

THESIS

PLANNING FOR PARENTAL LEAVE: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS EXPLORING
PLANNING DECISIONS DURING PRE-LEAVE

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Science

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2019

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ABSTRACT

PLANNING FOR PARENTAL LEAVE: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS EXPLORING PLANNING DECISIONS DURING PRE-LEAVE

This inductive, exploratory study aimed to increase our understanding about the parental leave and return to work process. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to identify how expectant mothers make decisions about parental leave before they take leave, to identify personal and workplace factors that predict expectant mothers' decision-making about parental leave pre-leave, and to understand how expectant mothers and employers plan ahead at work and in their career for taking leave and returning to work. I constructed semi-structured interview questions to address these research questions. I used an exploratory qualitative analysis method to analyze the data. The research team coded the data through first-level and second-level strategies, and then I identified major themes. The six main findings from the themes are 1) the monetary cost of things (e.g., childcare) in relation to household income played a major role in planning and decision making for parental leave, 2) participants varied in their perceptions on how much of a role their coworkers and supervisors play, 3) qualification for parental leave benefits (e.g., such as qualifying for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) benefits) or available sick or vacation time strongly influenced plans for when to take leave and for how long, 4) participants believe that supervisors and leaders in organizations can better support pregnant working women by supporting paid leave, knowing more about the policies and procedures around leave, and more flexibility around work hours and location, 5) participants expressed, and it became a clear theme, that each pregnancy and work situation around parental leave is

different, and 6) culture may or may not play a role in the experience of parental leave. These data may be a foundation to inform the development of interventions to help expectant mothers and their employers navigate this process successfully.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this thesis to my partner, Kole Daigle, for his unconditional love throughout my graduate school journey and my friend, Chela Wallin, for her endless encouragement and genuine interest in my research. Also to my advisor, Dr. Gwenith G. Fisher, who has been a great source of support for my professional and personal development. I thank my committee, Dr. Tori Crain, Dr. Jennifer Harman, and Dr. Eric Aoki, for their feedback, support, time, and energy given to this project. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my incredible undergraduate research assistants, Victoria Stansberry and Miranda Nabkel. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Robin and Tony, and my grandmother, Stephanie, for raising me to be more than a conqueror.

This research was supported by the Mountain and Plains Education and Research Center, Grant T42OH009229, funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services. This research was also supported by the Industrial/Organizational Psychology Program's Small Grant at Colorado State University.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s, women in the United States (U.S.) are more and more likely to work while pregnant and work further into their pregnancy (Laughlin, 2011). For example, in 2008, 82% of women who were pregnant with their first child continued to work until one month or less of the birth of their baby (Laughlin, 2011). Women are also returning to work faster after giving birth than in the past (Laughlin, 2011), on average within 3 months (Johnson, 2007). Most women in the United States are in the paid workforce when they become pregnant with their first child (Johnson, 2007), specifically “66 percent of mothers who had their first birth in 2006–2008 worked during pregnancy” (Laughlin, 2011 p. 4), and 88% of these pregnant working women worked into the third trimester (Laughlin, 2011).

Given the large proportion of women who work while pregnant and return to work soon after having their baby, understanding the parental leave process is critical to support the optimal planning and functioning of pregnant working mothers and the organizations that employ them (Fisher, Valley, Toppinen-Tanner, & Mattingly, 2016). This process of parental leave and return to work encompasses the transitional experience of employees as they become parents. The intersection between work and non-work life of employees may change dramatically with the addition of a new child. Unlike other types of leave from employment (e.g., leave for injury, illness, or other disability), planning can begin months in advance, and the general timeline may be one that pregnant working women can anticipate (given that the duration of most pregnancies is 38 weeks). Additionally, this type of leave may introduce new challenges employees may not have faced before, such as the experience of stigma associated with being a working mother (Sabat, Lindsey, King, & Jones, 2016). For the mother, going through this parental leave process

can be stressful, which could have negative well-being outcomes (Alstveit, Severinsson, & Karlsen, 2011). Meanwhile, the health and supportive benefits of being an employed woman are far reaching (Gjerdingen, McGovern, Bekker, Lundberg, & Willemssen, 2001; Lee & Powers, 2002; Rout, Cooper, & Kerslake, 1997; Schnittker, 2007). Of importance to her employer, it is expensive to replace an employee, recruit, hire, and train a new employee (Davidson, Timo, & Wang, 2010). However, there is a small amount of evidence suggesting that having support for workers planning for parental leave can increase retention, saving employers money (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2017).

Importantly, the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) in the United States only covers 40% of the workforce, many without a mandated policy for preparing for and executing parental leave, and without paid leave. The National Partnership for Women and Families states there is an urgent need for paid family and medical leave for all working women in the United States (National Partnership.org, 2017). Additionally, they suggest that paid family and medical leave, and affordable childcare are resources need to help support the economic security of our nation. Further, 44% of all voters reported that they would be very likely to face significant financial hardships if they had a new child (Lake Research Partner and Terrance Group, 2016). A lack of paid leave in this country can disproportionately disadvantage low-wage, black, and Latino workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016, Abt. Associated, 2013). When paid leave is not offered, women return to work faster, which can increase their likelihood of becoming ill (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2017). Therefore, it is in both the employer's and individuals' best interests to retain pregnant working women and returning mothers, and support the parental leave process. Business have begun to do more to support parental leave, such as Patagonia, Adobe, Spotify, Levis, and others.

Although there is extensive research on the work-family interface, there has been little attention to the process of taking parental leave and returning to work. Research about how parental leave and return to work impacts career progression is scarce; little is known about how to make the experience successful for the employee and employer (Freeney, van der Werff, & Collings, 2018). Previous research has found that pregnant working women may experience higher demands in work and non-work areas of their lives than before they were pregnant (Spitzmueller & Matthews, 2016). In the non-work domain, pregnant working women visit doctor's offices more frequently, and prepare their homes and non-work lives for the addition of a child. In the work domain, women handle their leave plans with their human resources (HR) departments, navigate when and how to tell others they are pregnant, and prepare the organization for when they will not be occupying their position.

The experience of transitioning back into the workforce after parental leave was explored in a mixed methods study (Freeney, van der Werff, & Collings, 2018). Freeney and colleagues (2018) found that the transition back to work is a significant "juncture in a woman's career" (Freeney et al. 2018 p. 8), which can involve career derailment and an increase in the demands between work and non-work. A mixed-methods collaboration between Dublin City University's Business School and HR Search recruiting firm found three main negative experiences women face when returning to work: 1) career derailment, 2) unconscious biases from people at work, and 3) deterioration of professional relationships (Freeney et al., 2018). Therefore, an expectant mother should consider how work, pregnancy, and her new child will impact her career and financial status, and consider her coworkers, supervisors, and family when making such decisions (Freeney et al., 2018; Spitzmueller & Matthews, 2016), although it is unclear if women are contemplating these factors before going on leave. Coulson and colleagues (2012) noted that

there has been very little empirical exploration of the active participation women may have in the process of returning to work (e.g., Harrison & Ungerer, 2002; Houston & Marks, 2003), and few studies have examined how the workplace can aid in this process. Exploring the process of parental leave and return to work is critical for the functioning of the workplace and employee. Following the chronological unfolding of this process, it is logical to begin exploring the first step of the process – pre-leave.

Due to the lack of empirical exploration of parental leave and return to work, the field is lacking a widely accepted model, or a definition of what a successful parental leave and turn to work transition is like. There are few quantitative studies that have been done to explore how employees navigate parental leave and return to work, and from this gap, we have no validated scales or quantifiable best practices on which to rely. Therefore, I used an exploratory qualitative approach to gather rich data to learn how pregnant working women are planning for parental leave.

Present Study

This inductive, exploratory study aimed to increase our understanding about the parental leave and return to work process. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to identify how expectant mothers make decisions about parental leave before they take leave or give birth, to identify personal (e.g., culture, income) and workplace factors (e.g., job demands) that predict expectant mothers' decision-making about parental leave before they take leave, and to understand how expectant mothers plan ahead at work and in their career for taking parental leave and returning to work. By conducting this study, I hope to gather new data to inform the development of interventions to help expectant mothers navigate this process successfully. In this introduction, I will describe relevant psychological theories that inform and guide research

on this topic and summarize a 4-stage parental leave model (Fisher et al., 2016), including the characteristics and importance of each phase (i.e., pre-leave, on leave, transitioning back to work, and the new normal). During this discussion of parental leave, I will review what previous literature has identified as significant work or personal factors most relevant to the pre-leave stage in the parental leave process. Then I will describe the research questions for the present study.

Theoretical Framework

Using a multi-disciplinary approach, Fisher and colleagues (2016) demonstrated how the process of parental leave and return to work is influenced by dynamic forces, such as societal, work, work-family, family, and individual factors. For example, workplace norms have been shown to contribute to breastfeeding intentions (Spitzmueller et al., 2016), and may play a role in other planning decisions made by mothers. Fisher and colleagues (2016) explained the dynamic forces at play during the parental leave process by referencing bioecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), the job demands-resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), and role theory (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964).

Bioecological systems theory considers how individuals function within the context of their lives (e.g., family, work) within the wider societal contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 2005). Like an onion, the individual is the core, with four layers of social systems surrounding them. The farther from the core the more abstract the systems become, with the most outer layer (i.e., macrosystem) containing the larger societal culture. Each layer or system can contain different norms and rules for behavior. The independent layers do not exist in a vacuum; they can influence each other and ultimately the individual. More recent research on this theory suggested

that it is really the process-person-context-time (PPCT) model that should be emphasized within this theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The PPCT model suggests that human development is a “complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996). According to this model, a pregnant working mother has developed over time, through a dynamic process where her individual factors and the surrounding contextual factors influence each other. Said another way, a pregnant working woman could impact her workplace and the workplace could also impact her.

As suggested in the parental leave model (Fisher et al., 2016), being pregnant while working and the parental leave process involves many changes not only for the mother, but for her current employer, too. Transitioning into parenthood and continuing to work involves many decisions that may have implications for the organizational structure and functioning, the mother, her well-being, and other stakeholders. However, as suggested above, the transition to parenthood may be impacted by job and organizational characteristics, and personal factors, that influence the process. Research has supported this notion – there are a variety of work-related factors that affect the experiences of pregnancy, as well as future experiences of motherhood and breastfeeding (Fisher et al., 2016; Spitzmueller et al., 2016). I will discuss examples below.

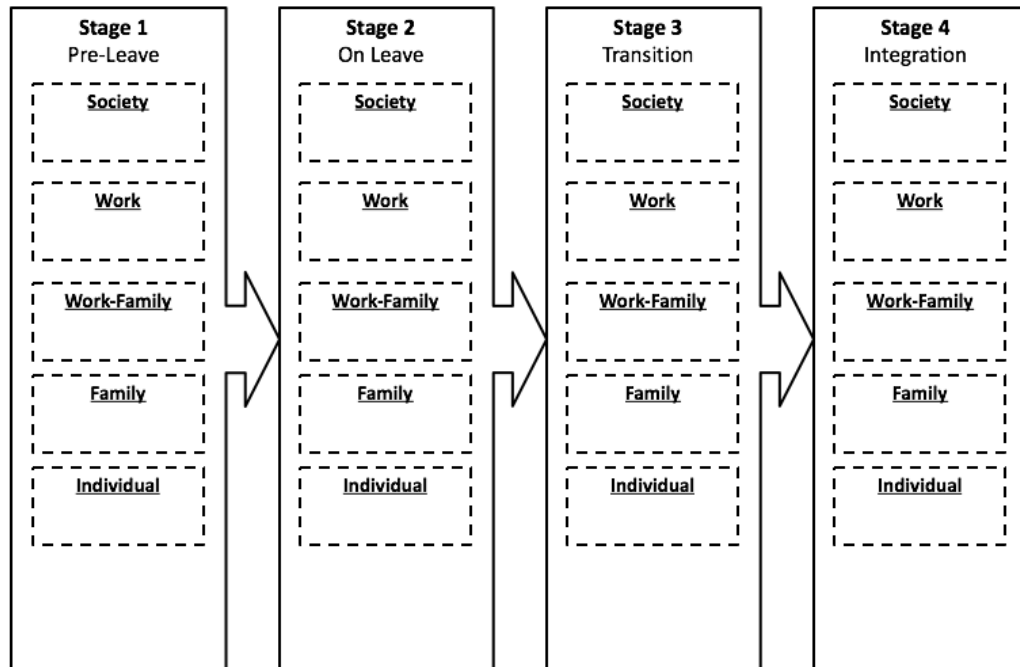


Figure 1. *Parental Leave and Return to Work Model (Fisher et al., 2019)*

Another approach for understanding the parental leave process, and the parental leave model (Fisher et al., 2016), is the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). According to this model, workplace and personal factors may present demands and/or resources during the parental leave process.

