The antecedents of long employment breaks after childbearing among Finnish mothers in 1987–2012

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Abstract

Work and family conflict is still one of the areas of modern society where equality has not been achieved. Even in a family-friendly welfare state, such as Finland, the unequal mechanism behind work choices of parents is still very strong. Previous studies suggest that educational attainment of the mother influences on the employment patterns after childbearing; the more educated the mother is, the shorter the career interruption is. We explore how the length of the non-employment period after childbearing differs between women of different backgrounds in Finland. The research asks whether mother's socioeconomic resources, age at childbirth, union status, and the resources of possible partner influences the risk to enter employment. We use Finnish register data from 1987 – 2012 and focus on women who enter motherhood for the first time. We produce hazard rate function for entering employment after the first child is born which is then used in the survival analysis. We find that mother's socioeconomic resources have a positive effect on the risk to enter employment. These resources include the possible partner's educational and financial status. Also, we find that those who have a delayed motherhood have lowest risk to enter employment if they do not have consecutive births during the interruption. In general, all effects get smaller when we analyze only those who have more children during the interruption.

Introduction

The revolution of family, in terms of postponed timing of the family, variety in union status and growing childlessness, reflects a fundamental change in a society and creates new inequalities (Esping-Andersen, 2009). The reciprocal relation between childbearing and work life affects nearly every family and parent. Furthermore, the effects it has on the gender equality, fertility and employment are significant for both individuals and the whole society. In reconciling family and work, the choices parents make are affected by a combination of preferences and constraints. These differ significantly between men and women as well as between parents with different resources and backgrounds. Inequalities between mothers with different level of resources are the focus in this study as we find answer to a question: *How is the length of the career interruption influenced by the socioeconomic resources of the mother, the timing of the motherhood, the union status, and partner's resources?* In other words, we are analyzing the risk to enter employment after the first entry into motherhood. From childbearing follows a break from employment. This career interruption is here defined as the period after childbearing during which the mother is non-employed and doing unpaid care work. The focus of this study is on mothers and their socioeconomic resources, because in the Finnish context fathers rarely use parental leave more than few weeks. According to the statistics of the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela, 2015), there were 99 645 mothers who got parental allowances. However, fathers used their right to parental leave 41 % less often than mothers. In most cases fathers only used their 3-week long paternity leave; only 3671 fathers were using parental leave without the mother on a leave as well. Only 0.6 % of the cash-for-childcare receivers were fathers. Therefore, as studying long career interruption due to childbearing, Finnish fathers are not the right target. The micro-economic theory of labor supply says that the family will consider the opportunity cost for doing unpaid care work and make decision based on the costs and benefits of their decision. We will study the effects of mother's socioeconomic factors, age at first-birth and the union status.

We study the effects to the length of the career interruption of Finnish mothers during the years 1987 – 2012. In Finland after the early 1990s and the period of recession, the employment rate of mothers with young children remained low for single mothers whereas the employment rate

of fathers rose above the previous rates (Lappalainen, Härkönen & Jalovaara, 2015). In 2000s, the main factors affecting the employment patterns of the mother seemed to be the labor market situation and availability of public day care (Salmi, Lammi-Taskula & Närvi, 2009). In most of the previous studies the example of a Nordic welfare state is Sweden. However, Finland differs in many ways from Sweden and represents different kind of Nordic welfare state. We find that studying Finland, new ways of gender equality and welfare state mechanisms for families can be revealed. Unlike Sweden, Finland has a strong full-time employment agenda as well as a controversial cash-for-childcare subsidy. Also, in Finland the caring is still highly gendered as only few percent of the fathers use parental leave. Results present an interesting case of a modern welfare state and can be used in finding a new, more equal, welfare state model.

Using a longitudinal register data of Finnish population, we estimate the risk of entering employment after childbearing. The focus is on the mothers who enter motherhood for the first time during the years 1989 – 2007. We use event history analysis and logistic regression to find the risk to enter employment, and how chosen factor affect it. In the analysis mothers who will enter employment after one child are analyzed separately from those who have a second child during the career interruption. Second pregnancy, a new child and greater family size all affect the reasons to enter employment. Therefore, the factors affecting the risk have presumably different effects and a separate analysis is needed.

The factors affecting the risk to enter employment

In the modern societies the equal possibilities in education and labor market is increasingly true, but still having children puts men and women into unequal positions. After childbirth, breastfeeding and caring most mothers have a need, requirement or compulsion to enter employment. Although this is partly a result of women giving birth and nursing the child, the main drivers of this inequality are the mechanisms of labor market, gender roles and even the social policies.

Theory used to explain the linkages between childbearing and employment is the micro-economic theory which explains a parent's decisions by the rational need to maximize the expected utility. There are many economic determinants of parent's decisions to enter employment following childbirth. In this study the focus is on the opportunity cost of taking time out of labor force and the wealth effect of other family income. In addition, the effect of the parental allowances provided by family policies will be considered as a factor that can lengthen the interruption. However, the opportunity cost for paid work in terms of child care cost is not important in the context of Finnish welfare state where the public child care is supported by municipalities. According to the theory, there is a positive effect of the wage; the higher the wage the more likely it is that the parent chooses to do paid work instead of unpaid care work (Borjas, 2010). Theory also assumes that the division of paid and unpaid work between partners is economically beneficial to the family (Becker, 1993). High income and high status in overall have a positive effect on the childbearing, since the family can afford to have children and take care of them. However, the effect on a parent can also be negative; the opportunity cost for caring children full time is high if the parent with high income exits paid work to care for children (Becker, 1960, 1993). These theories on the highly biased employment and family trajectories between genders have received criticism. The Becker equilibrium of nuclear family, male breadwinner and early timing of marriage are rarely the case (Esping-Andersen, 2009). In a modern nuclear family system a dual-earner family would be a more adaptive family strategy (Oppenheimer, 1994). Nowadays, the chances of equal employment career for both genders even after childbearing are more possible than before. Nevertheless, in Finland the maternal employment rate with children younger than 3 years old is still very low (approx. 50%) and to have a shared child care responsibilities between parents is unlikely (OECD, 2014).

