

ENTREPRENEURS' PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESS: EXAMINING  
DIFFERENCES ACROSS GENDER AND FAMILY STATUS<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract**

Our study examines to what extent female and male entrepreneurs differ in the way they perceive and assess entrepreneurial success, measured by extrinsic or intrinsic dimensions. Our results indicate a number of similarities between men and women entrepreneurs but also reveal interesting gender-based differences related to family status. Rather than assuming that women entrepreneurs are a homogeneous group, we found that family factors, and especially parental status, play a key role in shaping fundamentally different perceptions of entrepreneurial success amongst different types of women entrepreneurs. In particular, women entrepreneurs with dependent children placed more emphasis on independence as a measure of success than other types of entrepreneurs.

**Keywords**

Gender- Entrepreneurs- Perception of success- Children

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The increasing presence of women in the business field as entrepreneurs or business owners<sup>1</sup> in the last decades has changed the demographic characteristics of the phenomena of entrepreneurship. As a result of the increasingly active role women-owned businesses are playing in society and the economy, scholars have invested a lot of time and effort in looking for the nature and extent of differences between female and male business owners (Birley, 1989; Fisher, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Kalleberg and Leight, 1991; DeMartino and Barbato, 2003).

Major differences have been found on firm characteristics such as size, age, industry and ownership structure (NFWBO, 1995), as well as owner experience (Boden and Nucci, 2000; Fisher, Reuber and Dyke 1993; Kalleberg and Leicht, 1991). Based on those initial findings, researchers have assumed other “psychological” characteristics, such as motivation, goals and definition of success to be heavily influenced by gender roles (Starr and Yudkin, 1996; Walker and Brown, 2004). This assumption has had a fundamental impact on our understanding of women entrepreneurial behaviour: in fact, when gender variations have been identified in management practices (Fisher, Rueber and Dyke, 1993; Sheppard, 1992) and firm performance (Brush, 1992; Cliff, 1998; Srinivasan, Woo, and Cooper, 1994) they have often been attributed to presumed differing gender perceptions and intentions.

Nevertheless, and despite a growing academic literature in entrepreneurship on the subject, psychological and perceptual gender differences are still not fully understood. For example, several studies have failed to find support for the existence of relevant gender differences in psychological profiles of populations of entrepreneurs (e.g., Fagenson, 1993; Leahy and Eggers 1998, Sexton, Bowman-Upton, 1990). Results are also mixed with regards to gender differences in terms of the motivation to become entrepreneurs. While some studies suggest that women and men entrepreneurs are similarly motivated (Catley and Hamilton, 1998; Minnitti et al., 2005), some others find that a number of differences do exist (Brush, 1992; Moore and Buttner, 1997; Fischer et al., 1993) and that women are generally motivated by a more complex combination of goals for launching a business than are men (Collins-Dodd, Gordon and Smart, 2004).

The inconsistent nature of these results has brought confusion as to how entrepreneurs perceive business success. Based on measures of motivation for start up, researchers have come up to inconsistent conclusions regarding the way men and women entrepreneurs define and perceive success. A number of previous studies found that men tend to place a greater emphasis on economic values and quantitative measures of success, while women tend to assign more importance to social values and qualitative criteria (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Still and Timms, 2000b; Unger and Crowford, 1992; Williams, 1987). However, these differences have not been always found (Catley and Hamilton 1998; Eagly, 1995; Fisher, 1992; Kalleberg and Leight, 1991; Shane, Kolvereid and Westhead, 1991).

Given this mixed evidence, further research is needed that provides a better understanding of how women entrepreneurs define business success and how it differs from men’s definitions. Thus, the aim of this paper is to asses the relative importance women entrepreneurs attach to qualitative criteria of business success with respect to economic ones, when compared to men. To do so we analyze gender differences along two separate dimensions of perceived entrepreneurial success: an “*intrinsic*” dimension of success, which relate to the importance of the entrepreneur’s position in society as a

job provider. And an “independence” dimension, which stresses freedom and flexible schedules as the main expectation from self-employment. Consistent with arguments that wealth generation is an important goal for every entrepreneur, regardless of sex (Holmquist and Sundin, 1988; Kolvereid, 1996), we operationalize both the intrinsic and independence dimensions as two bipolar constructs, where qualitative values are assessed in opposition to profit and economic motivations.