Demands can include the “physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of a job” that require sustained cognitive or physical effort, that in turn have a psychological or physical cost, which may lead to negative health and well-being outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017 p. 274).

Resources are defined as the psychological, physical, or social aspects of a job that function to reduce job demands, and the negative impact demands may have on well-being. This theory can be expanded to include non-work and/or family demands and resources. Just as workers are less likely to experience negative outcomes if job demands are low and/or job resources are high, to guard against the negative effects, mothers are less likely to experience deleterious effects if non-work/family demands are low, and resources are high or are present to buffer against the

negative demands. For example, if the federal law mandates projected parental leave, and a mother qualifies for this, the mandated time off can serve as a resource to help her meet the demands of having a newborn. If an expectant mother has high demands at work, having social support from her supervisor, or having flexible working hours, may help her meet the demands more easily.

Role theory (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kahn et al., 1964; Pleck, 1977) suggests that for one to be successful, they must meet the demands implied by their social roles (e.g., spouse, parent, worker). This theory explains how preparing to have a baby can be exciting, and how it is often stressful at the same time (Alstveit et al. 2011; Barnes 2013). This tension could be due to the expectation of the mother to reconcile her new family role, while also juggling her changing work and non-work role demands. Similar to the job demands-resources model, role theory (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kahn et al., 1964) suggests that an individual's social role (i.e., being an employee, being a mother) requires the person to meet certain demands if they want to fulfill that role effectively. This theory contributes important insight into the parental leave process. When an employee acquires the additional demands of a motherhood role, they must manage the demands of their role as an employee and as a mother – this could be the source of conflict between their work and non-work lives, and create a greater need for resources to meet these demands.

Theories such as role theory (Pleck, 1977) left out an explanation for when the positive or negative effects of work-family were most likely to occur, and if they could happen simultaneously. Other theories have tried to explain this interface between work and family but have left out important aspects (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Hill, 2005; Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The work-home resources model (Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012) interface suggests that there can be

both beneficial and problematic relationships between work and family through resource depletion and enriching processes, and contextual demands. To explain the mechanisms behind work-family interface, the work-home resources model considers previous work-family theories, and draws heavily on the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989).

The conservation of resources theory suggests that when people encounter a stressor or demand of their environment, people will deplete personal or contextual resources to meet that demand. Furthermore, resources accumulate other resources. The conservation of resources theory categorizes resources and demands into several categories. ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) applied this categorization specifically to the work-home interface. In the work-home context, personal resources include, but are not exclusive to, skills, knowledge, mood, physical or cognitive energy, and health. Contextual resources include employment, social support, advice, and instrumental help from others both in the home and work. There are also contextual demands in both the work and home, which drain resources. Contextual demands include physical, emotional, or cognitive demands. Furthermore, the interaction between demands and resources produces outcomes in both work and home. These outcomes depend on how much the contextual demands depleted personal and contextual resources. For example, the way conflict occurs between work-home follows the demands of one domain draining personal resources, and producing less desirable outcomes in the other domain. Additionally, work-home enrichment occurs when contextual resources of one domain boost personal resources, and which boost performance in the other domain, producing more desirable outcomes. The work-home resources model provides a description of the mechanisms explaining how work could influence one's health. As stated above, work demands can drain personal resources, such as health. Also, the work-home resources model suggests that work resources can also generate personal resources.

A Model of Parental Leave

As mentioned earlier, Fisher and colleagues (2016; 2019) designed a four-stage model for describing the parental leave and return to work process. According to this model, pregnant working women progress through a sequential four-stage process of parental leave and return to work: pre-leave, parental leave, transitioning back to work, and complete integration back into work. In this instance, parental leave encompasses “all periods of childcare (including subsidized, paid, or unpaid) away from work life” (Fisher et al., 2016, p. 130). This model fits parental leave and return to work well; previous research has suggested there are multiple factors functioning dynamically which can influence the process (Coulson et al., 2012).

The first stage: Pre-leave.

Pre-leave (i.e., the first stage) encompasses the time when the employee discovers she is pregnant and starts to anticipate working while pregnant and her parental leave experience. Fisher and colleagues (2016) noted that the “pre-leave stage involves the physical changes among mothers, as well as the social and psychological factors that become salient in anticipating and preparing for parenthood which affects both parents” (Fisher et al., 2016 p. 133). This stage of transitioning into motherhood impacts not only the mother’s life, but has the potential to impact the child’s well-being, and other stakeholders in the workplace, including but not limited to, the woman’s coworkers, supervisors, or subordinates. This notion is supported by prior research which suggests that planning for affordable and acceptable childcare contributes to the working mother’s and child’s well-being during later stages of the process (Fisher et al., 2016).

The pre-leave stage of the process is very important; the expectant mother’s intentions during this phase lay the foundation for the rest of the returning to work process. This is

especially important when considering how prior research has neglected the monumental transitional period when women return to work after leave, and how it can positively or negatively impact the mother's workplace (Alstveit et al., 2011; Millward, 2006; Wiese & Heidemeier, 2012). Understanding how a pregnant working woman navigates the pre-leave stage may predict how and when she takes leave, and how returning to work may unfold. For example, a mother may intend to return to work after 3 months of leave, make decisions during pre-leave based on this intention, and turn to work at 3 months. However, if intentions or decisions are not made, returning to work may not be concretely scheduled and could not happen all together. Returning to work is of interest not only to the mother, but also those with whom she works with (e.g., supervisor or manager and coworkers) in the workplace, and the steps taken to support successful parental leave and return to work deserve more attention. Therefore, a more specific purpose of this research is to explore the personal and workplace factors that influence the pre-leave stage and parental leave planning – this research will focus on this stage of the parental leave process.

During pre-leave, most pregnant working women start deciding how they plan to allocate their resources to work and non-work demands during their transition to parenthood (Spitzmueller & Matthews, 2016). Throughout pre-leave, three types of planning have been identified a) planning with the mother's employer, b) planning with the mother's partner, and c) planning for childcare (Couson, Skouteris, Milgrom, Noblet, & Dissanayake, 2010; Harrison & Ungerer, 2002). The more planning done with a partner or employer and for child care during this stage, the more likely a mother will return to work post-leave (Couson, Skouteris, Milgrom, Noblet, & Dissanayake, 2010; Coulson et al., 2012) and return as intended (Harrison & Ungerer, 2002; Houston & Marks, 2003). Employers can directly affect the amount of planning done by

communicating about the importance of multiple types of planning (Coulson et al., 2010).

During each type of planning, a mother may consider any resources she expects necessary for a successful parental leave experience and may consider any expected demands she may face. For example, she may familiarize herself with employer or governmental leave policies, plan for when leave will begin, how long she will be away, and if she plans to breastfeed. According to the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti, Bakker, Machreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), planning for parental leave is a great time to consider what resources are necessary to mitigate any anticipated demands. Demands may involve making childcare arrangements, expectations from stakeholders in the organization, physically doing the job while pregnant, among other things. The source of demands could come from the organization, the partner or other family members, and a multitude of others. Resources may include having the financial means for childcare, a supportive supervisor or coworkers, support from friends and family, and parental leave resources put in place by the organization or government.

Based on role theory (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kahn et al., 1964), an expectant woman's roles may be shaped by work and non-work role demands. During the pre-leave stage, the expectant mother may anticipate what her work and non-work roles may look like during the span of the parental leave and return to work process and how they might change after the baby arrives. Work demands may include the amount of work she is expected to get done in a certain timeframe, the schedule she is given, what work she is expected to performance during leave, etc. Non-work demands may include concerns like partner expectations of the mother, domestic work that needs to get done, any non-work activities a mother does, such as attending social or religious events, and caring for a pet.

Also during the pre-leave stage, an expectant mother may be considering whether she wants to breastfeed her child or not, and may be considering how this decision may influence her work and non-work roles. Breastfeeding intentions established before the baby is born strongly predict overall breastfeeding duration (Spitzmueller et al., 2015). In addition, breastfeeding decisions may influence how long a mother may take maternity leave – many women take long maternity leave to support their decision to breastfeed (Fein et al., 2008; Spitzmueller et al., 2015). Additionally, organizational factors have been shown to influence a woman's success in reconciling breastfeeding and work (Bruk-Lee, Albert, & Stone, 2016). For example, a pregnant working woman's breastfeeding intentions are influenced by her perceived support for breastfeeding from her employer (Spitzmueller et al., 2016). Further, work-family conflict is more likely to occur when a woman returns to work and continues to breastfeed than if she did not continue to breastfeed (Spitzmueller et al., 2016). Understanding how her work role and non-work role influence one another and a mother's decisions is important considering a mother's employment, especially full-time employment, is one of the most significant factors influencing a mother's breastfeeding initiation and continuation (Fein et al., 2008; Spitzmueller et al., 2016).

A pregnant working woman may also plan to set boundaries between herself and work while on leave and decide how much contact she will have with work and work-related activities. Deciding what these boundaries will look like may depend on anticipated role demands. However, there is little research exploring the boundaries between work and parental leave. A specific goal of this research is to explore which work and non-work factors influence work and non-work demands mothers anticipate, what work or non-work resources they identify to be most important, and what boundaries mothers will try to set during leave. One of these resources may be perceived workplace support and social support, which previous research has shown to

predict women returning to work after leave (Glass & Riley, 1998; Houston & Marks, 2003; Harrison & Ungerer, 2002).

During pre-leave, mothers may consider perceptions related to their job when deciding if they want to return to work in general, and to which job. One factor that might influence the intent to return to work is job satisfaction, which has been shown to predict retention across work settings (De Milt, Fitzpatrick, & McNulty, 2011; Delobelle et al., 2011; Jones, Kantak, Futrell, & Johnston, 1996; Smith, Gregory, & Cannon, 1996; Stockard & Lehman, 2004). Additionally, the perception of job satisfaction is especially important to parents (Brough, O'Driscoll, & Biggs, 2009).

The second stage: On leave.

The second stage of the parental leave and return to work process refers to when the working mother is away from work on maternity leave (i.e., the on-leave stage). More specifically, the on-leave stage of the parental leave and return to work process model encompasses being away from work on leave, including physical and mental recovery from childbirth, breastfeeding initiation, and parental bonding. This stage is heavily influenced by formal leave policies (McGovern, Dowd, Gjerdingen, Moscovice, Kochevar, & Murphy, 2000). Typically, formal leave policies refer to two types of leave: job-protected leave (i.e., whether the mother's job will be retained while she is away on leave), paid leave (i.e., whether wages or salary will be earned during leave). In the United States, job protected leave time is enacted in the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and capped at 12 weeks – much less time than other comparable countries, such as Poland, Spain, Germany, Hungary, France, and Finland (Livingston, 2013). However, to have access to protected leave a mother must work for a company with 50 or more employees and work there for at least 12 months. Additionally, the

United States is one of four countries that does not have a formal policy in place to mandate paid leave (Hegewisch, Phil, & Hara, 2013). Although some states in the United States have state-mandated paid leave (i.e., California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and New York), only 30% of employers voluntarily provided paid parental leave (Society for Human Resource Management, 2017). FMLA and voluntary policies may not be accessible for many working mothers, including those who work at a small business and those who transitioned to their employer within the last 12 months. Furthermore, the use of parental leave may have significant ramifications for mothers' and their family, workplaces, communities, and the larger environment (Fisher et al., 2016). To better understand the parental leave process, research must investigate how these policies, or lack thereof, are related to a mother's planning for parental leave. This research will explore how parental leave policies, or lack thereof, factor into a mother's planning decisions.