Other theory, which has been used to explain the mechanisms in combing family and work, is Hakim's (2000) preference theory. The postmodern preference theory concentrates on mothers and their choices to combine paid work and unpaid care work. The theory divides mothers into three groups, those who are career oriented; those who want to have career and family and those who are only family oriented (Hakim, 2000). However, a previous study shows that the preferences before childbirth do not meet the preferences after childbirth (Crompton, 2002). Also, the preferences do not necessarily meet the real outcomes. Bolssfeld and Huinink (2015) find it that delayed marriage and motherhood give better options for the mother to actually act according to her preferences. The delayed transition to adulthood have been explained by women's growing economic independence or the extended participation in schooling (Blossfeld & Huinik, 2015).

Factors affecting the transition to paid work after childbirth can be divided into macro level influences such as important changes in the labor market, economy and in social policies within society; and micro level influences such as individual characteristics of a parent (Gaudet, 2011). In addition to occupational qualifications and educational attainment, factors affecting the choice of leaving non-employment are culture and religious values, age at first birth, the availability of personal networks for care giving and a partner or other relatives involved in child care (Gaudet, 2011). In our analyses, the culture and religious factors, values and attitudes, are not part of the data and therefore left out. In addition, macro level factors are not included.

Social policies

Social policies for families and available child care options affect greatly to the career interruption after childbirth. In social policies most important factors are the length of the job-protection and payments during the leave period. However, the social policy enabling a long career interruption is argued to be a choice only for employed mothers while non-employed mothers automatically use the entire parental leave (Lammi-Taskula, 2004). Quite a few previous studies on employment after childbirth, have looked into the social policies and their effect. Even though this is not a focus of our study, it is important to know the context. A previous study on the parental leave effects in Europe concludes that in Finland generous

parental leave arrangements diminish the effect of mother's human capital and the career interruption is longer than other countries. According to the research a well-paid leave lengthens the interruption but a longer job-protection period shortens it. (Pronzato, 2009). Another previous research on the effect of family policies examined the United States during the passage of the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (Hofferth & Curtin, 2006). Study shows that a right to have a maternity leave, even for a short period of time, shortens the career interruption after childbearing. Also mothers are more likely to return to the same job. Nevertheless, mothers will pay for the flexibility in their decreased wages after the interruption. Study on the effects of parental leave schemes to the career interruption in Sweden and Denmark (Pylkkänen & Smith, 2004) showed that even in similar Nordic welfare countries, differences in family policies can be seen in the impact they have. Sweden has more flexible leave schemes and fathers' take-up is higher due to the leave schemes incentives for the father. This way family policy more impact on the interruption duration in Sweden than in Denmark.

Socio-economic resources

Recent studies have shown that the level of education has a U-shaped connection with fertility. Also, the union stability is increasing among the highly educated in Scandinavia. (Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015.) Our study shows whether these trends are seen also in the work-family conflict. A Canadian study concluded that the level of education points out whether the parent is totally excluded from the labor force after childbearing (Gaudet, Cooke & Jacob 2011). A comparison between Germany and the United States showed that in U.S. the effect of education is strong and positive towards the risk to enter employment, whereas for German mothers there is no effect of the education (Drobnic, Blossfeld & Rohwer, 1999). One aspect is the educational homogamy of the parents which has a bipartite influence on the gender equality in a family; high educated partners are more equal than low-educated (Esping-Andersen, 2009).

Some previous studies suggest that employment prior to childbirth plays a major role in entering employment post-birth. According to a study of mothers in the US, having a job before childbirth had a strong effect on the length of the career interruption (Han, Ruhm, Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2008). Also, Even's (1987) study on the career interruptions found that prior

employment experience and being employed as further along before childbirth as possible, both influence positively on the risk to enter employment. Also a study on Swedish mothers reported that the break from employment is shorter if there is a job to return to (Stanfors, 2006). We will use information from the two years prior to childbirth. Hence, we can analyze how the intensity of employment affect the risk to enter employment after childbirth.

Family characteristics

The age of the mother at first childbirth is shown to have an influence on the risk to enter employment (Thair & Ridson, 1999). Women, who are older and therefore have longer history of employment, have higher risk. Timing of the motherhood plays a significant role also for young mothers. In most previous studies relationship status has been equal to marital status. Previous study comparing mothers in Germany and the United States found that for German mothers the influence of family is stronger (Drobnic, Blossfeld & Rohwer, 1999). Historically and institutionally, there is strong pressure for German women to end their full-time employment career for having children. In our study, we will look into whether the mother is married, cohabiting or single.

Second pregnancy and child during the career interruption has a clear effect on the interruption duration. In addition, the effects to the risk to enter employment are also different. Previous studies have considered the parity in different ways; as an explanatory variable (Stanfors, 2006; Drobnic, Blossfeld & Rohwer, 1999), as a control variable (Gaudet, Cooke & Jacob, 2011), or excluding other than first births. We will analyze separately mothers who enter employment after 1 child and mothers who have a second child during the interruption.

