

# young women = „risky business“? the **maybe baby** effect in the early career phase

Jamie Lee Gloor, M.A.

Chair of Human Resource Management  
Department of Business Administration



**University of  
Zurich**<sup>UZH</sup>

draw from multiple sources, data

(supply- & demand-side)

explain theory

present results

propose practical implications

provide **NEW** insights



*“No self-respecting small businessman with a brain in the right place would ever employ a lady of child-bearing age.”*

- Godfrey Bloom, British Politician & Member of the European Parliament (2004-2014)

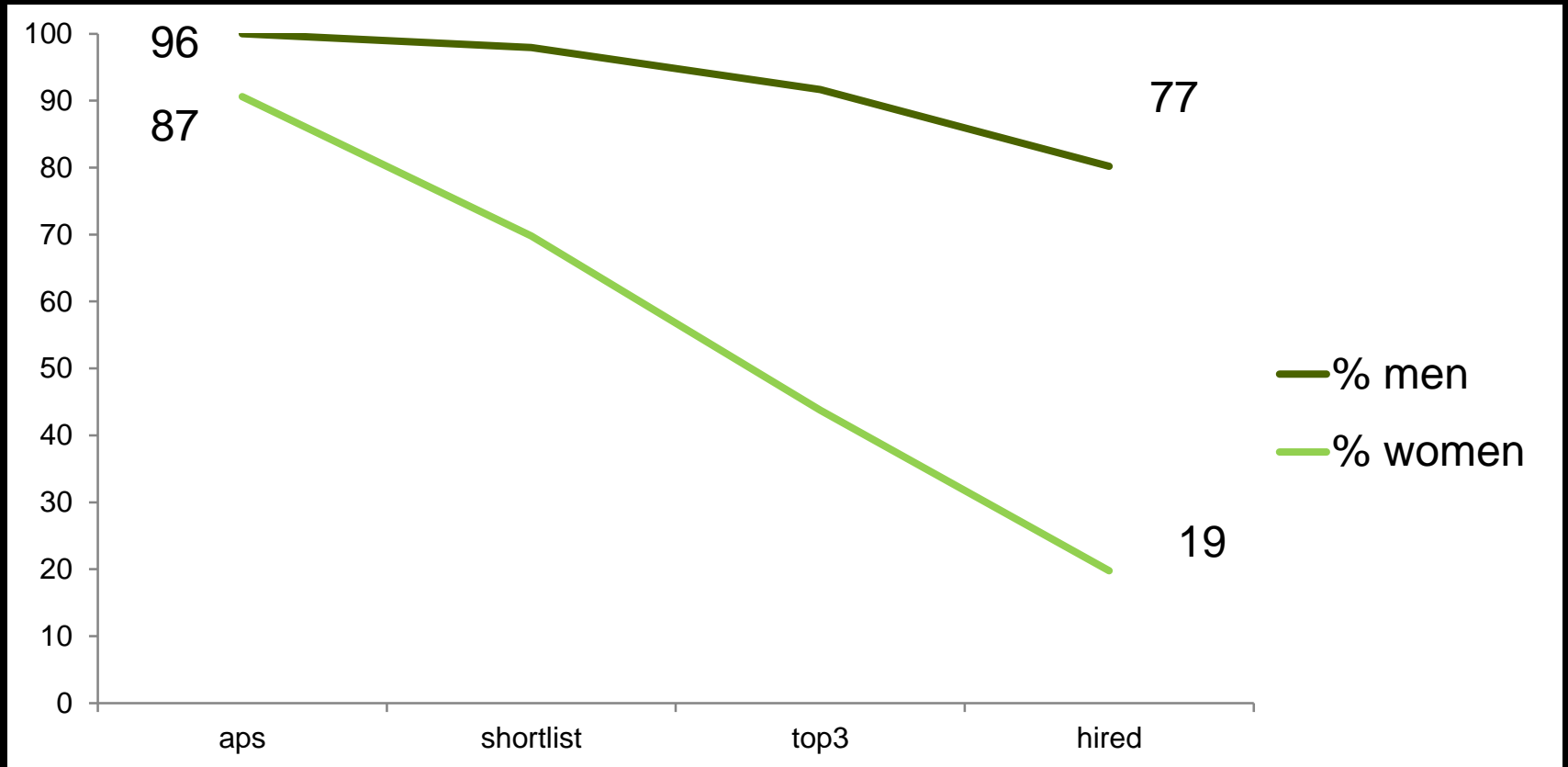


*“The problem is that (early career women) are likely to take time off at a number of times to have children... My wife has covered for maternity leave 7 times now...”*

