

Parenthood attitudes and reasons for delayed childbearing in Sweden

Eva Bernhardt, Stockholm University

and

Frances Goldscheider, Brown University

eva.bernhardt@kvinfo.su.se

Background

Less 'traditional' roles for women

- raise the 'costs of children'
- reduce the 'benefits of children'

But what about the relationship between
gender roles and fertility for men?

Research questions

- What factors affect men's and women's views of the costs and benefits of children, with particular emphasis on gender role attitudes
- What reasons do childless young adults in Sweden give for not having made the socially prescribed transition to parenthood

Family and working life in the 21st century

- Panel study with (so far) two rounds, 1999 and 2003
- Mail questionnaire survey of young adults, 22, 26, 30 and 34 years old (in 2003)
- This paper uses information from the 2003 survey, which had a response rate of 72 % and a total of 3711 respondents, of whom 1525 were still childless at the time of the survey

**Becoming a parent can influence one's life
in many ways.**

What is your view of the following?

- **If (when) I have children**
- **I can no longer do what I want**
- **I (we) will have economic problems**
- **I will have little time for my friends**
- **My relationship to my partner will improve**
- **My life will become more meaningful**

Costs and benefits of parenthood

Scale construction

- Each item was answered on a scale from 1 (disagree completely) to 5 (agree completely)
- Items 1, 2 and 3 refer to negative consequences of becoming a parent = *costs of parenthood*
- Items 4 and 5 refer to possible positive consequences of becoming a parent = *benefits of parenthood*
- *Ordered logit*

Costs and benefits of parenthood

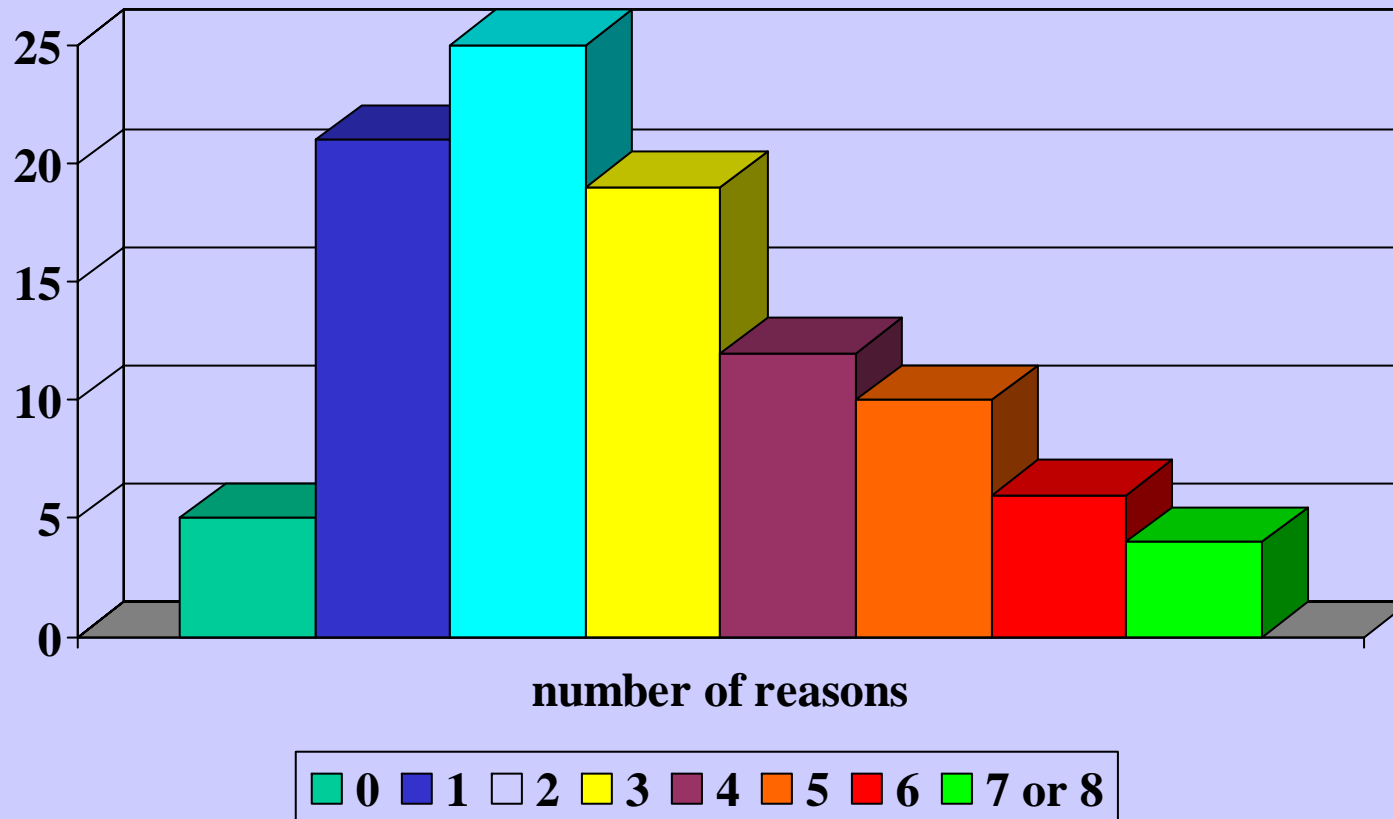
Factors Affecting Attitudes Towards the Costs and Benefits of Children