The case of Finland

Finland is one of the Nordic countries with a universalistic type of welfare state. It is built on social policies which provide subsidies through public expenditure. Subsidies for families with children and a low-cost public day care support parents to combine family and work as they choose to do. The allowances of parental leave are provided for the parents until the child is three years old. For the first 10 months the allowance is earnings-related, the cover being

approximately 70 %, and after that the amount decreases to approximately 400e per month. In almost every case, the parental leave is used by mother and the maternity leave is continued with child care leave. The fathers usually stay home for few weeks during the maternal leave and some also use few weeks of the parental leave (daddy quota) after the maternity leave. This missing input of fathers in the care-taking creates differences between Finland and other Nordic welfare countries.

While entering employment, parents can decide on the amount of work they will be doing. The choice between full-time and part-time work is available in all Nordic countries. However, it is not commonly used in Finland while in other Nordic countries part-time work amongst mothers with young children is popular (Rönsen & Sundström, 2002). In Finland during the recent years only 10 % of women worked part-time and only few of those were actually caring for children (Statistics of Finland, 2015). Most of the Finnish employers feel that part-time work is difficult to arrange (Salmi, Lammi-Taskula & Närvi, 2009). Also, it is not a real option for most of the parents due to reduced income.

During the time period of this study, 1987 – 2012, there were significant changes in the economy of Finland. The financial crisis began in 1991 and was at its deepest in 1993, as the employment level was lowest, approximately 60 % for both women and men. While the decrease of employment rate had been rapid, the rise after the year 1993 was very slow. One consequence of the recession was the increase of poverty among families with children, and the effects were greatest for mothers of young children. Social policies became more and more extensive for the families in the 1980s and even during the first years of recession. After which the cuts in public sector expenditure were large in family policy (Hiilamo, 2002). A minimum income limit was introduced and it has increased ever since (Haataja, Honkanen & Kangas, 2011). In the late 1994s in the so-called family support reform, the tax deductions for families with children were replaced by direct support. Many of the reforms affected negatively only one-parent families (Hiilamo, 2002). During the 2000s most of the reforms have concerned paternity allowances and their lengthening. These changes in time can have had an influence on the length of the career interruption; high unemployment rate lengthens the interruption and highlights the importance of previous employment, changes in the social policies guide the actions of citizens, as well as the family values and attitudes.

Research Questions

We study the relations between childbearing and career interruptions through the length of the career interruption and variables associated with it. We address the following research question: *How is the length of the career interruption influenced by the socioeconomic resources of the mother and the possible partner, the timing of the motherhood, and the union status?* In other words, we are analyzing the risk to enter employment period after the first entry into motherhood. The socioeconomic resources include educational attainment, previous earnings, and previous employment status. The patterns of employment transitions during the "rush years" of parenting and careers are in general very different for women and men. We are concentrating on the women and their first transition to the non-employment due to childbearing which is the key turning point in the life course of a woman (Gaudet, 2011). The following births are included in the break if the mother is non-employed between the births. However, mothers leaving non-employment after one child are analyzed separately from mothers who have second child during the career interruption.

First hypothesis, *the socioeconomic hypothesis*, is that those with a low socioeconomic status are more likely to have a longer career interruption. This is on one hand due to the low opportunity cost for caring children full time and on the other hand due to the higher risk for unemployment and studying before entering the labor market. The effect of union status is also evaluated. Women with a partner have more resources and support to enter employment when they wish. For married women, the support from the partner is more stable. Hence, the single-mothers are more likely to make their decision based on financial reasons. Second hypothesis, *the timing of motherhood hypothesis*, states that both early and late childbearing are special cases. Those who delay their motherhood have higher socioeconomic status in terms of previous employment history, educational attainment and income which then enables the mother actually carry out her preferences. Those, who enter motherhood for the first time during the early adulthood, have a greater risk to stay non-employed longer, but also greater risk to study.

Data and methods

We use data that were compiled at Statistics Finland (permission number TK53-663-11) by linking data from a longitudinal population register and registers of employment, educational qualifications, vital events, and other register sources. The extracted sample used in this study is taken from a random 11% sample of persons born between 1940 and 1995 who had been recorded in the population of Finland between 1970 and 2009. From 1987 onwards, the data include yearly information on such factors as employment and income, and events such as childbirths, and formations and dissolution of cohabitations and marriages, and completing educational degrees are recorded at the precision of a month. The data are unique also in containing high-quality information on all co-residential unions: not only marriages but also cohabitations.

In part of the analysis the mothers were analyzed in two groups; those who enter employment after having one child and those who have consecutive birth or births

,during the interruption. There are 24 729 mothers with one child and 19 065 mothers with second child. The childbirth years used are from 1989 to 2007 in order to have information from the two previous years and to follow the mother at most until year 2012.

The outcome event was the mother's entry to employment after childbirth. Here studying is paralleled to being employed, and non-employment refers to unemployment, retirement or other non-employment options. We used two variables to conclude whether the mother is employed or non-employed; "the main type of activity" measure is used to determine employment and studying while "amount of childcare allowance" variable is used to confirm the employment of the mother. The main type of activity is measured during the last week of the year. This measure is confirmed by the amount of childcare allowances which include cash-for-childcare and part-time cash-for-childcare. We chose the dividing line of not working and working to be 2500 e of child care allowances during a year. In this study the duration of the interruption is estimated in years.

We analyzed women at their transition to motherhood and therefore concluded only mothers who are on the career interruption after the first child in the data. The following births will be

included if they take place during the same break. Multiple births are generalized to one birth and here the number of children indicates the number of childbearing. We restrict from the data mothers whose first child dies because their reasons to enter employment are different than mothers in this study. In addition, mothers who lived abroad during the interruption are eliminated from the analysis since we do not have information on them during the time of absence.

Measures of socioeconomic status

The socioeconomic status of the mother is measured in terms of educational attainment, earnings, age, union status and previous employment status. The measure of union status is time-varying, while educational attainment and age are measured at the childbirth. The level of earnings is from the year before childbirth and previous employment status is evaluated from two previous years. The sample distributions are presented in the appendix. The sample is divided into two groups according to the number of children born during the interruption; 1) one child and 2) two or more children.

