



**Karolinska  
Institutet**

**Institutionen för Kvinnors och Barns hälsa**

## **Fruktsamhet och Barnafödande -upplevelser, tankar och attityder bland kvinnor som inte fött barn**

**AKADEMISK AVHANDLING**

som för avläggande av medicine doktorsexamen vid Karolinska Institutet offentligen försvaras i Hillarpsalen, Institutionen för neurovetenskap, Retzius väg 8.

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av

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## ABSTRACT

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*Aim:* The overall aim of this thesis is to describe experiences of fertility, interpret thoughts on childbearing, and compare attitudes to fertility and childbearing with background characteristics, among women not yet mothers.

*Methods:* In study I a phenomenological method was used to describe women's experiences of fertility. In study II a lifeworldhermeneutic approach was used to interpret women's thoughts on childbearing. In study III explorative factor analysis with principal component analysis was used to develop an instrument and in study IV principal component analysis was used and Student's t-test and ANOVA was performed between components and women's background characteristics. Data were collected from interviews with ten (I) and nine (II) women not yet mothers, and by using questionnaires (III, IV). A sample of 138 (III) and 424 (IV) women not yet mothers participated.

*Findings:* Fertility was experienced as paradoxical, as follows: fertility as a power that has to be suppressed, experiencing fertility in the present time and as a future finite possibility, and having one's own fertile responsibility governed by society (I). Childbearing includes dimensions of both immanence and transcendence. Immanence, as childbearing is seen as stagnant to women's freedom in present life. Transcendence, as childbearing is thought of as a project for future life, a part of female identity, and a conscious standpoint for which the woman wants to be prepared and for which she wants to create the best conditions (II). The instrument showed acceptable sample adequacy, factorability, and reliability. Three components were revealed, each one representing a specific underlying dimension of the construct (III). The results in study IV showed acceptable sample adequacy, factorability and reliability. The three components were *Importance for future*, *Hindrance at present* and *Female identity*. The youngest women (20-23y), of single status, students and women living in large cities were more likely to score high with the component *Hindrance at present*. Women having a partner were more likely to score high on *Importance for future* and *Female identity* (IV).

*Conclusions:* Fertility and childbearing are important to young adult women's future lives. Fertility is a possibility, and childbearing a future project initiated in present time, relevant to female identity. Attitudes to fertility and childbearing showed that it had importance for the women's future although it could be a hindrance at present. Fertility, childbearing and mothering need to be confirmed in young women's lives.

Keywords: Childbearing, fertility, phenomenology, hermeneutics, interviews, lifeworld, women's health, female identity, factor analysis, instrument development.