We contend that inconsistent prior empirical results regarding gender differences in terms of perception of success are due to the fact that researchers have consistently overlooked child-rearing and parenting issues when studying the phenomena. Previous literature has demonstrated the positive influence of parenthood on female initial interest in an entrepreneurial career (Boden, 1999; DeMartino and Barbato, 2002; Carr, 1996; Schwartz, 1992). However, there has been considerably less research examining how parenthood influences subjective perceptions of active female entrepreneurs regarding venture creation success. In this paper we find that, just as in the case of initial start-up motivations, differences in perceptions of business success not only are related to gender, but also on the parental status of the entrepreneur.

In particular, we hypothesize that perceptions of success will vary between the different categories of women entrepreneurs, and between women and men entrepreneurs depending on the presence or absence of dependent children.

Thus, this study makes an important contribution to the literature of entrepreneurship by integrating in a consistent theoretical framework research on gender psychology and measures of entrepreneur’s success. From an empirical perspective our study overcomes common pitfalls of research on personal values or measures of business success from a gender perspective. In particular, the few existing studies have often been based on small surveys that do not allow subgroup comparisons (Collins-Dodd, Gordon and Smart, 2003; Olson and Currie, 1992) or qualitative studies of women only (Chaganti, 1986; Fenwick and Hutton, 2000; Still and Timms, 2000b). Our study uses a large sample of female and male entrepreneurs that is representative of the Spanish adult population. The size and characteristics of our sample allows for differentiation between different types of entrepreneurs according to their personal and family characteristics.

## **Theoretical background and hypotheses**

A growing number of scholars attribute the inconsistencies in previous studies examining gender differences in perceived business performance to a lack of consensus as to what constitutes entrepreneurial success. This stream of research is in line with other studies that explore definitions of business success that extend beyond financial performance (Hudson, Smart and Bourne, 2001, Walker & Brown, 2004). In particular, followers of this approach contend that women entrepreneurs are redefining the concept of business success in their own terms, and the resulting perspective leaves significant room to the subjective part of the entrepreneur’s evaluation (Fenwick and Hutton, 2000; Valencia Silva and Lamolla, 2005).

Existing studies agree on the notion that success tends to be defined differently by women and men. Several authors suggest that while men tend to place a greater

emphasis on economic values and quantitative measures of success, women are inclined to assign more importance to social features and qualitative criteria (Larwood and Gutek, 1989; Unger and Crawford, 1992; Williams, 1987). For instance, Fenwick and Hutton's (2000) qualitative study found that most of the ninety-five women entrepreneurs they interviewed describe their work "success" mainly in terms of their children, satisfaction in work, reputation, ability to choose daily activity, the contributions they perceived themselves making to their communities and their overall perceived quality of life.

Romano's (1994) study, based on data from the National Foundation for Women Business Owners, revealed on the other hand, that women define success as having control over their own destinies, building ongoing relationships with clients, and doing something fulfilling, while men describe success in terms of achieving goals. However, Romano does not specify whether males' goals in his sample are mainly economic or if they also include some qualitative criteria. This dichotomy is probed in Butter and Moore's (1997) research, which demonstrated that in the case of women entrepreneurs, self-fulfilment and goal achievement was chosen as primary measures of success rather than financial profitability.

All these studies have highlighted the importance of the entrepreneur's non monetary expectations from business as a key determinant to understand small business ownership patterns. In particular, although freedom from financial worry is desirable, in these studies, women are predominantly found to place secondary importance on money vis a vis other dimensions of success.

However, it is noteworthy that the assessment of success in these studies has been inferred indirectly from measures of motivation for start-up and entrepreneur's personal values. These inferences assume that motivation defines success, and that success defines job satisfaction and performance. Walker & Brown's exploratory study (2004) represents a notable exception to this rule, addressing directly what success meant for a population of small business owners in Australia.

Our study builds over this last contribution and integrates it with previous research on gender and entrepreneurship to create a coherent theoretical framework that explains gender differences in perceived entrepreneurial success. Based on this theoretical framework, we seek to capture the multidimensional aspect of women's perception of success, unifying previous measures of non financial criteria into two attributes: the intrinsic and the independence dimensions of success. Assuming that wealth generation is an important goal for every entrepreneur, regardless his sex (Holmquist and Sundin, 1988; Kolvereid, 1996), we operationalize both the intrinsic and independence dimensions as two bipolar constructs, where qualitative values are assessed in opposition to profit and economic motivations. In this sense, the "intrinsic dimension of success", refers to those values that place personal relations and social acceptance in a proprietary position with respect to economic success. This dimension is consistent with constructs used in previous studies on motivation such as Carter et al (2003) which labelled as *recognition* (Carter et al 2003; Shane et al 1991), or *need for approval* (Schienberg & McMillan 1988) the individual's intention to have status, approval and recognition from one's family, friends and from those in the community.