Educational attainment indicates the highest education level achieved by the mother by the end of the year before childbirth. Five levels are distinguished in the analyses: 1) *basic education* which includes persons who have only graduated from comprehensive school, 2) *vocational education* refers to a secondary level occupational training after comprehensive school, 3) *gymnasium* refers to the secondary level Finnish matriculation examination after 3 years of education, 4) *lower tertiary education* is 2-3 years education after secondary school, and 5) *higher tertiary education* includes persons who have a degree from university or polytechnic. The reference in the regression is the higher tertiary education.

The employment status before childbirth is determined from the main type of activity variable and is categorized as non-employed and employed from the two years prior to childbirth. The variable has three categories; 1) being non-employed for two, 2) being employed for one year and 3) being employed for two years during the two years prior to childbirth. The reference group is those who have most stable employment history prior to childbirth.

The earnings of the mother include all the earnings subject to state taxation during the year before childbirth. To measure the effect of earnings level, the amount of earnings has been transformed into year's 2012 level of currency. The variable is the transformed into earnings levels; 0 – 10 000 e, 10 000 – 20 000 e, 20 000 – 30 000 e, and 30 000 euros or more.

The timing of the motherhood

The timing of the motherhood will be analyzed through the age of the mother at childbirth. The age groups are 1) less than 25 years, 2) from 25 to 29 years, 3) from 30 to 34 years, and 4) 35 years or older. The reference group is the 25–29 year old mothers at the end of the childbirth year.

The union status and possible partner

According to previous studies about the second demographic transition, cohabitation has become a norm in a post-modern society. In our analysis the union status has three categories; 1) married, 2) cohabiting, and 3) single. These values have been determined from the information on possible spouse and the union. The reference group is married mothers.

The socioeconomic resources of the partner are analyzed through the level of education and earnings. Earnings levels are; 0 – 20 000e, 20 000 – 30 000e, 30 000 – 40 000e, 40 000 – 50 000e, and 50 000e or more.

Other variables

All the models in logistic regression include variables; the birth year of the child and the age of the first child. In addition, the sample is divided into two groups according to the number of children born during the interruption; mothers with one child and mothers with two or more children. They are also referred to as mothers who enter employment before the possible second child and those who have second child before entering employment. In the sample 56.5 % of the mothers have only one child during the interruption (N=24 729).

The birth year of the first child is also the year of entering motherhood first time. The year variable indicates changes in the economy of Finland, in the social policies for families and in

the attitudes and values towards motherhood, caring and career. It has four categories; 1989-1993, 1994-1998, 1999-2003 and 2004-2007 of which the first one is the reference group.

The age of the first child refers to the interruption duration. The duration affects the risk of entering employment in different ways. For some mothers, a long break can make the transition from non-employment difficult and the risk gets lower. However, for most the risk gets higher the longer the break is. After three years, while the cash-for-childcare ends, the risk gets lower.

According to the sample distributions (table x, appendices), mothers who enter employment after one child have higher education, earnings and longer previous employment, are older and more likely to be single. The distribution of partner's education level is the same for both groups of mothers, whereas those mothers who have more than one child during the interruption have more likely a partner with high earnings.

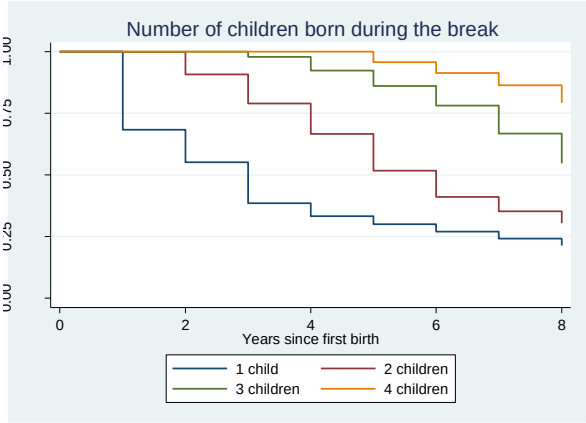
Methods

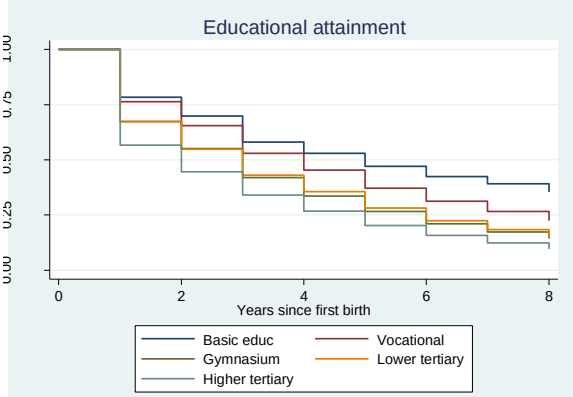
We used discrete event history methods in the data analyses, and Kaplan-Meier survival estimators in the descriptive analyses. In the logistic regression the dependent variable is the risk to enter employment at a specific time t, conditional on not entering employment at time t - 1. The results of the regression are presented as marginal effects.