The third stage: Transitioning back to work.

This stage in the parental leave and return to work process is the initial transition back to work. One key factor in this stage is the length of time away from work. However, research has shown how a mother's actual role and her desired role (regarding staying home or returning to work) should align to promote her mental health (Galtry & Callister, 2016). Consistent with the Job Demands-Resources model, higher demands from work (e.g., longer hours) or higher family demands (e.g., no one to help care for the child) are associated with lower well-being during this initial transition stage, whereas resources (e.g., social support, affordable childcare) are associated with more successful transitions (Feldman, Sussman, & Zigler, 2004). Additionally, parental leave policies play a large role in the way working mothers prioritize work and family once they have transitioned back to work (McGovern et al., 2000; Singley & Hynes, 2005). However, there is less policy about parental leave and returning to work after parental leave than

leave for illness, injury or disability. Consistent with the process of disability or medical leave, the process of parental leave needs to consider the concerns of the stakeholders, which have important effects on the outcome of the process (Fisher et al., 2016).

The fourth stage: The new normal.

The final stage occurs when the mother has fully transitioned and is adjusted to being back to work; the mother has settled into the new normal. This adjustment can be logistical (e.g., being back to work full-time after being back for part-time at first) and/or psychological (e.g., being back in the groove). One important consideration for this stage is its possible impact on breastfeeding. Breastfeeding can improve the health of not only the infant but the mother, too. (American Academy of Pediatrics). Being back to work full-time is one of the strongest predictors of breastfeeding discontinuation (Fein, Mandal, & Roe, 2008; Mandal, Roe, & Fein, 2010). More specifically, women who return to work full-time can be expected to breastfeed their child two months less than those who do not return full-time (McKinley & Hyde, 2004).

Research Questions

It is unclear how the pre-leave process unfolds and what work and personal factors are relevant to an expectant mother's decision-making process about when to take leave and how to navigate the process of taking time away from work. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the planning and decision making process during pre-leave, and to more clearly identify relevant personal, work, and employer factors that play a role to facilitate this process.

Specifically, I will investigate factors I believe are most important in this process, and see if such factors emerge. These factors include employer and social support for leave, anticipated support for leave and breastfeeding, knowledge of parental leave policies, employment status and job demands, and individual cultural influences. Below, I will provide my research questions.

As stated above, expected or perceived support from the workplace, parental leave policies, etc. can predict aspects of the parental leave and return to work process. The focus of this study was to explore what factors are most relevant to decision-making during planning pre-leave that may have not been identified in previous studies. More specifically, I sought to examine how these factors may differ based on age, race, job demands, and other individual characteristics. However, given the design and small sample size, I will not be able to draw generalizable conclusions on such factors. I explored how pregnant working women conceptualize their future parental leave experiences and see how abstract or concrete their plans are. Additionally, I examined how parental leave policies (e.g., benefits from such policies) may influence intentions to return to work. The semi-structured interview questions addressed these aims (See appendix A).

METHOD

Participants

A total of 16 working pregnant adult women in the U.S. participated. Inclusion criteria were: paid employment, working at least 30 hours per week, not self-employed, and having a singleton pregnancy. The sample included only singleton pregnancies because having multiples (i.e., being pregnant with more than one fetus) increases the risk for health issues, and complicates the parental leave and return to work process. Although 4 women referred to having previous children, I did not specifically ask whether participant had children prior to this pregnancy. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 39 years old ($M = 29.88$, $SD = 4.24$). Participants reported annual household income before taxes ranging from \$5,600 to \$200,000 ($M = \$95,443.75$, $SD = \$53,868.02$; median = \$92,500). Participants varied in pregnancy stages, ranging from 9 to 36 weeks pregnant with a mean of 24.31 weeks pregnant ($SD = 6.70$) at the time of the screening survey. Most participants reported “married” as their marital status; one participant reported single and one reported partnered but not married. Participants worked in various industries, including education and health services ($n=7$), finance and insurance ($n=3$), manufacturing ($n=2$), professional and business services ($n=2$), and other (2). Participant race and ethnicity included white or Caucasian ($n=9$), white and black or African American ($n=2$), black or African American ($n=1$), Hispanic or Latino ($n=3$), and Asian or Pacific Islander ($n=1$). Most participants had a Master’s Degree ($n=8$) or a Bachelor’s Degree ($n=5$). The lowest level of education was a high school diploma or GED ($n=1$).

Procedure

Consent and screening survey.

Participants completed an online consent form and screening survey to ensure they fit the selection criteria. The consent informed participants of the purpose of the study, how data collection would unfold, and asked specifically about the audio recording of the interviews (See Appendix B). The screening survey asked for demographic information, including race, age, household income, relationship status, and general questions about their pregnancy (See Appendix C).

Interview development and pilot testing.

I created semi-structured interview questions (See Appendix A) based on what factors I believed to be most relevant to planning during the pre-leave stage and what theories suggest may be relevant issues. SMEs gave their insight and corrections for the semi-structure interview questions. SMEs included academic experts in the field and expecting or recently pregnant women. To not lead participants into answering certain ways, the questions started with general asks about their experiences of working while pregnant. Then, I pilot tested these questions with women who fit my target sample or who have recently experienced parental leave and return to work; This gave me an estimation for how long the interviews might last. To pilot test my interview questions, I employed two cognitive interviewing technique in which I asked participants questions and had them think aloud about the question (Seidman, 2013). Once I finalized my interview questions and received IRB approval, I began to recruit participants. I recruited participants using snowball sampling on social media and word of mouth. I posted a Facebook status briefly describing my study and had a lot of responses within 24 hours.

I estimated that the semi-structured, one-on-one, phone interviews would last 1 hour, but they took an average of 35 minutes, ranging from 29 to 48 minutes. During the interview, I followed best practices in qualitative research by building rapport with participants by asking

about positive factors in the interviewee's life before diving into the structured questions (Seidman, 2013; Krueger & Casey, 2015). I described the nature of the study, some background information about me, and clarified the information on the informed consent (Krueger & Casey, 2015). I recorded the responses with an audio recording (Krueger & Casey, 2015) application on my computer (i.e., QuickTime Player), and took field notes during the interview about any factors I thought might be relevant (e.g., if the participant was cleaning while talking). I explained the purpose of my note-taking to the participants (in case they heard me typing and to be transparent), which was also to write down key points of their answers so I can clarify. I chose to do interviews instead of focus groups because I want participants to feel safe and comfortable to talk about parental leave as it can be a sensitive topic (Krueger & Casey, 2015). I asked the participants if they had any questions or concerns immediately after each interview finished. Within 2 business days I emailed the participants A \$30 e-gift card of their choice (Amazon or Target). After conducting interviews with 16 women, I found saturation in the data (Seidman, 2013). I was able to find saturation in most of the interview question responses, but tried my best to continue to recruit participants to ensure I was being diligent in the process to find a representative sample of pregnant working women who spanned multiple income and education levels, and represented multiple racial identities. I decided to stop collecting data after weeks of trying to recruit diverse samples of women (i.e., a new Facebook post just looking for women of color), balancing between saturation in the responses the timeline for my thesis.

Transcription of Audio Recordings

My research team consisted of three undergraduate research assistants who I recruited and trained. Before beginning to work with the data, I had the research team complete a self-reflection so that we were more aware of our individual assumptions, and how the research team

might be influencing the data analysis process (Ravitch & Carl, 2015; see Appendix D). Then, I trained four undergraduate research assistants how to transcribe the interviews on textual data from my pilot testing participants. To transcribe, a URA listened to the audio recording and typed what they heard into a Word Document. The transcripts were not cleaned up in any way so that they included all speech verbatim and indicated any laughter or other noises heard in the audio file (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). Additionally, the only punctuation we chose to use were question marks and periods (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). Flash drives provided a secure way to share audio recordings among the research team. Finally, I exported the transcriptions into Nvivo 12 Plus software.

Coding Responses

Before coding, I organized data in the chronological order (in the order of data collection). This allowed the research team to see how data collection and analysis changed over time (Tracy, 2013). Additionally, the research team participated in the precoding activity of data immersion (Ravitch & Carl, 2015; Tracy, 2013). This involved “marinating in the data” (Tracy, 2013, p. 188), reading and re-reading the transcripts, and considering emerging findings (Tracy, 2013). During this exercise, the research team jotted down their answers to the following questions “What is happening here? What strikes you?” (Creswell, 2003, p.153). The research team discussed their impressions of the data to aid in sense making and to help each other consider multiple interpretations of what they were reading (Tracy, 2013).

Relying heavily on Saldana’s (2016) research about coding for qualitative research, I used an exploratory qualitative approach. This approach is extremely flexible and allows for rich data, which is critical for such an understudied topic. This approach allowed for more flexibility in the coding than grounded theory coding or strict hypothesis coding, so that I may be able to

uncover richer information without the limitations and bounds set by theories before (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; King, 2004). Since this topic of planning for parental leave has been largely understudied, we cannot assume that existing theories fit the process of parental leave and encapsulate all of the variables at play. Therefore, the coding does not rely strictly on topics and structures of existing theories, but aims to build new or a deeper understanding of existing structures (Tracy, 2013). Our research team applied codes to segments of meaningful data (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013). We were not restricted to a sentence, paragraph or word count (Tracy, 2013; Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pederson, 2013). Segments of meaningful data ranged from one word to two sentences in a row (approximately 20 words).

My research assistants and I created a codebook and revised it throughout the process, following the strategy of template analysis (King, 2004), also known as a codebook or coding template (Tracy, 2013), and exploratory coding (Saldana, 2015) (See appendix E). The codebook was a list of main topics based on what we found during data immersion and based on our research or interview questions (King, 2004; Tracy, 2013). Since there was more than one coder, a codebook was useful because they are helpful when working in a team of researchers (Tracy, 2013). The codes in the initial codebook were first-level codes, or codes which represent basic levels of data, such as actions, places, relationships, people, beliefs, or concepts (Saldana, 2011; 2009; Tracy, 2013). After the first and second calibration exercise, we revised the codes and codebook (King, 2004; Tracy, 2013) (See Appendix F).

After the first codebook was created, an excerpt from the data was used to calibrate our coding. I trained URAs using a transcription from an audio recording from pilot testing data. URAs also reviewed resources on qualitative methods and coding, and participated in

discussions about best practices and the methodological choices that were made and will have to be made later on in the project. To calibrate, I chose an excerpt from the first transcript which contained about one third of the entire first transcript. After the calibration, all coders reached an agreement kappa level of .62 (Fleiss, 1971; Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013) (See Appendix G). This was unsatisfactory (Landis & Koch ,1977; Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013), therefore, we reviewed the codebook and revised some unclear codes based on group discussion (Charmaz, 2006; See Appendix F). During the second calibration exercise, an excerpt from a transcript later in the data collection was used, pulling one third of the eleventh transcript collected. During this calibration exercise coders reached a 90% level of agreement, which is above acceptable (Landis and Koch ,1977; Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013). After successful calibration, the research team executed first-level coding, on each transcript by two people; I coded every transcript in addition to one URA.