- Study Participant

Gloor (2014), Assistant Professor Exit Survey

# UZH Asst. Prof. Selections



N = 96

women face employment disadvantages  
relative to men (Heilman, 2012; Koch, D'Mello, & Sackett, 2014)

not all women equally affected: mothers face  
greater employment obstacles (Benard & Correll, 2010;  
Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004; Fuegen, Biernat,  
Haines, & Deux, 2004; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008; Okimoto & Heilman, 2012)

**BUT** even childless women may experience  
motherhood penalties

intersection of age, gender, & parenthood:  
childbearing chance → **risk**



**maybe baby**



occupational disadvantages often stem from  
**gender-based stereotypes**

women	men
warm kind nurturing	agentic competent dominant

**gender bias & motherhood:**

parent status exemplifies stereotypically

communal traits for women (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004;  
Heilman & Okimoto, 2007)

## **lack of fit** (Heilman, 1983; 2001; 2012)

attributes & behaviors associated with effective leadership **≠** stereotypically female

women = poor fit for masculine settings, roles  
(Heilman et al., 1989; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002)

## **social role theory** (Eagly, 1987)

historical sex distributions (breadwinners & homemakers) → genuine & perceived difs

incongruity between gender stereotypes & leader attributes (Eagly & Karau, 2002)

# „ideal“ worker ≠ woman ≠ mother



somewhat outdated, less relevant once professional roles achieved

more women & mothers in workforce than ever before (OECD, 2004; She Figures, 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014)

asymmetrical & changing parental leave policies „blurs“ lines

„perceived risk“ distinct mechanism from previously studied

# “maybe baby” effect

**risk:** “the multidimensional probability distribution of realizing losses on a range of dimensions” (Conchar, Zinkhan, Peters, & Olavarrieta, 2004)

**gender** triggers stereotypes of congruence, commitment, and childcare responsibilities

**age** cues the salience and potential fulfilment of these expectations

decision-makers avoid risk (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979)

# why early career?

early career overlaps with childbearing years

(Adamo, 2013)

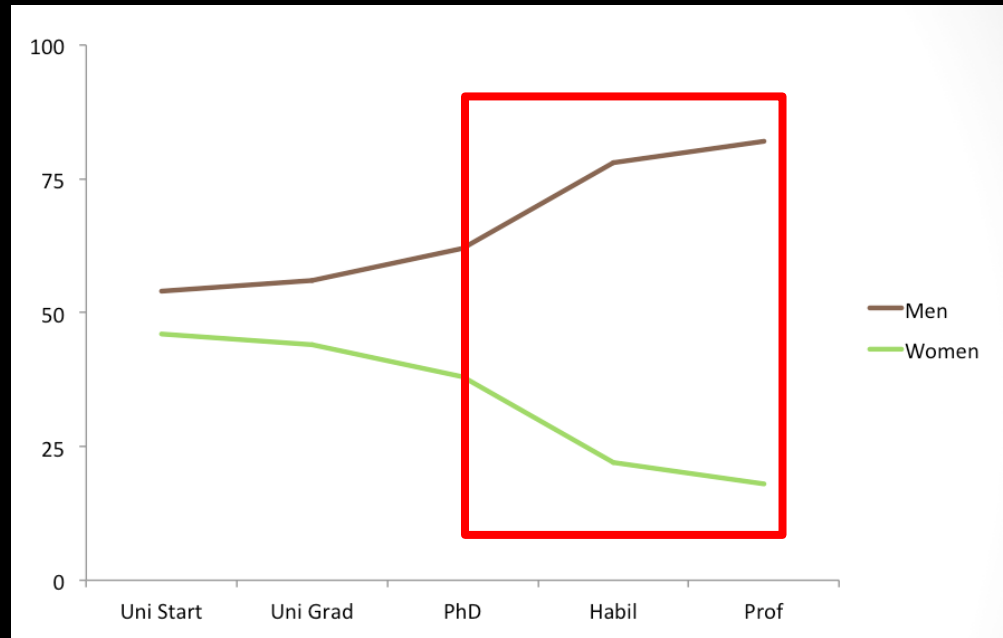
e.g., age of 1st child = 30, AP by 35

(ETH Faculty Affairs, 2013; Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2013)