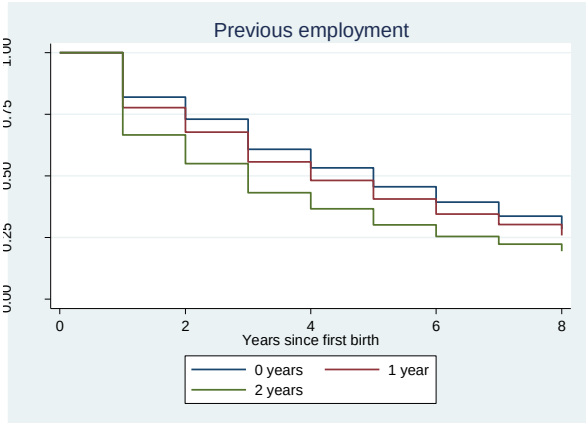
Results

Length of the interruption and enter to employment

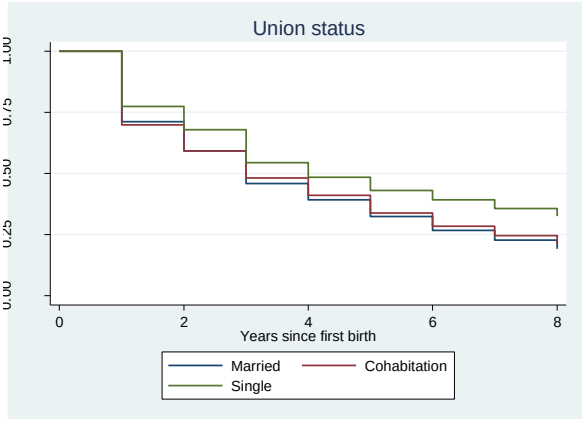
The results found from the Kaplan-Meier survival estimators and their illustrations are explained next (figures 1-8). According to Kaplan-Meier survival estimates, in the sample 29 % of all the mothers enter employment after 1 year. Those who are still non-employed have 39% chance of employment after the second year. The number of children born during the interruption increases the risk to stay non-employed. Mothers with tertiary education have highest risk of entering employment; after 1 year the risk is 0.43. For those with basic education the risk is only 0.22. Mothers who were non-employed for two years prior to childbirth have lower risk to enter employment than those who were employed; after 1 year the risk is 0.18 while for employed it was 0.33. The higher the earnings are, the higher the risk to enter employment. After 1 year, the risk is 0.43 for those with highest earnings, while for mothers in the group of lowest earnings have only 0.21 risk. After one year interruption, those women who are cohabiting have the highest risk for employment (0.30), while for married women the risk is 0.29 and for single mothers 0.23. For the youngest group of mothers, the risk to enter employment is smaller than for other age groups. Those mothers who have a partner with high education or high earnings have the highest risk to enter employment. The length of the interruption calculated in years' accuracy can be seen in the graphs; the risk not to enter employment before 1 year is 100%. The analysis time is limited into 8 years in Kaplan-Meier estimates.

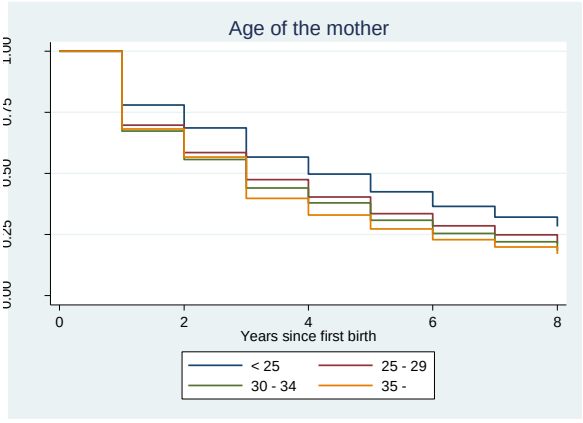

Number of children born during the break
0.00
0.25
0.50
0.75
1.00
0
2
4
6
8
Years since first birth
1 child
2 children
3 children
4 children

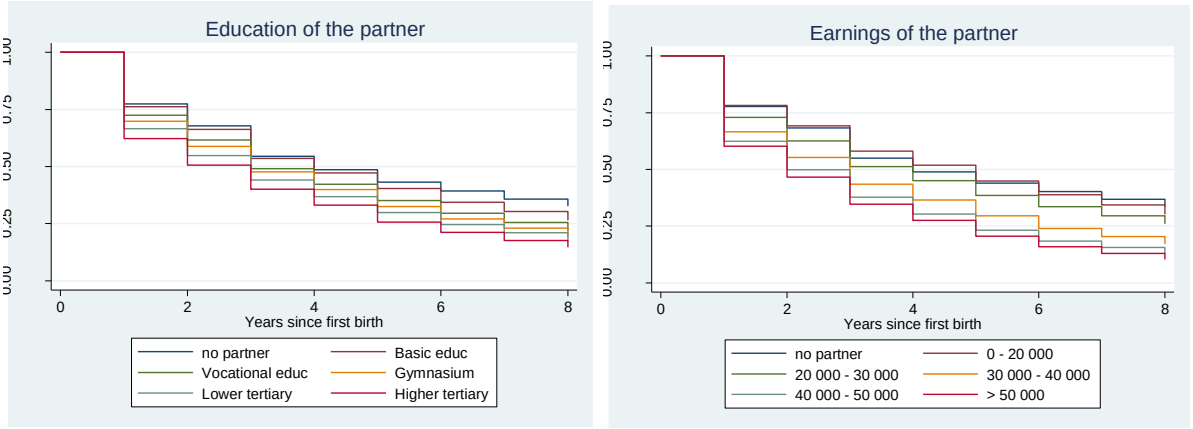

Educational attainment
0.00
0.25
0.50
0.75
1.00
0
2
4
6
8
Years since first birth
Basic educ
Vocational
Gymnasium
Lower tertiary
Higher tertiary


Previous employment
0.00
0.25
0.50
0.75
1.00
0
2
4
6
8
Years since first birth
0 years
1 year
2 years


Previous earnings
0.00
0.25
0.50
0.75
1.00
0
2
4
6
8
Years since first birth
0 - 10 000 e
10 000 - 20 000 e
20 000 - 30 000 e
> 30 000 e


Union status
0.00
0.25
0.50
0.75
1.00
0
2
4
6
8
Years since first birth
Married
Cohabitation
Single


Age of the mother
0.00
0.25
0.50
0.75
1.00
0
2
4
6
8
Years since first birth
< 25
25 - 29
30 - 34
35 -



Figures 1.-8. Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of the length of the interruption for 1) number of children born during the interruption, 2) educational attainment, 3) previous employment, 4) previous earnings, 5) union status, 6) the age of the mother at first birth, 7) education of the partner, and 8) earnings of the partner.