After first-level coding, interrater agreement was calculated to see if an additional recalibration need to be done – it did not. For second-level coding, we dove deeper into the data for more abstract meaning, and looked for content related to the following: “1) cognitive aspects or meanings (e.g., ideologies, rules, self-concepts, and identities), 2) emotional aspects or feelings (e.g., sympathy in health care, road rage, workplace satisfaction, 3) hierarchical aspects or inequalities (e.g., racial inequality, battered woman, high school cliques” (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006, p. 144). For example, cognitive aspects in the context of pre-leave mentioned in the interviews included norms in the workplace, ideas about the self in relation to pregnancy and work, and ideologies about domestic work or paid work, or breastfeeding. Emotional aspects involve expressed frustration, excitement, joy, fear, and guilt. Hierarchical aspects include job title or supervisory position at work, household income, breadwinner status at

home, social roles, and race or ethnicity in relation to the majority at work. To do this, the research team looked at everyone's first-level codes, the codebook, the semi-structured research questions, and the full transcripts. The team wrote their second-level codes into individual Word documents and organized them by research question and/or semi-structured interview questions (Tracy, 2013).

Finally, as the PI, I synthesized data, across the second-level codes, to reflect the overarching categories of coding and major themes (Silver & Lewins, 2014). After synthesizing the data and identifying the themes the rest of the research team provided feedback on the major findings drawn. Exemplars are excerpts from the data that represents multiple codes or themes within the data, which are discoverable while coding (Tracy, 2013). I provided exemplars to give be poignant examples of overarching themes and complexity of the data. Their purpose is to illustrate themes found in the analysis. When considering the exemplars, it is best to consider that they were not chosen to support any arguments or theories, but to demonstrate common responses and overarching themes, or extreme or outlying data (responses that deviate from primary themes) (Tracy, 2013).

RESULTS

Based on the coding process previously described in the Method section, which reached an overall intercoder agreement of .71, I identified six overarching main findings, each of them encompassing different themes and codes. The six main findings are 1) the monetary cost of things (e.g., childcare) in relation to household income played a major role in planning and decision making, 2) participants varied on their perceptions on how much of a role their coworkers and supervisors play, 3) qualification for benefits and national policies (i.e., FMLA) or available sick or vacation time strongly influenced plans for when to take leave and for how long, 4) participants believe that supervisors and leaders in organizations can better support pregnant working women by supporting paid leave, knowing more about the policies and procedures around leave, and more flexibility around work hours and location, 5) participants expressed, and it became a clear theme, that planning for each pregnancy and work situation around parental leave encompasses uncertainty and is different from person to person, and 6) culture may or may not be considered when expecting employees are planning for parental leave. The themes, correlations and local causality among codes will be discussed for each main finding. Local causality, unlike quantitative causal mechanisms or results, is not focused on generating universal causal links between constructs of variables. Instead it focuses on explaining causal events in the context of the events being described with in this specific study, within this sample of pregnant working women.

The First Main Finding

The first main finding suggests that monetary cost of a variety of needs or wants related to parental leave is a major concern for the pregnant working women interviewed in this study.

The monetary cost of things such as childcare were mentioned often by participants. For example, four specific semi-structured interview questions were most frequently answered by respondents first mentioning cost, savings, or finances: 1) “How are you planning for parental leave and what influences this decision?”; 2) “Do you have plans for childcare?”; and 3) “How has money played a role in your pregnancy and work, and plans for taking time off?”; and 4) “What could leaders and supervisors do to better support pregnant working women?” When responding, often mothers would describe how they were planning for parental leave by considering how much money they could either save, be paid, or not lose during time away from work. When describing how they were planning for leave, they discussed what types of leave were available to them (e.g., FMLA, paid leave, paid vacation) and how that interacted with how long they wanted to or could afford to take leave, when they wanted to start leave, and what type of childcare was most appropriate. Finances were also strongly associated with decisions about childcare. For example, participants often discussed how expensive childcare is in relation to their preferences on who will be spending time taking care of the child (local causality). Some mothers considered childcare to be too expensive and therefore a family member was going to be the primary childcare and/or watch the child a few days a week. Mothers also discussed how they were uncertain about if they were going to receive pay during leave and how that plays a role in their uncertainty around childcare decisions. The theme of finances and childcare, uncertainty, and availability for benefits and time off occurred frequently and did not seem to related to level of household income or other demographic variables. In other words, financial costs associated with having a child was a major concern across all participants.

Furthermore, regarding this first main finding, money and finances came up frequently when participants were asked “How does your culture and family influence your experiences of

working and pregnancy?” Most of the time participants said culture does not influence their experiences, but their financial behaviors or monetary situation does. Many also reported that their spouses’ income is an important factor in their decisions, either because their spouse makes more than they do so the mother can afford to take more time or because the mother is the breadwinner for the family and needs to return to work as quickly as possible. The frequency of this finding is correlated with a being married, which almost all participants reported. Several mothers also mentioned saving for child-related expenses (e.g., daycare, hospital costs) and/or living without an income for their unpaid maternity leave (bills, mortgages). Several women mentioned how they were uncertain of what their lives were going to look like on leave without pay or with limited pay, and even more stated that their financial situation caused stress in their lives. A few mothers also stated that their personality/individual characteristics influenced their decisions regarding money (e.g., “I’m a budget person”). Several participants also mentioned either a reduction or maintenance in their current lifestyle, how changes and sacrifices must be made, and how the changes could be difficult/stressful to themselves and their spouse. Codes most associated with this finding include “time off,” “childcare,” and “monetary costs.” Below are four exemplars of this main finding, including the themes of monetary cost, childcare, decisions about returning to work:

“We have one son that is in daycare and all that I mean obviously that affects the financial piece which, like I said can be—is—the biggest deciding factor for whether or not I’ll be able to take a full 12 weeks leave.” - 23 weeks pregnant, 36 years old, Professional and Business service

“...that [money] was one of the big conversations, obviously, thinking about what we kind of wanted that to look like, um, and I think really, kind of, what, what it kind of boiled down

to is, you know, my husband makes a decent living, where I don't feel like we're going to have to, like, scrimp and save every little penny, um. I think we'll still be able to kind of maintain, maintain somewhat of a normal, like, kind of like what we have right now, lifestyle. Um, certainly I said, you know, for the next couple of years we probably won't be able to go on as many vacations or, you know, not buying as many clothes, and just different things like that that we're kind of used to being able to do as we are right now, um. But I said I, I would, you know I'm happy to kind of make those sacrifices to be able to stay home a little bit more, um. So, we've, you know, we've kind of looked at, like, the budgeting and kind of the breakdown, we did compare a little bit if we wanted to do, like, um, a daycare, and how that would work cost-wise, and then we kind of just came to the conclusion and had been kind of running numbers and talking to people is, for the daycares that we would be really interested in in the area. I don't know that we would be, like if I were, went back to work full-time, like, making so, so, so, so, so much more that it would over-like-compensate for that. Like I was kind of like oh, I don't know if that is really worth it, um, especially when I said, you know, in the beginning they have so many doctor's appointments, and, just all of those things that I would then, you know, I have, I mean, kind of how my job is, you get paid for the clients that you see. So, so, I said if I had a day where the baby was sick or if we had a bunch of appointments, it's not like I'm making a salary, well. I would be getting that anyways, um, so I think that it just makes sense for me kind of to do the evenings and then pick up, like, uh, days in the week and kind of balance it that way, um. That way we're not having to put our child in daycare full-time. Um, and unfortunately, a lot of the daycares in the area, um, you pay the same regardless if the child's there part-time or full-time."

– 20 weeks pregnant, 32 years old, Education and Health Services

“I mean I save a lot, um so I don't budget. I don't have to budget, which is nice. Um but just knowing that you know I can take the, take the time off that I don't necessarily need to be paid. So um It was- my biggest fear kind of I guess- one of one of my biggest decisions regarding maternity leave was, am I going to take the final six to seven and a half weeks yes. Is that going to be unpaid? Or is that going to be my paid vacation? Do I want to use my paid vacation or do I want to split it up? Because of my first pregnancy, I split it up. I did about half and half. Um and this time I decided to not do it, um unpaid because our office is really flexible. And so because I can still be paid, my thought process is why not use my paid vacation, and then if there's something that I need to go home for, Or if there is an emergency, I know I that I have the support in the office where they're not going to say, “You don't have any more vacation days, so you cannot go, you need to be here, you can't take a sick day, you can stay home for half the day, you can't work from home today.” I know that that's not going to happen. Um and so that was kind of the biggest decisions in the maternity leave, and the decision-making process.” - 27 weeks pregnant, 31 years old, Education and health services

“So, I think it's going to come down to probably—I'm due in January—so probably come like November we'll see how much we have saved up, really calculate how much short-term spending will be, um, and figure out how long we can monetarily financially afford to be out of work. So, I know it'll be a minimum of 6 weeks, but I don't know for sure if it'll be a full 12.” - 23 weeks pregnant, 28 years old, Professional and business services

The Second Main Finding

The second main finding suggested that pregnant working women may have varied perceptions about how much of a role their coworkers and supervisors play. When directly asked what role coworkers and supervisors play in their experience and decision-making about

planning for leave, multiple women said that they do not play a role or play a very little role in how they are planning. Often participants referenced how their supervisors or coworkers cannot influence how much time they get off or whether or not they get paid during leave, but frequently stated that their coworkers and supervisors were supportive in non-instrumental ways (e.g., responding with excitement when they announced their pregnancy). On the other hand, respondents spoke about how their supervisors directed them to Human Resources, and how they were not pleased with this form of direction, or being supportive in non-instrumental ways. This finding suggests that pregnant working women may not be considering how their coworkers or supervisors play a role unless they are able to provide instrumental help (e.g., a coworker who picks up some of their work while they are on leave) or directly influence the length of leave or pay. Local causality here suggests that if supervisors or employees are able to provide instrumental help and/or objectively influence the leave process, then expecting mothers will consider their role to be more influential. Said another way, the causal here is the type of help supervisors provide and the effect is pregnant working women considering their role in the leave process to be impactful. Themes most frequently found in this finding were positive reaction to pregnancy, supervisor support is registered as instrumental or not at all, and pregnant working women may not consider social support as beneficial if there cannot be instrumental support. Codes most frequently found in this finding are “supervisor support,” “perceived support in the workplace,” “time off,” “reaction to pregnancy,” and “uncertain.” Below are exemplars of the second main finding:

“In terms of my supervisor, honestly there’s really not a whole lot else he could do.” – 34 weeks pregnant, 37 years old, Professional and business service

“I think that the bosses and coworkers being supportive um all the time of whatever the person is deciding to do or not decide to do is really helpful because when it comes down to it really has nothing to do with them, um, and it’s you know, uh, not a condition that sounds bad (laughter) it’s a serious part of life, you know?” - 30 weeks pregnant, 31 years old,

Manufacturing

“I’m trying to think, my boss has always been pretty flexible um which is nice, as far as being pregnant, um, he’s been even more flexible with things, um, if I, you know as far as doctors’ appointments and things like that, um, I, I’ve been taking off a lot for that, um, and my coworkers have of course been there when I haven’t been so they’ve had to pick up, you know, some of the additional work.” – 36 weeks pregnant, 29 years old, Finance and insurance

“My coworkers haven’t really played any kind of role in that, um, and then my supervisor, you know, it’s mostly just concerning you know, will I for sure be coming back, will they need to find someone to replace me, um, but, I wouldn’t say they really play as much of a role in that.” – 22 weeks pregnant, 28 years old, Manufacturing

The Third Main Finding

The third main finding suggests that a pregnant working woman’s qualification for benefits provided by human resources or national policies (e.g., available sick or vacation time, or time off due to FMLA benefits) strongly influences plans for when and how to take leave, and for how long. It makes logical sense that federally mandated or company policies about time away from work would strongly influence when and for how long mothers can take leave. The data suggest that pregnant working women must first figure out which benefits they qualify for before they can make decision about when and for how long to take leave, what types of childcare make the most sense, and if they are legally allowed to contact work during leave.