On the other hand, the “independence dimension of success” stresses the values of autonomy and self-achievement as primary criteria for assessing success, and is also placed in opposition to financial aspects. Previous studies on reasons for start up have also used a similar construct to describe an individual’s desire for freedom, control and flexibility in the use of ones time (Carter et al 2003, Bierley & Westhead, 1994; Blaise et al 1990). In what follows, we will build our hypotheses around these two dimensions.

### **Intrinsic and Independence measures of success from a gendered perspective**

In order to explain gender differences with respect to motivations and perceptions, researchers have used arguments based on two opposed theories derived from the social and behavioural sciences (i.e. Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986): The “dispositional” and the “situational” perspective.

The “dispositional” perspective contends that variations in education and socialization patterns of women and men lead to different experiential backgrounds, ways of thinking and interpersonal orientations, and these differences shape “*the way women and men construct and interpret reality and influence the formation of their values and intentions*” (Carter et al., 1997).

On the other hand, the “situational” perspective contends that men and women do not differ in terms of values or intentions, but that these differences can be attributed to variations in the power and opportunities accorded to men and women. In particular, according to this view, women are being denied equal access to opportunities in labour markets organizations (Liou and Aldrich, 1995). These two theoretical perspectives can be used to explain why men and women differ in their assessment of the intrinsic and independence measures of success.

The dispositional perspective, which assumes the existence of gender-specific values, beliefs, and cultural imperatives, has in fact important implications for the patterns of small business ownership (Olson and Currie, 1992). For instance, MacNabb, McCoy, Weinreich and Northover’s (1993) found in their examination of the process of change in women’s value systems as a result of business start-up, that women do not display “masculine” entrepreneurial values, rejecting in particular risk taking and profit motivation. On the other hand, testing this assumption on women managers and professionals empirically, Sheppard (1992) found that they viewed themselves as “humanistic” and “personal oriented” as opposed to “cost oriented”. According to psychologists (Miller, 1986; Williams, 1987) the lives of contemporary women are organized around “giving” to and serving others and it is from this dynamic that they derive a major part of their self-worth. Others suggest that women are inclined to assign more importance to social features and qualitative criteria such as exceeding customers’ expectations and contribution to the community (Larwood and Gutek, 1989; Unger and Crawford, 1992; Williams, 1987). Based on this framework and given the definition of intrinsic dimension of success given above we state that:

*H1: The intrinsic dimension of success will be more important for women entrepreneurs than for men entrepreneurs.*

In the same vein, the situational perspective can be used to explain gender differences along the independence dimension. Women that have attained the “glass

ceiling” in the corporate world are more numerous than ever and quit paid work to join entrepreneurial ranges in a search for more freedom in scheduling their work, avoid discrimination in career advancement and achieve more fully their professional development (Mattis, 2004). This situation is captured by Noble’s famous statement: “For men, being an entrepreneur is business strategy. For women it is a life strategy” (1986, p.35). Following the situational perspective, we expect then women to seek independence from their venture in higher extent than economic rewards, while men would value success in the opposite direction.

*H2: The independence dimension of success will be more important for women entrepreneurs than for men entrepreneurs.*

### **The Moderating Role of Parental Status**

Parental status and the ability to care for dependents has become an important concern for women professionals and entrepreneurs. In a recent Harvard Business Review survey of 2,443 highly qualified women business professionals, 64 percent cited flexible work arrangements as being either extremely or very important (Hewlett and Luce, 2005). As a result of the increasing economic and social needs to balance career and family needs (Cinamon and Rich, 2002), researchers have been trying to gain a deeper understanding of how parental role affects female entrepreneurship.

A common inquiry on this subject refers to the link between parenthood and initial motivations for self-employment: researchers (Carr, 1996; Schwartz, 1992) have consistently found that having children, and particularly young children (Boden, 1999; DeMartino and Barbato, 2003, Lombard 2001), had a differentially strong and positive impact on women’s tendency to be self-employed. Contrary to men and childless women, parenting female’s entrepreneurial motivations would be therefore primarily based on a socialization model where the pursuit of self-employment could be a solution to dual domains of work and family (Marlow, 1997).