Predictor variables	Costs of parenthood			Benefits of parenthood		
	Males	Females		Males	Females	
Men (ref=women)	0.43*		*	0.56*		
Egalitarian gender attitudes	-0,60 *	0,07	* #	-0,53 *	-0,90 *	
Partner commitment	-0,21 *	-0,18 *	*	-0,20 *	0,10	#
Educational level	-0,11	0,08		-0,03	0,01	
Metropolitan residence	0,00	0,20		0,00	0,10	
Age	0,08	0,05		-0,13 ^	-0,25 *	
High income	-0,18	0,39	#	0,37	0,65 *	
N	685	766		685	765	
* Significantly different from 0						
# Male coefficient significantly different from female coefficient in pooled regressions						

There may be many reasons not to have had children (yet). Do any of these apply to you?

	Men	Women
I have not wanted children (yet)	60	60
I have not had a suitable partner to have children with	47	46
I first wanted to complete my education	24	36
I first wanted a secure job situation	30	45
I first wanted to get well established in my job	17	26
I wanted to do other things before I have children	55	56
I first wanted a better economic situation	39	42
I (or my partner) have had difficulties getting pregnant.	4	9

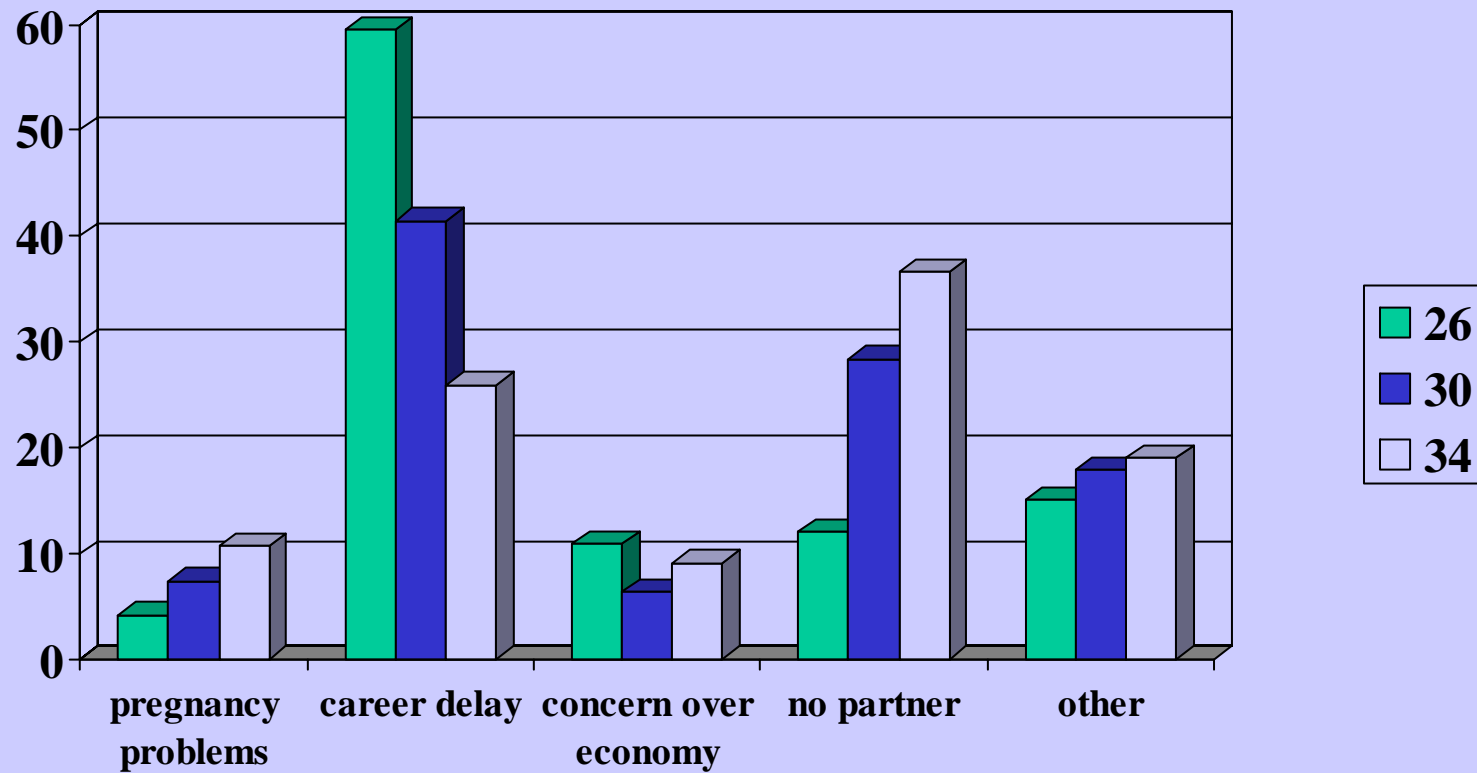
Number of reasons given for delayed childbearing