Major themes in this finding were that women often did not know about the specifics of their workplace policies or FMLA until they were pregnant, supervisors were often not able to answer specific questions, often women are combining multiple times of time off (e.g., sick time, vacation, parental leave), and negotiating how and when such time off will be used. Local causality here suggests that benefits and policies may predict when, what type, and for how long expecting mothers plan to take leave. Themes here included uncertainty about what time is available to them, uncertainty about when the baby will be born, lack of supervisor understanding of such policies, and complexity of combining types of time off. Codes most frequently used were “time off,” “supervisor support,” “FMLA,” “uncertain,” “return to work decision,” “when to take leave,” and “human resources.” Below are exemplars of this finding:

“I actually have to call to our medical leave and actually if I do have vacation time, they will be paying my 6 weeks of work and then, if I want to take extra six weeks, um, those would be unpaid but I actually have to set that up before I actually leave for FMLA, so there’s actually no one that I could actually go and actually speak about that, it has to be done over the phone with the company that would be paying my FMLA. Um, I actually started working, or gave them a call last week, um, just because I hit my 30 weeks and at any given time, with how I have high risk pregnancy, I could go into labor, um, so it’s always, they’ve always told me that I have to do it before time, and not at the last minute, so I actually have a case number for it, um, they should be sending me paperwork if I don’t receive it within 2 weeks I will have to contact them again and ask them to send me that information one more time. Um, So I’m going to try to stay at work until my due date, my due date is December 24th, I want to, I want to stay until like the very last day, um and from there I’ll actually use all my 12 weeks until it’s time for me to return back to work.” – 26 weeks pregnant, 21 years old, Finance and insurance

“At the university we are offered, um, six weeks of paid, six weeks of FMLA, and then we are offered um and additional six weeks of unpaid leave, or I can use the vacation that I have accumulated. Um and then an additional uh I’m sorry, we are given up to eight for FMLAs if there is a cesarean. So I’m under the assumption that I will have a vaginal delivery and so I’ll have up to the six weeks of the FMLA and then in addition to that I’ll use about five weeks of paid vacation. Um and then because my maternity leave will happen over the holiday break when the university is closed, they allow us an Additional week and a half to tag on to the end that we lost during that holiday. So it’s not paid, but it will be tagged onto the end so it will offer me 15 and a half weeks. So my plan is to use 11 to 12 weeks of FMLA paid vacation and then use the rest of the time as unpaid, and transition back into work, um, about 3 days a week.” – 27 weeks pregnant, 31 years old, Education and health services

“Even though my boss is super flexible, my work isn’t great about maternity leave—we have no paid leave. Um, we do obviously—I have FMLA, I’ve done that for 5 years. Um, and I do have short-term disability. But, a big part of my work is also commission based. And, so, while my salary is decent, um, my short-term disability is only paid off my salary. So, and my commission is more—I make more in commission than I do in my salary. So, um, it’s hard to kind of budget off of just 60% of my salary for 6 weeks, if that makes sense. But, um, so we’ve actually been trying to—since we found out we were pregnant—um, we’ve been trying to save some extra money each month so that we have like a separate fund that we can pay ourselves from. Um, almost like for my missing paychecks. So, I don’t know yet what I’m going to do. I mean my gut instinct is would like to take the full time because this is going to be our second child and I think my last. Um, so I’d like to take the full time. But uh, you know, unfortunately we do have to pay the bills too so—and without any paid leave, it’s going to be a little trickier. So, I

think it's going to come down to probably—I'm due in January—so probably come like November we'll see how much we have saved up, really calculate how much short-term spending will be, um, and figure out how long we can monetarily financially afford to be out of work. So, I know it'll be a minimum of 6 weeks, but I don't know for sure if it'll be a full 12.” – 23 weeks pregnant, 36 years old, Professional and business services

The Fourth Main Finding

The fourth main finding suggests that pregnant working women may feel more supported if their supervisors and leaders in their workplace supported or advocated for paid leave, knew more about the policies and procedures around leave (more understanding), and advocated for more flexible work arrangements. This finding is related to many themes in the data, such as monetary cost of things, federal regulations, instrumental supervisor support, and flextime or flexible work arrangements. It is especially interesting finding that almost all participants suggested these avenues for how supervisors could better support, but also stated that their supervisors play little to no role in their planning for parental leave. This may be because the support must be instrumental to be considered helpful, or that the benefits and policies pregnant working women qualify for are out of the supervisor's control. Codes most frequently used in this finding were “supervisor support,” “flexible work arrangements,” “time off,” and “monetary costs.” Below are exemplars of this finding:

“I think the most important, and I think something that would have support from my work is flexibility, um, it's you know, especially morning sickness, and just not feeling great or feeling tired, being able to work from home, being able to go to doctor visits and not feel stressed or worried about having to schedule at a certain time, my work has been super great about that as far as being that there was, I have four doctors, um, just because I have some issues that was

making me a high risk pregnancy, so I was seeing four doctors, um, multiple times a month, so I was gone and out of work quite often, and um, cannot feel like, um I was being a burden to the company and they were really flexible with it and, um, very understanding, um, and then the ability to get up and walk around and, um, to feel like you don't have to sit there because it's so hard on your body to sit there for 8 hours in front of a computer so, just to have the flexibility to kind of stretch out and get comfortable, I think that's also important.” – 22 weeks pregnant, 28 years old, Other services expect public administration

“I think for, honestly just knowing, knowing or finding out as far as you know my boss goes he's been the company as I have so when it came to a lot of this stuff he didn't know the answers to it, um, and granted I'm kind of a take charge person so I did a lot of research on my own but when I did go to him and say “Listen, I need you to figure this out” like “We need to do this, you know, now” um, even when honestly we didn't need to do it right then but for my own peace of mind we did, um, he was really helpful, so I think that um, you know if you've been at a company long enough or even if you've been a manager and you've been you know in those situations or if you're a women and you've been in a situation yourself as a boss, I think knowing what's expected would be really nice, um and I think that the encouragement of you know just saying “Do whatever you need to do” because every woman and every pregnancy, everything about all of a pregnancy and childbirth are so much different from person to person and even from kinds who came from the same person, so I think that the bosses and coworkers being supportive um all the time of whatever the person is deciding to do or not decide to do is really helpful because when it comes down to it really has nothing to do with them, um, and it's you know, uh, not a condition that sounds bad (laughter) it's a serious part of life, you know? So um

*it's a really important time for people to be supportive.” – 36 weeks pregnant, 29 years old,
Finance and insurance*

“I mean if I were in charge, I would definitely push for paid parental leave because, I mean that makes people want to return to work, to me at least. I mean if somebody, it's weird too, because I have female CEO at my work and you would think, you know, she would understand or you know push for that, but um, just, I feel like you want your employees to do well, so why would you put them in a hard place when they're already going to be in a hard place, having a baby is difficult, I mean, it's your whole life changes, and then to be like Try to do this without getting any money.” – 34 weeks pregnant, 28 years old, Finance and insurance

“Leaders or bosses can do...hmm, that's a good one...Um, I don't know if they have any, um, I don't know, I believe just be, just being accommodating. I think that, I don't, I don't think we, we as pregnant women want, um, you know, free passes or, or anything like that, but I think if there does, if there, there is something that comes back, which is there are multiple appointments, they are in the daytime, a lot of us do work in the daytime. Um, to be accommodating, I believe, even through, like, the morning sickness aspect, um, I think just at least trying to maneuver things a little bit, um, uh, maybe allow someone to work from home. I mean, not that we don't want to get the job done but it, it is quite tough. And, uh, maybe just understanding that aspect of pregnancy. I think sometimes too, like, I would never, I was kind of a little bit... but I would never interview for a company pregnant, because I feel like there's always, there's a bias already that “she's going to leave,” you know, “she may not come back and if she does work, she's not, it's not going to be top-rated because she's pregnant.” I, you know, just from comments I've heard in the past from other people and, and in employers, so, I, I feel like sensitivity, or, uh, compassion towards pregnant women. Like I said, no free passes, but,

it's just that a lot, a little bit more accommodation and understanding through that time, even maybe offer options.” – 25 weeks pregnant, 33 years old, Education and health services

The Fifth Main Finding

The fifth finding suggests that each pregnancy and work situation around parental leave contains a large amount of uncertainty and what is uncertainty is unique to each pregnant working woman. For example, many respondents explicitly stated that their situation is unique, or that all pregnancies are unique, because you cannot predict when your baby will be born, if there will be any complications, and how that may influence the time off you can qualify for and use. Specifically, they stated that they were uncertain about a lot of the details of their planning because 1) they were waiting to hear back from HR or about their eligibility for vacation, sick time, or FMLA, which influences when and for how long they take leave; 2) they do not know when they will give birth, which influences why type of leave days they will use and when; 3) are still deciding childcare factors, which often hinges on cost in combination with types of leave days available; 4) are unsure if their birth and baby will be complicated or risky, and 5) are not sure if they will be physiologically able to breastfeed. Codes most frequently found in this finding were “uncertain,” “time off,” “birth plan,” “breastfeeding” and “when to take leave.” Below are some examples of this finding:

“Kind of very up in the air, like not being able to actually plan what or when you’re going on leave or when you’re, you know, when you’re going to stop getting a paycheck because you know babies can come early or they can come late, so like my sister, she, her first daughter, she came three and half weeks early, so you’re not prepared when they give you a date, you think that’s the day you’re going to, you know. So I think the uncertainty of when you’re going to stop going to work or when you’re going to be on your leave, that, and then like I said the pros of

being able to be home with your family and your kids are definitely a pro (laughs).” – 31 weeks pregnant, 27 years old, Education and human services

“I’m 36 now so I don’t know if that’s going to anything or if that increases my chance for a C-section, I’m really not sure. So, no, no specific birth plan. Um, the only things we’ve really had to put in place this time that is different is making sure we have care set up for my son that we already have.” - 31 weeks pregnant, 36 years old, Professional and business services

“I don’t know how it is for you around where you guys are—but for us, I mean, the waiting list is always really far out. I mean, I put him on the waiting list 2 or 3 months ago and I was the last person that got in for March of 2019. So, it’s very far out. So, we do have that on there. Again, nothing is like 100% sure, but we figured we’d rather have that secured and lose the \$75 deposit if something changes than not.” – 23 weeks pregnant, 25 years old, Professional and business services

“I said, I didn’t have enough supply so we just kind of weaned to mainly formula at that point. And he did on-and-off breastfeed a little bit from then forward but, I’d like to try and do it longer but, again, it just depends on how pumping goes and all that.” – 19 weeks pregnant, 27 years old, Education and health services

“I, our daycare just informed us that they are not holding a spot for our baby, so, when they said they were, so, now I am not sure about my return to work, because of that, all week I’ve been contacting daycares in the area and they’re either ridiculously expensive or they’ve got a ridiculously long wait list until next summer, so I don’t even have a spot until next summer, or they don’t take infants because they take more toddlers than infants so they can make more money by taking toddlers, so returning to work, I’m not sure yet. I mean, that was always been

my plan, because I like what I do, but I can't find a daycare, it's impossible so far.” – 22 weeks pregnant, 28 years old, Other services expect public administration

“I am not sure if I want to go early, I'm not even trying to leave just so I have personal time and vacation time for next year because I mean it's impossible to go a year without any paid time off with children, so yeah, right now the plan is a little (laughs) up in the air.” – 34 weeks pregnant, 29 years old, Finance and insurance

The Sixth Main Finding

The sixth major finding suggests that pregnant working women may not consider culture a factor at all in their pregnancy, or they think it influences them greatly. When asked, “How does your culture and family influence your experiences of working and pregnancy?”, most respondents said that culture plays no role. More frequently, respondents suggested that family plays a role in that mothers of the pregnant working women may provide some childcare after the baby is born, or that their family and spouse are supportive. Those who stated their culture played no role often suggested that the way they were raised (e.g., in a dual income family, in a household where the mother did not participate in the paid workforce) influenced their decision making. However, there were three participants who responded to this question and discussed their racial/ethnic identity and how it intersected with their experiences of working while pregnant. Codes most frequently used in this finding include “culture,” “non-work advice,” “family influence,” and “childcare.” Below are exemplars of this finding, highlighting both the respondents who did not feel culture influenced them, but family did, and those who thought their culture influenced them greatly:

“When it comes to my culture, I'm first generation Hispanic in the United States. So, um, my parents, or, yeah my parents have always had the mom stay at home or it's always been the

tradition and at first my dad was saying he didn't fully agree that I would be working while I was pregnant, and until I let him know that it's not because we're not able to afford it but it's because there's nothing really I could do at home, um, besides cleaning, like, as a woman, there's always that 50/50 that I would like to come home, make sure that there's, um, helping out at home with financial struggles, so it has been a question of [unintelligible], um, through my parents. Um, sometimes it does become a question between me and my partner, um, but I don't think I could be a person that stays at home, um, while I'm pregnant (laughs)." – 26 weeks pregnant, 21 years old, Finance and insurance

"Honestly I don't think at all really, I mean when I was younger my, both my parents worked, my mom stayed home with my sister and I when we were real little before we went to school, um, but, you know I understand that I have to work, so that's just the end of that, you know?" - 22 weeks pregnant, 39 years old, did not report industry

"There is certainly a cultural aspect, um, to it um... a lot of the women. Not many of people in my family have um a college education. And so a lot of the women are not used to, like having a full-time career, and having children, and having to kind of like balance the two. So, it's, I don't want to say stressful, but it's a lot more difficult to navigate as far as like the advice of having, um you know to ask questions about how do I navigate to situation. And I tend to more to rely on my college friends um who have also graduated, or my peers at work. Um just because my family and my friends do not have that same experience of having to work full time um and again balance the two. Um and then I think the biggest cultural is probably, like well during and after... Like I guess for a lot of women, exercise, exercise, exercise. And so like culturally you cannot do that, it's not good for the baby, you need to take it easy. And I'm like no it's okay. (Laughs) Like, like I know my limits, my body is used to exercise, and the doctor is completely

okay with it. Um and then, like even after there's like this unknown Mexican rule that you can't, you are not supposed to leave the house for 40 days. Um and so, I remember I did that with my first child and it, like all hell broke loose. and so, I'm like well I have to, especially with me being a single mom, there is no way that I can't not leave the house within the first 40 days. There are things that I have to do, there are doctor's appointments I have to go to... Um so just sometimes there's just a little bit of backlash um, from things that are you know, not thought to be the right way from the culture. Um that are not necessarily the way that I am doing things.” – 26 weeks pregnant, 31 years old, Manufacturing

“Well we're not religious, so no religious influence. My family has been very supportive, but my mom was a stay at home—well, I shouldn't say she was a stay at home—well, she was a stay at home when I was born, but she worked in daycare, and so she was able to take me to work and so, having me never really impacted her working when she did eventually go to work.” – 22 weeks pregnant, 25 years old, Education and health services

“Uh, guess, I guess that's, is, uh, family-wise, um, I go back to how I was raised. Uh, you know, when I get off work, I, I to try to have dinner ready. So, um, I try to do all the classic, um, good wife, good mother duties. Um, and I actually enjoy it.” - 17 weeks pregnant, 30 years old, Professional and business services

“I never really thought about that. I guess I've always had like, a strong work ethic and I've always been super competitive, and I always, I don't know, want to achieve the best. Um, so, I think that background is you know, it helps in um, deciding I guess in what to do like, to keep working, provide the best for my family, um, etc.” – 10 weeks pregnant, 28 years old, Manufacturing

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how pregnant working women plan for and make decision for parental leave. More specifically, it was to investigate which factors are most influential in this decision making. I hoped to learn if mothers consider stakeholders, and how factors such as culture or preferences may influence decisions for childcare. Results suggest that pregnant working women may not consider how their culture influences their pregnancy experience but frequently considered monetary cost to be a major concern, policies and benefits put constraints around what pregnant working women are able to take in terms of leave, and each pregnancy situation is unique and contains frequent uncertainty.

Previous research on pregnant working women suggests that understanding the parental leave process is critical to support the optimal planning and functioning of pregnant working women and their organizations (Fisher, Valley, Toppinen-Tanner, & Mattingly, 2016). These data suggest that the process may have many moving parts, and depending on the organization, coworkers and supervisors may play different roles. Consistent with what Spitzmueller and Matthews (2016) stated, women in this sample seemed to be facing higher demands in work and non-work areas of their lives than before they were pregnant. Further, women did seem to be considering how their supervisors would react to their pregnancy and how finances would play a role in their decisions, as suggested by previous work (Freeney et al., 2018; Spitzmuller & Mathews, 2016).

Theoretical Implications

Although this was not a grounded theory design, the data do map on to existing theories and provide some qualitative support. These results lend supporting evidence for the dynamic 4-

stage process of parental leave and return to work proposed by Fisher and colleagues (2016, 2019) and its reference to bioecological systems theory, job demands-resources model, and role theory. Throughout the data there were evident dynamic forces, such as societal, work, family, and individual factors at play, suggesting that the permeable boundaries in the parental leave model may exist. As the bioecological systems theory suggests, the pregnant working women in this study explicitly stated how the wider society contexts (e.g., FMLA, cultural expectations) influenced their concerns and decisions about leave. From the results, we can see that an expecting employee is actively interacting between their work, family, and individual expectations, where the workplace and employee are reciprocally impacting each other.

These qualitative data also support how the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001) might be relevant to parental leave and return to work. Respondents mentioned physical demands (e.g., swelling, morning sickness, etc.) of pregnancy, especially during their first trimester, and how draining that was of their energy, and the demand or need of going to the doctor's office. Additionally, they mentioned how they either did or did not have the proper resources at work to help cater to those needs; some women had a job where they could leave their desk if they didn't feel well, or come into work later in the day after a doctor's appointment, others suggested that navigating time for doctor's appointments and not feeling well was more challenging. In this example, the resource that could reduce the demands or strain from demand would be flexibility, which was explicitly stated when I asked respondents what could supervisors and leaders do better. The need to provide or find childcare for a newborn is another demand that provides an example from the data that lends support for the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Here, as respondents explicitly stated, paid

leave or benefits during leave (e.g., job protection) would be a helpful resource which could reduce some of the demands faced during the second stage of leave (i.e., on leave).

Role theory is also a useful theoretical framework to apply to parental leave and return to work. Specifically, respondents stated that they may have differing expectations for childcare than what their workplace or family members prefer. As the theory suggests, when an employee acquires an additional role (i.e., motherhood) they must manage the demands of their new role with their existing roles. One participant highlighted this by explaining how conflict can arise when your cultural role and family expectations may be in conflict with or cause tension with each other. This could shed light on the greater need for resources to meet these demands depending on how much your role demands conflict or are cohesive.

The work-home resources model (Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012) may also be applicable for parental leave and return to work. Many women stated they were lucky to have a supportive spouse or partner, and family. This could be a sign that the non-work domain resources (e.g., support) are helpful in navigating the parental leave and return to work process in their work domain, demonstrating a beneficial relationship between work and family. However, this phenomenon could be strongly related to the marital status of most respondents (i.e., married). On the other hand, the only single respondent was also the only respondent to report mental health issues (i.e., anxiety and mental health therapy). She recently broke up with the biological father of her pregnancy and was experiencing a lack of support outside of the workplace. At the point of data collection, she was missing some work time for mental health issues or treatment; this could be an example of the resource depletion process and contextual demands that could negatively influence the work-family interface.

Additionally, this study aimed to shed light on the impact contextual differences may have on planning for parental leave. To attempt to answer this question, researchers explicitly asked participants how their culture, heritage or background influenced their decision-making. This semi-structured interview question had the least amount of saturation among all of the questions. Specifically, the responses to this question were particularly interesting in the way that they seemed to follow two major routes: 1) thinking culture did not play a role, and 2) thinking culture does play a role. For the former, pregnant working women may not know what culture encompasses and or how their culture may influence their experiences. For the latter, women who expressed that culture played a role may have a better understanding of cultural influences, or have a culturally identity that is more likely to intersect with parental leave and return to work. Although it is not possible to make large generalizations from this study given the small convenience sample, it was interesting that no white non-Hispanic women suggested that culture played a role, and those that mentioned culture were non-white.

Practical Implications

This research has implications for supervisor training, workplace interventions, human resource policies, national policies, and the development of training to better equip pregnant working women to navigate parental leave. From these data, we can gather that pregnant working women appreciate a positive reaction to their pregnancy, but are looking for more out of their supervisors when it comes to instrumental help. For supervisor training, our field could develop interventions that target supervisors' understandings of parental leave, including the demands and challenges pregnant working women may face and the impact it may have on the workplace. This could lead to more supervisors investing in parental leave (e.g., advocating for paid or job protected leave), or becoming more educated on their workplace's specific leave

policies and procedures, and advocating for ways they can instrumentally help expecting employees. Supervisor training of this kind could increase perceptions of family supportive organization perceptions (FSOP), especially in organizations that do not qualify for FMLA (Little, Hinojosa, Pustaiian-Underdahl, & Zipay, 2018; Allen, 2001).

Specifically, family supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSBs) could be employed to increase support for pregnant working women. I argue that all four dimensions of FSSBs (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hanson, 2009) could be implemented as low-cost ways to support the parental leave process. The first dimension is emotional support, which could be implemented through leadership practices and coworkers who are willing to demonstrate their concern and regard for the expecting mother's non-work life and pregnancy (Hammer et al., 2009; Crain & Stevens, 2018). Secondly, instrumental support could be implemented through HR practices or supervisor training which could give a formal foundation for support in the workplace. For example, this could take the shape of training supervisors to know the process for applying for FMLA, or the best places to find childcare in the area. For an organization to know what type of instrumental help would be most beneficial, they should do a needs analysis of their employees to see in what ways they could provide the most valuable help. The third dimension, role modeling, could be displayed by supervisors with children expressing their experiences to the expecting employees, or discussing what strategies they use to successfully navigate work and non-work. Finally, creative work-family management could involve helping the pregnant working women explore options for how their job position and responsibilities may be rearranged during leave so that the transition is smooth and less stressful. Given the results of this study, I argue that all facets of FSSBs could be beneficial in helping pregnant working women plan for parental leave.

Supervisors and workplace interventions should be aware that cultural characteristics may influence what factors pregnant working women are considering. For Example, if a workplace policy around parental leave conflicts with cultural expectations, or even family expectation, it could cause strain on the expecting employee. More broadly, if a workplace's policy conflicts with pressures from other sources (e.g., financial need, family influence, spouse expectations), mothers may face higher levels of demands trying to navigate opposing expectations.

There is a high level of uncertainty when it comes to planning for parental leave and return to work. As stated above, supervisor training may be beneficial. If supervisors were more informed in the way parental leave has unfolded at their workplace, or how it may unfold for the current expecting mother, it may ease some uncertainty and help the expecting employee better plan. Additionally, human resources and leaders in the organization may benefit from creating a 'plan A' and 'plan B' for the employee going through parental leave. One plan could be centered around everything going according to their intentions without complications, and the other could be if there are complications (e.g., baby is delivered early, unplanned caesarean section). Supervisors could be more explicit in what they discuss with their employees. A question as direct as, "Do you know how to plan during this process?" or "What are you struggling to plan the most?" could allow employees and supervisors to work together. If employers do not feel it is appropriate to be this direct, they could ask, "what could this organization do to help you plan during this time?" This could tap into what aspects are most uncertain, and help with uncertainty reduction.

More broadly, this research has national policy and workplace policy implications. It was clear from these data that these pregnant working women relied on national or workplace policies

to structure their parental leave. If they qualified for benefits from FMLA or workplace policies they would consider those benefits (e.g., time off, how long, paid or unpaid) in conjunction with other benefits (e.g., sick time, vacation time) and individual factors (e.g., income, childcare, spouse time off). It seemed as though benefits set boundaries around parental leave decisions, especially when deciding when to take leave and for how long. Further, when workplaces had policies for job protection or some pay, women often felt more valued by the company and better supported. Most of the frustration expressed in the data surfaced when pregnant working women expressed their thoughts about FMLA, or their workplace's policy, in comparison to other countries. Additionally, a respondent expressed frustration when she was able to get paid leave for a funeral, but no pay for the birth of her child. If we could better understand national policies' influence, and the structure of workplace policies, we could better design benefits for pregnant working women that could also benefit their employers. For example, if we could reduce negative perceptions among expecting employees from a lack of perceived support, they may be more likely to commit to the organization and return after leave.