One of the later developments in this field of “situational” determinants of gender differences is represented by Aldrich and Cliff’s (2003) conceptual paper, which establishes the case for a *family embeddedness perspective* of entrepreneurship. Through their conceptual framework, the authors advocate recognizing and analyzing the existing relationships between the entrepreneurs’ family value systems and the new venture’s outcome - including performance and subjective perception of success-. While the entrepreneurship literature shows empirical evidence of the relationship between family responsibilities and structure and gender initial start-up motivation, few scholarly works have taken the analysis further to assess its impact on perceptions of success once the business has been launched. Indeed, Matthews and Moser (1996) argue that interest and expectations from small business ownership may change over time, and suggest family and childrearing issues as possible drivers of this change for females.

Following the situational perspective, we include in our analysis the impact of family considerations and parental status on perception of success. Due to the ambiguous role played by adult children, and the possibility of them representing a help for their self-employed parents (Aldrich and Cliff, 1998), parental status will be operationalized in our paper by the existence of dependent children.

To the extent that, despite a gradual shift in gender role norms, women still carry the bulk of household chores and childrearing responsibilities (Still and Timms, 2000a), we expect the entrepreneur's familiar situation to affect women perception of success in a different fashion than men that are in the same situation. In fact, traditional role expectations assign different family responsibilities to women and men (Bernard, 1981).

While women are expected to put all their efforts in nurturing and supporting their spouse and children (Miller, 1986), relegating outside work to a secondary place, economic success and financial security is seen as the cornerstone of parenting role for men (Elam, 1998). In this sense, we expect the presence of dependent children in the family to higher women's need of flexible schedule and freedom in managing their time, converting the independence dimension as the most cherished reward immediately expected from entrepreneurship. Thus:

*H3: Parental status (PS) will moderate the relationship between gender (G) and independence perception of success: the independent dimension of entrepreneurial success will be more important for women entrepreneurs (G) with dependent children (PS).*

While gender differences in psychological profiles continue to be a point of interest, a growing number of scholars suggest that the argument of systematic and significant gender differences might not hold across the different categories of women entrepreneurs (Starr and Yudkin, 1996). Given the broad range of women who have been joining the entrepreneurial ranges for the last decades, it seems indeed legitimate to expect the existence of differences among women business owners.

Having identified general gender differences in the independence measure of success and the moderating role of parenthood, our study goes further and tries to analyze the differences that may exist within female entrepreneurs depending on their parental status.

To date, Goffee and Scarse (1983) and Cromie and Hayes (1988) are the only two empirical studies that have developed a typology of female entrepreneurs according to their orientations towards business performance and their families. In particular, Cromie and Hayes differentiate between 3 categories of women entrepreneurs: innovators, young women with no children; dualist, middle-aged women with young children and returning women, which are more mature and have older children. While these studies suggested that there was a "mummy track" for entrepreneurial women, their findings have not been validated by subsequent researches and very few works built on these interesting findings to further understand how parental status affected entrepreneur's perceptions of success (Ohran, 2004).

In line with this classification we distinguish between three categories of women entrepreneurs according to parenthood: those without children, those with some dependent children and those with only adult children. Following the situational perspective, we expect women entrepreneurs with dependent children to perceive success as more oriented to independence criteria with respect to economic ones than do women with no children or women with adult children. This leads us to our last hypothesis:



*H4: The independent dimension of entrepreneurial success will be more important for women entrepreneurs with dependent children than for women entrepreneur with no children or with adult children.*

## **Sample and methodology**

Data to test our hypothesis came from the GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) survey conducted in Spain in April 2005. The GEM study offers the possibility to compare between the population of entrepreneurs across gender as well as according to their parental role, plus given the sample sizes in GEM it allows for within groups analysis with sufficient power. Both the female and male populations are investigated in terms of their perception of entrepreneurial success, their entrepreneurial experience and future intentions, as well as in terms of demographic and psychological characteristics.

Sample size for this study was of 1236 entrepreneurs. Consistent with previous literature on gender and entrepreneurship, females were significantly under-represented in the entrepreneurial ranges (Franco and Winqvist, 2002). Our data yields a percentage of 10.2% entrepreneurs for women with respect to the general adult feminine population against a 14.6% for the masculine population.