women maintain lion share of „unpaid work“

(OECD, 2009; Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2014)



professional desire = clear (self-selected “in”)  
departure point for widening gender gap  
most research on leaders (barriers every step)

**why assistant professors?**

# overview of experiments

perceived risk of hiring young women:

1. contingent on *believed* desire to have children
2. *compared* to young childless men, mothers, and fathers



contexts of asymmetrical parental leave

# risk hypotheses

1. want children > don't want children
2. childless women > childless men  
(childless women = mothers)



# study 1

sample: 31 Executive MBAs in Switzerland

3 conditions: desire, no desire, control

**risk** (Cabrera, 2008)

“...risk you perceive in hiring the candidate.”

7-point scale („no risk“ – „extremely risky“)



**maybe baby**

# review

even *very* subtle interest in kids triggers risk  
evidence that risk diverges from commitment

# study 2

replicate with between-subjects design  
compare with men, fathers, mothers

# study 2

72 professors in Switzerland (12 Universities)

randomized, double-blind, between-subjects



**maybe baby**

# review

1 line on a CV = enough to increase risk  
childless women riskier than childless men  
(yet equally risky as mothers)



# longitudinal study



559 (51% women) early career scholars  
39.9% Swiss

data collected 1 year apart (2014, 2015)

gender, family & career

**incivility:** subtle disrespect from colleagues

**career identity:** satisfaction, importance



are women targeted with > disrespect?

are mothers especially targeted?

how does this affect career identity?

no differences in initial career identity  
BUT, women experience more incivility  
(especially childless women)  
which especially affects career identity

# discussion

## demand-side

young childless women = **risky business**

“maybe baby” from expected **interruption**

## supply-side

women-especially childless-face **incivility**

negative consequences for **career identity**

*„...extensive laws originally designed to make it easier for women to combine work and family can actually have negative consequences for women and thus result in hurting the very persons they were designed to help.“*

Peus & Traut-Mattausch (2008)



# practical implications

## selection

women apply, but dropped in selection process  
**shifting standards theory** (Biernat, 1994)

women-especially childless-greater hiring **risk**  
gatekeepers = risk averse (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979)

# practical implications

## withdrawal

**incivility → turnover; career identity → effort**

(Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cortina et al., 2013; Ibarra et al., 2013; Lobel & St. Clair, 1992; Lim et al., 2008; Lim & Lee, 2011)

# practical implications

## demand-side

allow shared parental leave

decision-makers: integrate risk assessment tools in hiring processes (Kühberger, 1998)

reframe employers' conceptions of having children (i.e.,  $\geq$  employee commitment, Aven, Parker & McEvoy, 1993; King, 2008; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; population growth)

# practical implications

## supply-side

proactively highlight inaccurate risk perceptions

clarify involvement, desire to advance (King, 2008)

surrounding pregnancy (Peus & Traut-Mattausch, 2008)

job insecurity/econ. uncertainty (Proudfoot et al., 2015)

cumulative effects (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hoobler et al., 2014)