Organizations may be interested in recruiting and retaining diversity among employees and talent, and having proper gender representation at all levels within the organization. Previous research has clearly established barriers women face in the workplace (e.g., parental responsibilities, Vinkenburg, Van Engen, & Peters, 2015), and parental leave and return to work may be another. Exploring planning for parental leave is the first step to understanding how the rest of the parental leave process will unfold and how returning to work may have positive or negative influences on the mother's career trajectory. If pregnant working women and their employers could better plan for the process, women may be able to better transition back into the workplace and maintain their career trajectories (Freeney, van der Werff, & Collings, 2018).

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that qualitative research cannot make broad causal generalization to the population of interest. Quantitative researchers may argue that qualitative data is not sufficient to answer questions of causality. However, a qualitative approach with rich data can answer questions of local causality (Maxwell, 2004; Tracy, 2013). Local causality is not focused on generating universal causal links between constructs of variables. Instead it focuses on explaining causal events in the context of the events being described. Of course, this cannot experimentally control for other confounding variables, but it does shed light on an explanation for the contextualized events and experiences within the data (Katz, 2001; Tracy, 2013). Further, local causality cannot be explained in a way that supports or refutes the theoretical arguments above, since my approach was not grounded theory or to test theory. Local causality was explored in this study to help answer our research questions on what influences parental leave planning and decision making. For example, decisions about length of leave might be caused by a need for income. Additionally, for an understudied topic, local causalities may highlight important contexts, variables, and experiences that can be applied in quantitative work. It could also be the case that presumed local causalities are simply correlations, therefore major generalizations should not be made from this work.

Another limitation of this work is the sample size and diversity of pregnant working women sampled. Given the scope and timeline of a Master's thesis project and grant funding, I was not only attempting to recruit a diverse sample of women, but also balance the recruitment efforts and diversity with data saturation and deadlines for my project. This study did not capture or represent all identities and experiences of parental leave. Given the outliers in the data (e.g.,

those that explicitly stated that culture influenced their experience) it is logical to expect more intersecting experiences beyond those sampled in this study.

A limitation specific to my study is the lack of generalizability to other countries. Leave benefits in the U.S. are less generous and less standardized than northern European countries. For example, other countries have national policies that extend to all pregnant working women regardless of organizational size. This takes the burden of responsibility away from the organization. Additionally, conducting this study in countries other than the U.S. could have yielded different results. For example, expecting employees may have known more clearly what their benefits were before getting pregnant, and been less uncertain about the process because the experience is standardized and controlled by comprehensive and inclusive leave policies from the top-down national level.

There are also other topical limitations that could have influenced the themes and major findings. Participants who did not say culture influenced their pregnancy may have a lack of understanding of the concept of culture. This may be especially impactful in experience of women who are part of the majority culture in this country or in their workplace. Another limitation related to this topic could be found in my probing style. Perhaps I could have probed further into the cultural aspect of parental leave and return to work to help participants be aware of their culture.

This study did not explore how planning changes across children. For example, we did not target experiences of previous miscarriages, complicated pregnancies, or how previous experiences of parental leave and return to work may have impacted planning this round. I was also not able to explore how women are making decisions about parental leave. This project was

able to capture some of the most important factors pregnant working women think about, but it does not tap into their cognitive process of how they are considering them.

Future Research

The theories used in this study explain how multiple factors can reciprocally influence the parental leave and return to work process. However, they do not explore how pregnant working women may conceptualize their future in the parental leave and return to work process. Trope and Liberman (2010) suggests that how abstractly or concretely a person thinks about a future object/event is related to how psychologically distant it is. They propose four general psychological distance dimensions including *time*, *space*, what/who the *social target* is, and *hypotheticality* of event or object. Temporal distance refers to the perceived distance in time between the individual and the event or object in the past or future. Spatial distance refers to the perceived physical space between the individual and the event or object. Social distance is the distance between two people or groups interpersonally. Hypothetical distance is perceived when an individual is thinking about an event that is unlikely or likely to happen. Further, the distance dimensions are expected to be related, but are not to be considered the same. Trope and Liberman (2010) suggested this in their statement: “Spatial distance from an event may depend on...whether it is expected in the near or distant future... whether it is expected to be experienced by oneself or another, and whether it is probably or improbably” (p. 443). This statement shows an example of how characteristics of the other distance dimensions can influence spatial distance specifically. Further, research suggests that one distance dimension may be more influential than another. However, these distinctions have yet to be made.

In terms of how abstractly or concretely an individual thinks about a topic, Trope and Liberman (2010) label a more abstract conceptualization as a *high-level construal*, and a more

concrete conceptualization as a *low-level construal*. These two construals have different functions. A high-level construal is typically more abstract, big picture and not as detail oriented, and is usually construed with more psychologically distant objects. The more subordinate level of construal, a low-level construal is typically more detail oriented and concrete. Generally speaking, and regardless of the specific dimension of psychological distance, the more distant an object or event is the more it will be construed on a higher level. This also goes the other direction, the more highly construed an object or event is, the more distant it is perceived. A great spatial example of this idea is a quote from the authors, “It may seem intuitive that from a distance we see the forest, and as we get closer, we see the trees” (Trope & Liberman, 2010 p. 444). When distance is being perceived or an object is being mentally construed, the reference point is always egocentrically the individual, and in this case the expectant mother. Therefore, for the relationship between distance and level of construal to hold true, an expectant mother has to consider the objects and events of parental leave in terms of distance from herself and no one else.

I argue that CLT is an important advancement to the study of parental leave and return to work because it may shed some much-needed light on the thought processes underlying how decisions are made and how planning is done during pre-leave. CLT will help us explore how expectant mothers are conceptualizing their futures by addressing how they form mental construals (i.e., abstractions) of object, events, or goals relevant to this process (Trope & Liberman, 2010). The mental construals expectant mothers form can explain how they expect their future to happen, if they consider how others may react to specific events, and other things they may take into account when planning during pre-leave. Further, this theory could explain how expectant mothers conceptualize parental leave events or objects more or less concretely,

with respect to the psychological distance they perceive from the events and objects. Pregnancy, and accommodating work for pregnancy, are generally processes that continue once they start. As stated above, parental leave is unlike other unexpected events (e.g., illness or injury) that cause an absence from work. At the very least working while pregnant necessitates some consideration of how or acknowledgement that the process will continue to unfold, unless stopped by the loss of the fetus (e.g., miscarriage or abortion). Therefore, it is conceivable to think that when pregnant and working, expectant mothers are thinking prospectively and anticipating the future. This theory helps us understand how expectant mothers are construing the future, how women may construe the process of parental leave differently, and how that prospection may have influences for planning during pre-leave. For example, this theory supports the notion that high-level construals are more likely used for future events when there is an increased distance from a similar past event. For instance, an expectant mother who just had a child and experienced the parental leave and return to work process might use a lower level construal for her current pregnancy and the corresponding parental leave than a first-time mother who does not have a past and proximal event to apply to her current prospection.

Psychological distance impacts the predictions we make about ourselves and future situations (Trope & Liberman, 2010). This may play a direct role in the process of planning, which often involves considering childcare, when women want to return to work, if they want to try breastfeeding etc. If expectant mothers are more psychologically distant from birth, taking leave, or returning to work they would be expected to have a high-level of construal for those events. Which this higher-level construal comes less thought about the concrete details of each event. This could have implications for decision making and planning in pre-leave. If an expectant mother is psychologically distant from taking leave or giving birth, she may be more

concerned about the big picture details. This could abstain her from making detailed and action-oriented plans for how to handle leave. She may also be more confident in these decisions made with a high-level construal (Trope & Liberman, 2010).

There are many objects and events that expectant mothers could consider in the parental leave and return to work process. For example, CLT could be used to explore how psychological distance between a mother and available resources for her parental leave might influence her planning decisions. Essentially, CLT could help researchers explore how mothers conceptualize all of the social objects or events relevant in all of the theories used previously to explore parental leave. Other objects or events relevant to the parental leave process can influence planning regarding if an expectant mother wants to take leave, when to take leave, when to disclose pregnancy, what boundaries between work and non-work she wants during leave, if she is going to look for a new job, how long she wants to take leave, how she wants to feed her baby, etc. Further, how they construal it has implications for planning, which can ultimately influence the entire process. If expectant mothers and their employers want to have a successful and smooth parental leave and return to work process, how expectant mothers construal the process of parental leave must be addressed. This theory may be especially helpful in arguing that there are four distinct stages in the parental leave process, each distinguished by changing levels of construal and distance.

Future research should expand and further investigate these research questions with more diverse pregnant working women from a broader range of cultural groups to see if certain cultural identities are more likely to play a role in planning for parental leave and return to work. As the results of this study suggest, there may be some cultures which are more closely tied with planning for parental leave than others. Subsequent research should address intersectional

identities among pregnant working women and how certain identities may face higher demands, challenges, or have different needs. For example, women from minority groups may already have higher demands in terms of fitting in or being accepted, then to add pregnancy status into their identity could increase the demands. Additionally, expecting employees who are already mothers may have multiple identities they are trying to reconcile.

Future research should also address how planning for leave compares to how leave actually unfolds. We do not yet know the relationship between plans made during pre-leave and outcomes in the subsequent stages of parental leave and return to work. From studies such as this we know a little bit more about what expecting employees are considering when planning for leave, but further exploration would allow researchers and practitioners to better understand what and when expecting employees and their workplace should be planning and how that relates to future outcomes. Perhaps there are decisions and factors that are best considered at specific times in the process to ensure the most successful leave process.

Due to the limited scope of this project, other major themes could be found by conducting more interviews. It should also sample multiple stakeholders (e.g., supervisors, human resources employees, coworkers, subordinates, family) in the process (Freeney, van der Werff, & Collings, 2018), considering that previous research has suggested that management's position on parental leave and return to work influences a women's experiences while returning. Perhaps, by conducting more research about planning for parental leave, validated tools predicting future outcomes of parental leave could be used to help both the mother and employer to make the transition back to work as smooth as possible. Conceivably, if stakeholder perceptions of parental leave were measured during pre-leave, steps could be taken to either shift perceptions to

be more helpful for the process, or put instrumental support in place to reduce negative outcomes for both the mother and employer.

Summary and Conclusions

Despite the fact that parental leave and return to work has received little attention, existing theories and the current study suggest the process is dynamic and may pose challenges for both the pregnant working woman and her employer. In this study, I provided some evidence that money is a major concern for expecting employees, planning for parental leave encompasses a large amount of uncertainty, culture may or may not play a role, and that supervisors and organizations could be doing more to instrumentally support their expecting employees. Data such as these will lay a foundation for future research to continue to explore planning for parental leave, and how to better support pregnant working women and their employer.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A.

Semi-structured interview questions

1. Tell me about your pregnancy so far.
 - a. What kind of support do you have?
2. How are you planning for parental leave and returning to your work? What are your plans in terms of work related to your pregnancy and when you give birth / do you have plans for parental leave?
 - a. How long do you plan to take leave? What influences this decision?
 - b. Do you have a birth plan?
 - c. What do you think this will look like?
3. What role do your coworkers and supervisors play in your planning for parental leave and return to work? Did you speak with anyone about parental leave? Do you take advice from anyone?
 - a. Probe to find out about speaking with family members and people at work. “Did you talk to any family members?” “Did you talk to anyone at work? If so, who? Were they a coworker, supervisor, someone else?”
4. How are you planning to manage your job/career while on leave? What will you do about work / what will happen to your position while you are on leave?
 - a. Will you communicate or keep up with events at work while on leave?
 - i. How will you communicate with work while you are away?
 - ii. To what extent do you plan to do any work while you are on leave? If so, what do you plan to work on? How will you decide what to work on and

what will wait until you return? Probe for whether they will check email and other tasks/projects.