## **Description of Variables**

Based on data source described in the previous paragraph, we selected the following variables for the analysis:

### Dependent Variable: Perceived Success Scales.

The perceived success scale the one developed by Walker and Brown (2004) for their study of success factors to Small Business Owners, with slight modifications to fit our sample (see Appendix). The original scale was made up of 7 items formulated to judge the importance of measuring business success in terms of traditional financial measures (making money) versus others alternative measures (personal satisfaction, pride in job or flexibility). Respondents were asked to indicate their strength of agreement using a 5 point Likert scale with the anchors of (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. As expected, the factor analysis carried out using principal component analysis and varimax rotation indicated the existence of two factors.

The first factor incorporates items that capture the desire to pursue social goals from entrepreneurial activity such as personal enjoyment and helping others. These expectations are expressed by the owner against external and financial goals such as making money. We interpret this dichotomy as the difference between “intrinsic” versus “extrinsic” values when measuring business success. Similarly, the second factor consist of two items that rate flexibility and being one’s own boss as opposed to making money, an “independence” measure of success. The items in both factors have all items load between 0.4 and 0.9. Hence, we created a composite by averaging the items that are part of the two factors, labeling them “Intrinsic” and “Independence” measures of success. Both scales reached acceptable level of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .70$  for the intrinsic Scale, and  $\alpha = .59$  for the independence scale).

### Control Variables

In the explanation of the perception of success, and following existing research, we controlled first of all for business location and owners characteristics. Business location was measured as a dummy variable (1=rural area, 0=urban area). Demographic effects included owner age (continuous variable) and immigrant condition (a dummy variable with 1= immigrant, 0= native). Lastly, owner education was measured as a three categorical variable with 0= no education, 1= at least secondary education, 2= post secondary education).

Moreover, given that previous research has showed that self reported motivations for start-up correlates with measures of success (Buttner and Moore, 1997), we included the motivation to start the business as a control variable in the analysis. Following the GEM classification, we distinguish between “push” and “pull” motivators. Push factors drives individuals towards business ownership out necessity and is originally linked with dissatisfaction with ones current position. Pull factors attract individuals into entrepreneurship because of the future value behind the business opportunity (Ohran, 2004).

However, acknowledging that entrepreneurship is rarely a clear cut situation of necessity or choice, rather than a two dichotomy category variable, we created a combined scale with three categories (1= Pure opportunity, 2 = Combination of both, 3= Pure Necessity).

### Independent Variables

Finally, independent variable in the analysis included Gender (dummy variable that equals 1 if the entrepreneur is a woman) and parental status, a dummy variable that equals one if the owner has at least one dependent child (less than 18 years old).

## **Analysis and results**

Descriptive results for male and female entrepreneur’s population are showed in Table 1

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*Insert Table 1 here*

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Demographic characteristics differentiating men and women entrepreneurs are in line with the literature on gender and entrepreneurship (Minniti, Arenius, Langowitz, 2005): while women business owners are similar to their male counterparts in education, parental status and main motivation for business start-up, there are differences in terms of age. Women tend to start ventures at a later age than males, indicating a probable effect of pregnancy and early motherhood as a barrier to venture creation at a younger age. Another interesting result, although beyond the scope of the present research, is the existence of a higher proportion of entrepreneurs among female ethnic entrepreneurs compared to male counterparts.

Surprisingly, and contrary to previous research (Brush, 1992), our results indicate that the motivation to start a business does not differ between men and women

entrepreneurs. Underlying this apparent similarity between reported motivations for starting up a business may be the existence of several types of female entrepreneurs, driven by different goals for starting up a business. Another possible explanation lies in the different meanings that necessity and opportunity may have for each individual entrepreneurs and specially for women. .

Table 2 shows the correlations between the main variables of the study. Means and standard deviations are also presented. In general, intercorrelations are consistent with our expectations. No problems of multicollinearity were detected in the data.

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*Insert Table 2 here*

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Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 were tested using hierarchical regression analysis. As customary, control variables were entered first, followed by main effects. Multiplicative terms were added later to examine the hypothesized interactions. Results are showed in Table 3, with “independence” and “intrinsic” measures of perceived success as the dependent variables.

