and uninterrupted history of small business ownership
- ▶ No government provision for paid Family Leave in the U.S
- ▶ U.S. childcare costly; CR very limited availability for young children

CR Context

- ▶ Czech Republic experienced hiatus in business ownership during Communism until its end in 1989;
- ▶ Under Communism women expected to work outside the home but labor inequalities remained & double work day was norm
- ▶ Post-Communism ideal of women at home and re-familization policies (decrease childcare and extend family leave)
- ▶ Women continue as undervalued workers & undesirable workers
- ▶ Growth of new businesses and businesses sought by women for flexibility - women 30% of Czech Entrepreneurs
- ▶ Traditional gender division of labor still favored

US context:

- ▶ Long continuous ethos of small business ownership that was decreasing over US history and then began to rise again in the 1970s
- ▶ National Association of Women Business Owners (2013) estimates
 - ▶ 8.6 million firms owned by women (30% of all firms)
 - ▶ Contribute 14% of employment and 11% of business revenues
- ▶ US women also often seek entrepreneurship as an option for flexibility and freedom from discrimination
- ▶ Barriers: capital access for business women and inadequate parental leave and childcare support policies for working women
- ▶ Pew Research Center reports that 73% of American adults believe that the trend toward more women in workforce is a change for the better and 62% believe that a marriage in which the husband and wife both have jobs and care for house and children provides a more satisfying life

Methods

- ▶ Semi-structured interviews with snowball sample of copreneur couples:
 - ▶ 12 CR couples (2012)
 - ▶ 10 US couples (goal = 12) (2013-2014)
- ▶ Each business partner interviewed separately (35 minutes-1.5 hours)
- ▶ Varied ages, age/type business and family stage
- ▶ Heterosexual couples for now (hope to add same sex couples)
- ▶ Interviews taped, transcribed, and analyzed using NVivo software
- ▶ Drawing on narrative and storytelling methods, we keep in mind that the research interview setting frames the respondents construction of self, business and others.

Demographics

- ▶ 12 CR couples all of Czech origin (mostly from Prague)
 - ▶ Age 36-46 for men; 20-47 for women; Over 50% had university degrees
 - ▶ Employees 1-20; business age 3-23 years
 - ▶ 7 couples had children living with them; 4 couples had adult children several raised during business; 1 couple had no children
 - ▶ 4 couples had children working with them in the firm
 - ▶ Business types: internet/retail sales; creative product/services; prof services
- ▶ 10 US couples born in US (TX; AZ, Maryland)
 - ▶ Age 26-70 women; Ages 25-71 men; Over 50% had university degrees; Racially varied
 - ▶ Employees: 0-30; business age 1-37 years
 - ▶ 2 couples had children living with them; 7 couples had children that they raised during the business; 2 couples had no children
 - ▶ 4 involved their children in the business and 2 involved other family members
 - ▶ Business types: internet/retail sales; creative products/services; prof services

Findings CR couples

- ▶ Motivation for women often lack of flexibility for mothering in jobs (n=3)
- ▶ Division of labor among men and women varied across businesses, not necessarily gender-traditional pattern
 - ▶ Women jewelry designer/maker; sport event organizer; lawyer
- ▶ Yet descriptions of work responsibilities were gendered
 - ▶ He handled finances; she kept the books
- ▶ Credit more often going to men regardless of respondent gender:
 - ▶ “He tells me that he is my boss.” in a business started by a woman wherein her craft is the center of the business (n=3 joined wife’s business)
 - ▶ “She has my back.” (firm of two lawyers wherein he meets public more)
 - ▶ No men said woman was primary in the business; one woman said she was primary
- ▶ Housework and childcare mostly province of women (Only 3 couples shared housework & childcare. More sharing once kids are out of house; supplement w/paid help).
- ▶ Gendered descriptions: he does heavy work.
- ▶ Women’s business role planned & shaped around childcare when kids are home; also true for families who raised children in the business.

Findings US couples

- ▶ Motivation for women sometimes lack of flexibility for mothering in jobs (n=3)
- ▶ Division of labor in business was diverse across couples
 - ▶ Women as lawyers; Business CEO; PR sales; physician; dentist; finances
- ▶ Overall, characterizations of business responsibilities less gendered
 - ▶ In 3 couples, women described husbands as primary & selves as in support functions but still key roles: running an office; managing business finances
- ▶ Credit more evenly distributed:
 - ▶ 8 men described their partners as equal business partners, even in 3 cases where women's described husband as primary
 - ▶ 2 men described their female partners as the one primary in the business
- ▶ Housework and childcare still primarily on women but men described by women and themselves as doing more sharing than that reported by CR couples (n=8 couples). Sharing common once kids gone.
- ▶ Narrative descriptions of housework still gendered: he does heavy work
- ▶ Women's business role still planned around childcare when kids at home.

Insights common in both samples

- ▶ Success strategy: Different niches & autonomy
- ▶ The importance of life course → business and home DOL
- ▶ Need for flexibility in business
 - ▶ Family - Business Balancing
 - ▶ Adapt to changing market - diversify or change business with ups and downs in economy or changing demand
 - ▶ Supplement with outside full or part-time employment
- ▶ Life cycle changes in division of labor and future plans
- ▶ Women's support functions in home and business often lead to diminution of their visibility/credit and personal time
 - ▶ Work at home, late at night, less visible jobs, part-time
- ▶ Men shied away from even talking about domestic labor

Implications

- ▶ Doing Business is Doing Gender: motivation, type of business, women & men's involvement, descriptions of chores & credit illustrate discernable constructions of jobs as gendered.
- ▶ Doing Business is Embedded in Family Life: they codetermine each other but salience of this relationship is gendered
- ▶ Doing Business & Doing Gender is also Embedded in Cultural Context
- ▶ Women's Continued Responsibility for Home/Family - even when they start and run own businesses
- ▶ Fluidity of Doing Business & Doing Gender: Changing divisions of labor over life/family cycles & the expansion of women's power in business as children leave home
- ▶ Interview Narratives Can Construct Women Partners as a Business Secondary - in narratives of both women and men
- ▶ Women's Responsibility for Family Work Reinforces Men's Visibility in Business

Thank you!

For Questions and Comments:
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