The main-effect models: Socioeconomic resources and timing of the motherhood

The models describing the associations between the socioeconomic resources with entry into employment were fitted separately for the two groups; mothers who enter employment before next childbirth and mothers who had second child before entering employment. Each model include the year of the first entry into motherhood and the age of the first child. In model 1 additional factor is the educational attainment. All the subsequent models have one variable added in the following order; previous employment status, earnings before childbirth, age at first birth and the union status at the employment entry. Tables 1 and 2 summarizes the results.

For mothers who enter employment after one child (table 1), the explanatory variables together explain 9.6 % of the risk to enter employment. The effect of educational attainment decreases as other variables are controlled in the models. Nevertheless, in general the higher the level of education is, the higher the risk to enter employment is. The difference between higher tertiary and vocational or basic level education is 5 % in the last model. When the earnings are controlled, the difference between gymnasium level education and higher tertiary education disappears. Otherwise, the effect of education is statistically significant. In all the models, the

previous employment status variable has a clear effect; the more there are employment history, the higher the risk to enter employment. In general, the higher the previous earnings are, the higher the risk to enter employment. However, in the last model those with smallest earnings have higher risk than mothers with earnings between 10 000 and 20 000 euros. The youngest age groups have the highest risk to enter employment. Mothers in a marriage or cohabitation have 3 % higher risk to enter employment than single-mothers. According to year variable, those who entered motherhood during the years of 1989 – 1993, have lowest risk to enter employment and in the later child birth cohorts the risk increases. As the child gets older, the risk also changes. When the child is three years old, the risk is highest which indicates the limit of cash-for-childcare.

For mothers who have a second child before entering employment (table 2), the explanatory variables together explain 5.3 % of the risk to enter employment. Also here the effect of educational attainment slightly diminishes as other variables are controlled in the models, and the higher the level of education is, the higher the risk to enter employment is. However, the differences between the education levels are smaller than for mothers with only one child. The previous employment status variable has a similar effect; the more there are employment history, the higher the risk to enter employment. As in the previous group, the higher the previous earnings are, the higher the risk to enter employment. The risk to enter employment does not vary between different age groups. Also, for the different union status groups the risk to enter employment is almost the same. According to the childbirth year variable, the risk to enter employment increases as the childbirth cohort gets later. Also, the risk increases as the first child gets older.

Comparing the two groups of mothers, we find that in general the effects are smaller for those mothers who have second child during the interruption. This indicates that the factors analyzed do not play much role if the mother have more than one child before entering employment. According to the analysis, the oldest mothers have the lowest risk to enter employment after one child is born but if the mother has more children during the interruption the age of the mother is almost non-significant. The age of the first child has different kind of effect in the two groups; for those having one child the risk is highest after three years and for the other group the risk gets higher after every year.

Table 1. Marginal effects of logistic regression on the probability of entering employment after the first entry into motherhood. Including mothers who enter employment after 1 child.

		Bivariate	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Education at birth (ref. Higher tertiary)	Basic educ	-0,21 *** (0,006)	-0,09 *** (0,005)	-0,08 *** (0,005)	-0,06 *** (0,005)	-0,06 *** (0,006)	-0,05 *** (0,006)
	Vocational educ	-0,14 *** (0,006)	-0,09 *** (0,005)	-0,08 *** (0,005)	-0,05 *** (0,006)	-0,05 *** (0,006)	-0,05 *** (0,006)
	Gymnasium	-0,06 *** (0,007)	-0,06 *** (0,006)	-0,03 *** (0,006)	-0,01 (0,006)	-0,01 (0,007)	-0,01 (0,007)
	Lower tertiary	-0,07 *** (0,006)	-0,04 *** (0,005)	-0,04 *** (0,005)	-0,02 *** (0,005)	-0,03 *** (0,005)	-0,02 *** (0,005)
Previous employment during 2 years (ref. 2 yrs)	0 yrs	-0,08 *** (0,003)		-0,08 *** (0,003)	-0,06 *** (0,005)	-0,06 *** (0,005)	-0,06 *** (0,005)
	1 yr	-0,06 *** (0,003)		-0,06 *** (0,003)	-0,04 *** (0,004)	-0,04 *** (0,004)	-0,04 *** (0,004)
Earnings before childbirth (ref. > 30 000)	0 - 10 000	-0,16 *** (0,005)			-0,05 *** (0,006)	-0,06 *** (0,006)	-0,05 *** (0,006)
	10 000 - 20 000	-0,16 *** (0,005)			-0,05 *** (0,005)	-0,06 *** (0,005)	-0,06 *** (0,005)
	20 000 -30 000	-0,09 *** (0,005)			-0,02 *** (0,006)	-0,03 *** (0,005)	-0,03 *** (0,005)
Age at first birth (ref. 25 - 29)	< 25	-0,05 *** (0,003)				-0,006 (0,004)	-0,004 (0,004)
	30 - 34	0,005 (0,004)				-0,01 *** (0,003)	-0,01 *** (0,003)
	35 -	-0,01 ** (0,004)				-0,03 *** (0,004)	-0,02 *** (0,004)
Partnership (ref. Married)	Cohabiting	-0,003 (0,003)					-0,007 * (0,003)
	Single	-0,10 *** (0,003)					-0,03 *** (0,003)
Year of first birth (ref. 1989 - 1993)	1994 - 1998	0,06 *** (0,003)	0,04 *** (0,003)	0,06 *** (0,003)	0,06 *** (0,003)	0,06 *** (0,005)	0,06 *** (0,005)
	1999 - 2003	0,21 *** (0,004)	0,17 *** (0,004)	0,18 *** (0,004)	0,18 *** (0,004)	0,18 *** (0,004)	0,18 *** (0,004)
	2004 - 2007	0,36 *** (0,005)	0,30 *** (0,005)	0,30 *** (0,005)	0,30 *** (0,005)	0,30 *** (0,005)	0,30 *** (0,005)
Age of the first child (ref. 1 year)	2 yrs	-0,13 *** (0,004)	-0,10 *** (0,003)	-0,10 *** (0,003)	-0,09 *** (0,003)	-0,09 *** (0,003)	-0,09 *** (0,003)
	3 yrs	-0,02 *** (0,005)	0,02 *** (0,005)	0,03 *** (0,005)	0,03 *** (0,005)	0,03 *** (0,005)	0,03 *** (0,005)
	4 yrs or older	-0,18 *** (0,003)	-0,08 *** (0,004)	-0,07 *** (0,004)	-0,07 *** (0,004)	-0,07 *** (0,004)	-0,07 *** (0,004)
N		100683	100683	100683	100683	100683	100683
pseudo R2			0,088	0,094	0,095	0,095	0,096
df			8	9	12	15	16
BIC			101483,5	100896,3	100787,7	100782,9	100717,2