The base model includes only the control variables. Entrepreneurs located in urban areas seem to place a higher value on the independence measure of success. In the same line, independence is also higher valued among those entrepreneurs that decide to start a new business more because of the attractiveness of the business idea and less due to necessity reasons. However, neither demographic variables nor motivation reasons make a difference in the case of the intrinsic measure of success. In this case, only the education variable shows a significant effect; in particular, more educated entrepreneurs are those who valued the independence associated with having their own business to a higher extent.

To test Hypotheses 1 and 2, we introduced the Gender variable as a main effect in the regression equation. The main effect model shows a significant effect for the intrinsic scale ( $p < 0.01$ ) but not for the independence scale. Thus, only H1 is supported by the data: women entrepreneurs tend to place a higher value on the intrinsic measures of success than their men counterparts, but it seems that female entrepreneur do not differ from male in terms of their evaluation of the independence measure of success, rejecting H2.

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*Insert Table 3 here*

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However, when the independence evaluation is made taking into account parental dependent status, a number of additional differences emerge. Although for both, men and women, having dependent children makes a difference in terms of their evaluation of the independence measure of success (parental status is significant  $p < 0.05$ ), the effect is stronger for women. This is empirically demonstrated by the significant increase in the explained variance in the dependent variable ( $p < 0.01$ ) when the interaction effect is introduced in the interaction model, thus supporting H3.

Hypothesis 4 which refers to differences within female entrepreneurs was tested through an ANOVA analysis, which results are discussed below. The results give partial

support to Hypothesis 4. Mean differences between the different categories of women entrepreneurs (Table 4) are significant ( $p < .05$ ) and Table 5 reveals that these differences lie in fact between the group of women with dependent children and that with adult children, with the former valuing more independence as a measure of entrepreneurial success than the latter. Based on these results we may surmise, as Aldrich and Cliff (1998) seem to suggest, that adult children, rather than being a burden on women entrepreneurs may contribute to their parent's business, either through moral support, or by actual non-paid work. While women entrepreneurs without children reported on average a higher valuation of the independence dimension, the difference with the rest of categories was not significant.

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*Insert Table 4 & 5 here*

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## Conclusions

Researchers have not come to an agreement as to how gender-specific factors influence women entrepreneur's perception of business success, and research evidence has been inconsistent on this issue. The purpose of this paper was to provide evidence of the relationship between gender and subjective assessment of success, reconciling previous discrepancies in the literature on the subject and including the role of parental status in the mix.

Our results indicate that the relationship between intrinsic and independence measures of success in men and women entrepreneur is more complex than previously thought. While intrinsic measures of success overall are more important to women entrepreneurs, there are no differences with respect to measures of independence. These are similarly valued by men and women entrepreneurs.

However, these results vary significantly when dependent children are introduced in the analysis. While for men entrepreneurs having dependent children does not alter their perceptions of intrinsic and independence success, women entrepreneurs with dependent children value more independence measures of success than men entrepreneurs, and the prior effects of intrinsic success that were observed for women in general are overcome by the strong effects of independence success when we consider dependent children.

These results are consistent with previous research by Boden (1999), Carr (1996) and DeMartino and Barbato (2003), which consistently demonstrated that having children, and particularly young children, had a differentially strong and positive impact on women's tendency to be self-employed. Contrary to men and to other types of women, entrepreneurial ambitions of young and parenting females would be therefore take into account intrinsic and independence measures of success. This is consistent with research that has argued for a socialization model where the pursuit of self-employment is seen by women entrepreneurs as a palliative to the demands of the dual domains of work and family (Marlow, 1997). Thus, it highlights the importance of not examining women entrepreneur as a homogeneous group, but the need to decouple the unique characteristics of different types of women entrepreneur and how they affect their perceptions of success as entrepreneurs.

Finally, understanding the different perceptions and values women entrepreneurs hold and how these relate to their parental status can be of great help to researchers, policy makers as well as for practitioners interested in examining and promoting women entrepreneurship. This understanding can lead to the development of more finely tuned programs of support that not only recognize that women have different goals for wanting to start a business, but that their needs and experiences in starting up vary according to their particular characteristics.