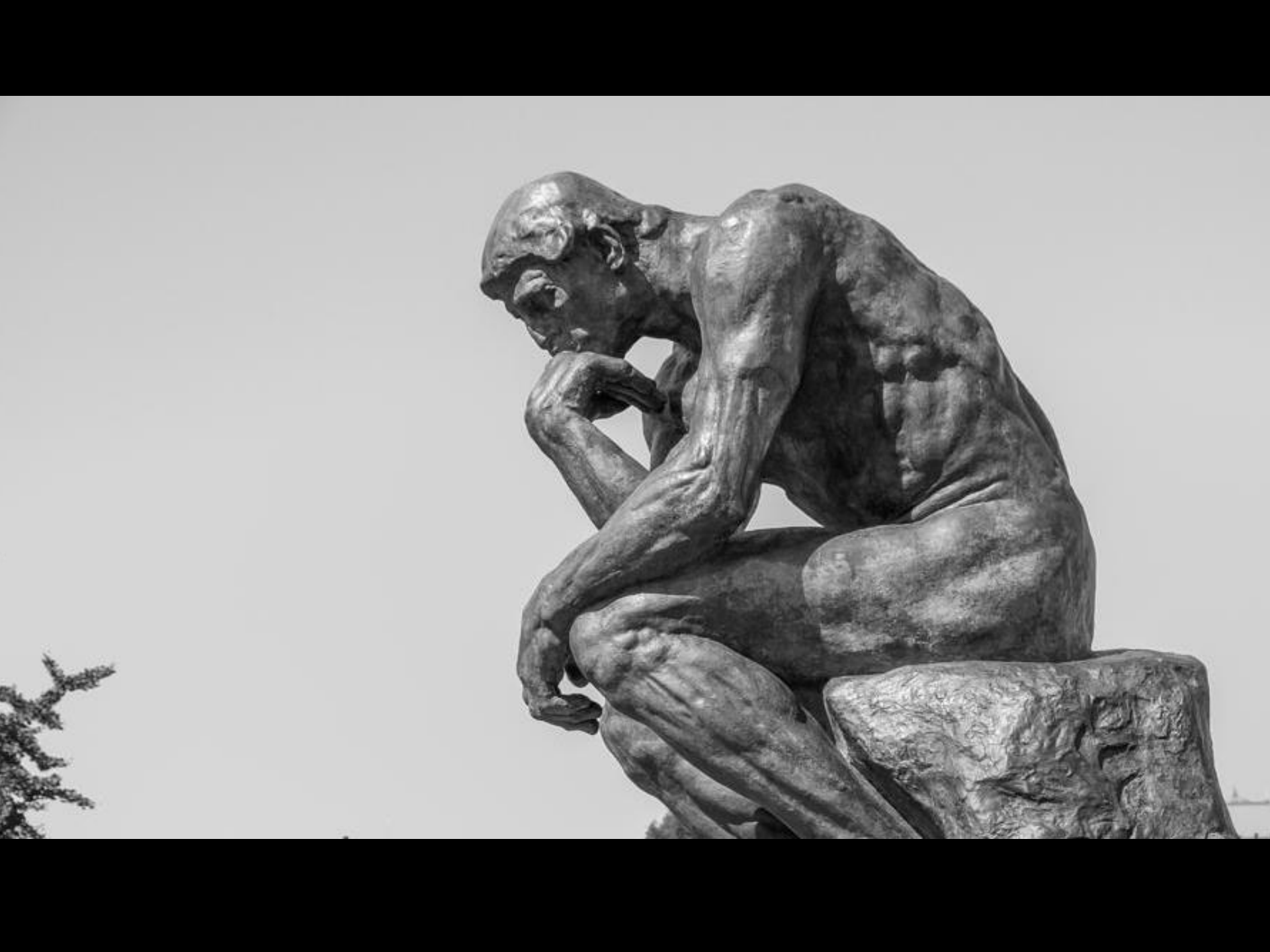


bias-free hiring = fair chances for qualified,  
educated, individual & societal investment (\$)

implications for professoriate as well as student  
study choice, persistence

(Bettinger & Long, 2005; Carrell, Page & West, 2009; Neumark & Gardecki 1997;  
Johnson, 2014)

strive for teacher diversity = student diversity











There's a time  
for playing it safe  
and a time for...

# *Risky Business*





# thank you.

Professor Bruno Staffelbach

Dr. Anja Feierabend

Professor Tyler Okimoto, Susanne Mehr

Tanja Neve-Seyfarth, Dr. Karin Gilland-Lutz

UZH Gender Equality Office

assistant professorship project committee





**any questions?**