Standard errors in parentheses: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 2. Marginal effects of logistic regression on the probability of entering employment after the first entry into motherhood. Including mothers who have second child before entering employment.

		Bivariate	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Education at birth (ref. Higher tertiary)	Basic educ	-0,08 *** (0,005)	-0,06 *** (0,005)	-0,06 *** (0,005)	-0,05 *** (0,005)	-0,04 *** (0,005)	-0,04 *** (0,005)
	Vocational educ	-0,06 *** (0,005)	-0,06 *** (0,005)	-0,05 *** (0,005)	-0,04 *** (0,005)	-0,04 *** (0,005)	-0,04 *** (0,005)
	Gymnasium	-0,03 *** (0,006)	-0,05 *** (0,005)	-0,04 *** (0,005)	-0,02 *** (0,006)	-0,02 *** (0,006)	-0,02 *** (0,006)
	Lower tertiary	-0,03 *** (0,005)	-0,03 *** (0,005)	-0,03 *** (0,005)	-0,01 ** (0,005)	-0,02 ** (0,005)	-0,02 ** (0,005)
Previous employment during 2 years (ref. 2 yrs)	0 yrs	-0,02 *** (0,003)		-0,03 *** (0,003)	-0,02 *** (0,004)	-0,02 *** (0,004)	-0,02 *** (0,004)
	1 yr	-0,01 *** (0,003)		-0,02 *** (0,003)	-0,01 *** (0,003)	-0,01 *** (0,003)	-0,01 *** (0,003)
Earnings before childbirth (ref. > 30 000)	0 - 10 000	-0,05 *** (0,004)			-0,04 *** (0,005)	-0,04 *** (0,005)	-0,04 *** (0,005)
	10 000 - 20 000	-0,05 *** (0,004)			-0,03 *** (0,004)	-0,03 *** (0,005)	-0,03 *** (0,005)
	20 000 -30 000	-0,03 *** (0,004)			-0,02 *** (0,004)	-0,02 *** (0,004)	-0,02 *** (0,004)
Age at first birth (ref. 25 - 29)	< 25	-0,02 *** (0,002)				-0,01 ** (0,003)	-0,01 ** (0,003)
	30 - 34	0,01 * (0,003)				-0,01 * (0,003)	-0,01 * (0,003)
	35 -	0,01 * (0,006)				-0,003 (0,005)	-0,002 (0,005)
Partnership (ref. Married)	Cohabiting	-0,01 * (0,003)					-0,001 (0,003)
	Single	-0,03 *** (0,003)					-0,01 ** (0,004)
Year of first birth (ref. 1989 - 1993)	1994 - 1998	0,05 *** (0,002)	0,06 *** (0,002)	0,06 *** (0,003)	0,06 *** (0,003)	0,06 *** (0,003)	0,06 *** (0,003)
	1999 - 2003	0,11 *** (0,003)	0,15 *** (0,004)	0,15 *** (0,004)	0,15 *** (0,004)	0,15 *** (0,004)	0,15 *** (0,004)
	2004 - 2007	0,09 *** (0,005)	0,16 *** (0,005)	0,15 *** (0,005)	0,15 *** (0,005)	0,15 *** (0,005)	0,15 *** (0,005)
Age of the first child (ref. 2 years or younger)	3 yrs	0,06 *** (0,003)	0,05 *** (0,003)	0,05 *** (0,003)	0,05 *** (0,003)	0,05 *** (0,003)	0,05 *** (0,003)
	4 yrs	0,08 *** (0,003)	0,07 *** (0,003)	0,07 *** (0,003)	0,07 *** (0,003)	0,07 *** (0,003)	0,07 *** (0,003)
	5 yrs or older	0,12 *** (0,002)	0,16 *** (0,002)	0,16 *** (0,002)	0,16 *** (0,002)	0,16 *** (0,002)	0,16 *** (0,002)
N		117514	117514	117514	117514	117514	117514
pseudo R2			0,051	0,052	0,053	0,053	0,053
df			8	9	12	15	16
BIC			97631,3	97492	97452,7	97476,2	97489,1

Standard errors in parentheses: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Those who do not enter employment

To find the characteristics of mothers who continue their non-employment more than the usual trend, we looked into the descriptive numbers of these mothers. To compare mothers according to their non-employment duration, we will include only mothers who entered employment before the possible second child. We will use two years interruption duration as a dividing line. In our sample 24 700 mothers entered employment before possible consecutive births and of those 67.7% within two years (table 3). In other words, one third of the mothers were non-employed for more than two years. According to our analysis, on average those mothers are less educated, have lower earnings, are less frequently employed prior to childbirth, and they are more often single-mothers. Average age at first birth were high for both groups, 28 years. Mothers who are non-employed longer are on average 0.4 years older at first birth. All the differences between the two groups are statistically significant.