Our results push this question even further. Baker et al. (1997) have written that “Some researchers has found that women are more likely to become self-employed for “lifestyle” reasons such as attempts to balance work and family”, yet our results indicate that independence is not a concern if we do not take into account children. Further research is needed to ascertain whether the concerns change over time or if it is just different types of women entrepreneurs. This difference would have significant implications for researchers and practitioners, as it may indicate differences in the process over time, or differences in the characteristics of women entrepreneurs. Independence might be more relevant then to those more likely to have children. As Mirchandani (1999) suggests, “the conceptualisation of the women’s domestic responsibilities as a structural, organizational concern rather than a personal problem can shed light on the gendered processes underlying entrepreneurship”. Overall, the results suggest that the organization of work and for family duties is still an issue of significant concern to many women (Loscocco, Robinson, Hall and Allen, 1991, Shelton and John, 1996). Then, much is left to do with respect to balancing work and family issues.

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**Table 1**  
**Descriptive characteristics of women and men entrepreneurs**

	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
<i>Owner demographics</i>		
Age (mean) **	44	42.4
Immigrant**	4%	2.1%
Native	96%	97.9%
<i>Education</i>		
No studies	1.9%	2.5%
Undergraduate studies	65.9%	62.2%
Graduate studies	32.2%	35.3%
<i>Parental status</i>		
Number of children (mean)	1.65	1.58
No children	7.5%	9.1%
Some dependent child	53.8%	57.1%
Non dependent child	38.7%	33.8%
<i>Motivation for entrepreneurship</i>		
Opportunity	58.8%	56.2%
Combination of opportunity and necessity	27.2%	29.8%
Necessity	14%	14%
N	522	714
Gender differences are: ** significant at $p < 0.05$ ;		

**Table 2**  
**Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations**

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Location	.19	.39							
2. Age	43.11	11.97	-.035						
3. Immigrant	.97	.168	-.013	.011					
4. Education (5 levels)	3.54	1.258	.006	-.118**	-.090**				
5. Motivation for Start-Up	1.57	.725	.011	.039	-.030	-.015			
6. Gender	.42	.494	.027	.066*	-.056*	-.014	-.018		
7. N° of children	1.62	1.003	-.074**	.369**	-.008	-.014	.010	-.033	
8. Dependent children	.56	.497	.030	.000	.001	-.033	.061*	-.033	.035

\*\* significant at  $p < 0.01$ ; \* significant at  $p < .05$  ;  
N = 1236

**Table 3**

**Results of hierarchical regression analysis: regressing perception of success on gender, parental status and their interaction**

Variable	Independence			Intrinsic values		
	Base Model	Main effects	Interaction	Base Model	Main effects	Interaction
Location	-.077**	-.075*	-.075*	-.059	-.062	-.063
Age	-.000	.001	.001	.000	.001	.001
Immigrant	-.007	.006	.011	.061	.081	.076
Education: Secondary	.011	.007	.011	.311**	.305**	.303**
Education: Post-secondary	.032	.032	0.32	.313**	.309**	.307**
Motivation	-.045**	-.045**	-.045**	-.021	-.020	-.020
Gender		.045	.013		.086**	.129**
Parental status		.066*	.018		.037	.075
Gender* Parental status			.117**			-.090
R <sup>2</sup> Change	.008	.006**	.008**	.004**	.001	.001

\*\*\* significant at  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* Significant at  $p < .05$  ; \* significant at  $p < 0.1$

**Table 4****The impact of children on Independence: ANOVA analysis women sub-sample**

	$\sum$ squares type <i>III</i>	<i>gl</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Model	2.174	2	4.124	.017
Intersection	2026.722	1	7688.386	.000
Children_categories	2.174	2	4.124	.017*
R <sup>2</sup> = .017				

\* significant at  $p < 0.1$

**Table 5****The impact of children on Independence: between-group differences**

		<i>Means differences</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Significance</i>
<i>No Children</i>	<i>Dependent</i>	.051	.091	.844
	<i>Adult</i>	.181	.093	.131
<i>Dependent children</i>	<i>No children</i>	-.051	.091	.844
	<i>Adult</i>	.129	.049	.025*

\* significant at  $p < 0.1$

**APPENDIX 1:****Success Perception Scale:**

- Personal satisfaction is more important than earning money
- Pride for my job is more important than earning money
- Earning money is more important than having flexibility at work
- Employing others is more important than earning money
- Earning money is more important than being my own boss
- Social status is more important than earning money
- Financial measures are the only valid firm success indicator
- Spending time with my family is more important than earning money

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i For the purpose of this paper no distinction will be made between the terms 'women entrepreneurs' and 'women business owners', since the study focuses on ventures founded and led by women.