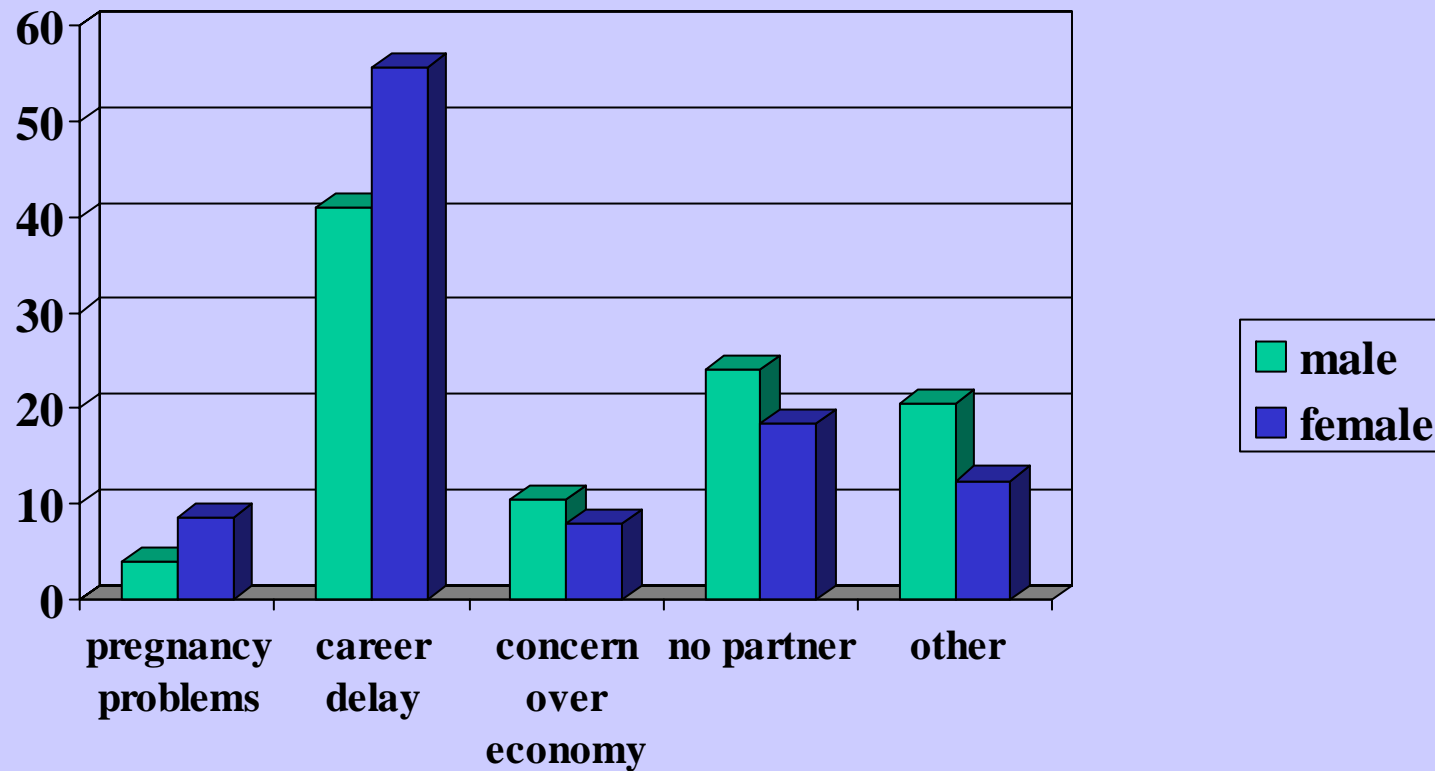
Construction of a 'why not' variable

- **Pregnancy problem**
- **'Own career delay'** (education or job reasons) but no pregnancy problems
- **'Concern over economy'** (but no pregnancy problems or career delay)
- **'No partner'** (but not any of the above reasons)
- **'Other'** (not any of the above, but 'not wanted' or 'other things')
- Missing (no reason given)

Reasons for delayed childbearing by age



Reasons for delayed childbearing by gender



Multinomial logit regression of 'why not' variable – tentative results

- Increasing age increases likelihood of 'no partner' or 'pregnancy problems'
- Women less likely than men having 'other' as main reason, more likely 'pregnancy problem'
- Higher education has negative effect on 'no partner', 'economy' and 'pregnancy problem'
- Metropolitan residence increases likelihood of 'no partner', 'other' and 'pregnancy problem'
- Having a coresidential partner has a positive effect on 'other' and 'pregnancy problem'

Thank you for your attention!

All comments welcome