Table 3. Characteristics of mothers who had and had not entered employment two years after childbirth. Only those mothers who entered before the possible second child are included. N=24726

	Total who gave birth	Returned within 2 years	Had not yet returned
Total	24 723	16 736	7 987
	100 %	67,7 %	32,3 %
Human capital and job characteristics			
Average age at first birth	28,3	28,2	28,6
Tertiary level of education	39,4 %	45,8 %	25,9 %
Median earnings	21 100e	22 400e	18 400e
Previous employment (2 years)	69,1 %	73,7 %	59,4 %
Family characteristics			
Spouse present	83,0 %	88,0 %	72,5 %

Conclusions

This study examined how the socioeconomic resources, the age of the mother, the union status, and the partner's socioeconomic resources affect the entry into employment after a childbirth. The Finnish context shows how in a welfare state with an extended parental leaves, the reconciliation of family and work is still very different for women with different socioeconomic resources, and therefore work and family conflict is also still very unequal environment. Our study show this polarization in Finland. The gap between disadvantaged and advantaged women in the work-family conflict has been noticed since the recession in the early 1990s. Moreover, it can still be seen in the labor force attachment and decisions regarding the career interruption.

We grouped the mothers according to the number of children born before entering employment; mothers enter after one child and mothers who have second child before entering. According to the descriptive analyses, those who enter employment before the possible second childbirth are on average older, have higher earnings, and they are more likely partnered. Also, partner's high education and earnings have positive effect on the mother's employment entry. The number of children born during the career interruption is an interesting area to examine; mothers with consecutive childbirths without employment periods can have different preferences, or as according to the micro-economic theory, the opportunity cost of not being employed gets lower. Clearly, the interruption duration is longer, but whether the risk to enter employment differs as well, was analyzed in this study. In addition, this is an interesting aspect in the Finnish context since nowadays the mothers are less encouraged to enter employment between births.

Our findings indicate that the risk to enter employment is affected by educational attainment, earnings, previous employment, age of the mother at childbirth and union status. The effects of the socioeconomic resources are positive for all the mothers; high education, high earnings and previous employment increase the risk to enter employment. These results follow the micro-economic theory and our hypotheses; the opportunity cost is higher for mothers with higher socioeconomic status and they enter employment faster. According to our analysis, being single-parent increases the risk to enter employment if the mother has one child during

the interruption. However, if the mother has more than one child, there is no difference between having a partner and not having.

Second hypotheses considered the timing of motherhood. Delayed motherhood is strongly related to the second demographic transitions where female labor force participation rose, cohabitations increased and fertility decreased. According to our study, women who have a delayed motherhood are more likely to enter employment after one child and their risk to do so is lower than for younger mothers. However, the youngest group of mothers in general have longer career interruption than others.

Our findings are in line with those previously reported on the effect of socioeconomic factors. However, we have more detailed knowledge on the number of children born, the union status and partner's socioeconomic resources. Together with previous studies we can conclude that there are differences between mothers and their choices regarding the work-family conflict. In Finland, where low-paid cash-for-childcare can be extended until the youngest child is 3 years old, the polarization between mothers with high and low socioeconomic status is a very current topic. There are great differences in the length of the career interruption and how the socioeconomic factors affect the risk to enter employment.

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Appendices

Table a. The sample distributions for mothers who enter employment before possible second child (N=24 729) and mothers who have second child before employment (N=19 065).

		1 child	2 children or more
Education at birth	Basic educ	30 %	33 %
	Vocational educ	19 %	21 %
	Gymnasium	12 %	11 %
	Lower tertiary	27 %	27 %
	Higher Tertiary	13 %	9 %
Previous employment during 2 years	0 yrs	15 %	19 %
	1 yr	16 %	21 %
	2 yrs	69 %	60 %
Earnings before childbirth	0 - 10 000	19 %	23 %
	10 000 - 20 000	27 %	34 %
	20 000 -30 000	34 %	31 %
	> 30 000	20 %	12 %
Age at first birth	< 25	24 %	32 %
	25 - 29	38 %	43 %
	30 - 34	26 %	20 %
	35 -	13 %	5 %
Partnership	Cohabiting	31 %	19 %
	Married	52 %	72 %
	Single	17 %	9 %
Earnings of the partner	0 - 20 000	19 %	16 %
	20 000 - 30 000	26 %	22 %
	30 000 - 40 000	26 %	27 %
	40 000 - 50 000	14 %	16 %
	> 50 000	15 %	19 %
Education of the partner	Basic educ	17 %	16 %
	Vocational educ	37 %	38 %
	Gymnasium	10 %	9 %
	Lower tertiary	23 %	24 %
	Higher Tertiary	13 %	13 %
Year of first birth	1989 - 1993	22 %	37 %
	1994 - 1998	24 %	31 %
	1999 - 2003	28 %	21 %
	2004 - 2007	26 %	10 %
Age of the first child	1 yr	53 %	0 %
	2 yrs	15 %	6 %
	3 yrs	14 %	10 %
	4 yrs or older	9 %	84 %