5. How have people at work reacted to your pregnancy
 - a. How are your coworkers supportive?
 - i. In what ways?
 - b. Is your supervisor supportive?
 - c. Have you experienced any negative reactions? If so, what were they?
6. How does your culture or family influence your experiences of working and pregnancy?
7. How has money played a role in your pregnancy and work and plans for taking time off?
 - a. Will you receive any pay while you are away on leave?
8. Tell me about your health insurance.
 - a. Who provides your insurance? (Probe for participant's employer, their spouse's employer, other sources)
 - b. What is and what will be covered regarding healthcare expenses related to pregnancy and the birth of your baby?
9. What pros and cons do you expect in your planning and parental leave experiences?
10. How can leaders and/or supervisors better support pregnant working women?
 - a. What other ideas do you have besides paid leave?

Appendix B.

Consent

Consent to Participate in a Research Study Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: Working Parent Longitudinal Study: Interview Portion

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Gwenith G. Fisher, PhD., Department of Psychology,
Gwen.Fisher@colostate.edu; (970) 491-1032

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kelsie (Colley) Daigle, Department of Psychology,
Kelsie.daigle@rams.colostate.edu

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? We would like to explore your thoughts and experiences about pregnancy and work, and parental leave (anytime away from work, paid or unpaid, in preparation for or for the birth of your child). We are interested in if, when, and why you plan to take parental leave and the decision you are making while pregnant and working. This interview will help us accurately articulate what is happening while women work during their pregnancy.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? The research is being conducted Dr. Gwenith Fisher, and doctoral student Kelsie Daigle, from the psychology department at Colorado State University who study parental leave and return to work.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? To better understand the experiences women have and decisions made while working and pregnant.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? An interview will be conducted over the phone, and the interview should take between 1.5-2 hours of your time. We can take short breaks for the restroom, etc.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? If you are interested in participating, we would like to conduct a confidential interview with you. The interview will include questions about your experience pregnancy and work, and how you might be planning for parental leave. With your written consent, we would like to audio-record the interview, which will then be transcribed to text, but with removal of all identifying information so that your confidentiality can be preserved.

We can send you a copy of the transcription to approve and give you the opportunity to review and/or modify your responses in any way. We will also at this point destroy the audiotape. If we decide to include your interview in any papers written or presentations given, we will send you a revised transcript (based on your review, as noted above) and you will have an opportunity to

again modify any of your responses. Instead of giving us consent, you have the option of leaving the study at any time, and all of your materials would then be deleted.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY? If you are not pregnant, working at least 30 paid hours per week, 18 years old then you should not take part in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

- There are no known risks associated with this study, except it may be difficult and emotional painful to discuss any negative experiences you have had while pregnant and working. You are free to decline answering any questions that you are uncomfortable answer, however.
- It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no known benefits for participating in this study. We hope that this account of experiences will inform professionals and the public about the experiences women have while working and pregnant and lay a foundation for better support systems for working pregnant women.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. **Your interview will be ensured confidentiality at all times:** All identifiable information (names, location, occupation) will be removed from the transcript of your interview. Only the research staff will have access to a master list linking the identifiable information with the original audio in the early phases of the project and both the audio and the master list will be destroyed simultaneously once you approve the written transcript sent to you, as noted above.

You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, we may be asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee. The law may require us to show your information to a court *OR to tell authorities if we believe you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.*

When we write about the study to share with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Dr. Gwenith Fisher at Gwen.Fisher@colostate.edu ; 970-491-1032. If

you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the IRB Coordinator at: the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553. You should keep a copy of this consent form for your records.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW? By agreeing to participate, we also ask that you indicate agreement to participate in each step of the research study. Please check off each step of the research process that you agree to participate in.

Please initial by each research activity listed below that you are volunteering to participate in.

Participate in the initial 1.5 – 2 hr interview _____ (initials)

Approve the use of transcript from interview for research, papers, and presentations _____ (initials)

Permission to re-contact:

Do you give permission for the researchers to contact you again in the future to follow-up on this study or to participate in new research projects? Please initial next to your choice below:

YES _____ (initials)

NO _____ (initials)

Permission to audiotape/videotape interviews or interventions:

The researchers would like to audiotape your interview to be sure that your comments are accurately recorded in the transcription. Only our researcher team will have access to the audiotapes, and they will be destroyed when they have been transcribed.

Do you give the researchers permission to audiotape your interview? Please initial next to your choice below:

YES, I agree to be digitally recorded _____ (initials)

NO, do not audiotape my interview _____ (initials)

Permission to use direct quotes:

Please let us know if you give us permission to use direct quotes from your interview. Please initial next to your choice below.

I give permission for comments I have made to be shared using my exact words and not my name/position/title _____ (initials)

You can use my data for research and publishing, but DO NOT use any direct quotes from my interview _____ (initials)

Your consent acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. After signing this form, please scan it electronically and email:

workingparentstudy@gmail.com

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Appendix C.

Screening Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate! First we would like to gather some basic contact information to enroll you in the interview. We promise to keep this completely confidential. We will not share any of your information at any time.

What is your first name?

What is your last name?

What is your preferred email address?

Please provide a phone number where you can be contacted. If you are not comfortable, we are able to schedule your interview via email, but cannot do the interview via email. Please include area code. For example, "5551551555." (Please make sure there are not unnecessary spaces or symbols in your entry)

Are you currently pregnant?

Yes

No

Not 100% certain

Are you currently working on average at least 25 hours per week? (If you work multiple jobs and the total number of hours across all jobs is on average 25 hours per week or more, mark "Yes.")

Yes

No

Uncertain

How many weeks pregnant are you? (Indicate number only) If you are not sure, please provide your best guess. (Please make sure there are not unnecessary spaces in your entry.)

When is your due date? mm/dd/yyyy. It is very important that you enter it in this format. For example, if your due date is March 9th, 2019, please enter 03/09/2019.

Are you pregnant with more than one fetus (such as twins, triplets, etc.)?

Yes

No

Uncertain

What is your current age? Please enter a number. (Please make sure there are not unnecessary spaces in your entry).

Which of the following best describes your <u>current relationship status? If you are not sure or none of the specific categories fit your situation, please choose "Other" and briefly explain.

Married

Partnered but not married

Single

Divorced

Widowed

Other

What is your average household income before taxes? (Please do not include a dollar sign \$)

What is your job title? If you work more than one job, please tell us about your primary job.

What industry do you work in?

Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting

Mining, Quarrying, Oil & Gas Extraction

Construction

Manufacturing

Wholesale Trade

Retail Trade

Transportation & Warehousing

Utilities

Information

Finance & Insurance

Professional & Business Services

Education & Health Services

Leisure & Hospitality

Other Services (except Public Administration)

What is your race/ethnicity? Please choose all that apply.

White / Caucasian

Hispanic or Latino

Black or African American

American Indian or Native American

Asian / Pacific Islander

Other

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

Some high school, no diploma

High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (GED)

Trade / technical / vocational training

Some college, no degree

Associate Degree

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Doctoral or other professional degree

Appendix D.

Self-reflection

1. In what ways is your study's topic worthy?
 - a. Theoretical relevance
 - b. Practical application
 - c. Opportunity for social transformation
2. In what ways is your study interesting? How does it solve a problem? How does it provide something new and surprising?
3. Is your study sufficiently rigorous? Given the topic and the contribution you hope to make, what other things might you do to ensure due diligence in terms of:
 - a. Collecting appropriate and sufficient data?
 - b. Spending enough time in the field?
 - c. Adopting appropriate data collection and analysis practices?

What are your motives for conducting this study? What are your strengths and shortcomings?

How can your past experiences or assumptions (biases) influence the research process?

Appendix E.

First Codebook

<i>ABBREVIATION</i>	<i>CODE</i>	<i>DEFINITION</i>	<i>EXAMPLE</i>	<i>NOTES</i>
<i>First –Level (Descriptive) Codes</i>				
<i>BPlan</i>	Birth Plan	Answer to the birth plan question		
<i>Feed</i>	Feeding child	Breastfeeding or pumping		
<i>FeedAtWork</i>	Integrating feeding, pumping and working	Talking about feeding at work, integrating feeding and driving to work, pumping at work		
<i>Accom</i>	Accommodations	Parking pass, feeding rooms, leaving desk, except from living		NOT flextime
<i>PlannedPreg</i>	Planned Pregnancy	If the PR discusses if their pregnancy was planned or unplanned		
<i>DrApp</i>	Doctors Appointment	When discussing going to or arranging for doctors appointments	“...doctors appointments I think that’s difficult and having people understand like”	
<i>DrInfo</i>	Information from Doctors	Information learned from doctor		
<i>Complication</i>	Complications	Anything medical, including miscarriage, gestational diabetes		In the past or present.

<i>PsychHealth</i>	Physical Health	When the PR discusses their physical health		
<i>MentalHealth</i>	Mental Health	When the PR discusses their mental health		Depression, anxiety, post partum depression
<i>Child</i>	Other Children	When the PR has another child	"I have a three year old"	
<i>PreviousPreg</i>	Previous Pregnancy	When discussing a previous pregnancy		Could be talking about their first child, other children they have carried.
<i>PTO</i>	Paid Time Off	When the PR discusses any paid time off		
<i>OTO</i>	Other Time Off	This could be vacation time, sick days, etc.	"So I started out back to work after my daughter with no sick time available, no vacation, no personal days "	
<i>FMLA</i>	Family Medical Leave Act	Anytime FMLA is mentioned		NOT talking about other organizational policies
<i>WhenLeave</i>	When to Take Leave	When the PR discussing when they will stop working	"I am not sure if I want to go early"	
<i>CatchUp</i>	Catching up with work, or working more/extra, for time that was or will be missed	When the PR discussing having to work extra or catch up on work for time that was taken for docs, or sick, previous preg, or surgery.		NOT talking about domestic work

<i>Position</i>	Position	When the PR describes working in a team, as a boss, or as a subordinate		
<i>OrgComposition</i>	Organizational composition.	Gender composition (coworkers), size of office.		
<i>JobTasks</i>	Job tasks	Lifting, sitting at desk, driving, travel to work, meetings,		
<i>PosOL</i>	Position On Leave	When the PR is describing what is going to happen to their position while they are on leave	“so she took over and did my job” “pass the baton”	
<i>TeleCom</i>	Tele Commute	When a PR discussing not being able to telecommute (work from home vs. having to work in the office)	“so I have to go to the office, so I can’t make up anything, um, like at home or anything”	
<i>FlexTime</i>	Flexible Work Arrangement	When PR is talking about being able to come into work late or leave early.	“...like you said a flexible schedule or being able to come back, um, I mean I guess that would fall under flexible schedule”	(This is not the best example.)

<i>HealthIns</i>	Health Insurance	Anytime PR discuss health insurance	“trying to make it like work through lunch to be able to still get a full amount of hours to be able to go through my insurance basically”	
<i>CCare</i>	Childcare	When PR discusses childcare plans for after the baby is born	“like my mom might be able to watch her”	
<i>Cost</i>	Monetary cost of something	Any time someone talks about the cost of something	“daycare is really expensive”	Not talking about saving money or making money
<i>Income</i>	Income	PR discussing their income or spouse/partner income		
<i>Saving</i>	Monetary Saving / budgeting	PR discusses their savings, budgeting		
<i>RTW</i>	Return to Work Timing	PR is talking about when they plan to return to work	“now I am not sure about my return to work”	Not talking about a “yes” or “no” to returning to work
<i>RTW_D</i>	Return to Work Decision	Yes, no, unsure.		
<i>JobSat</i>	Job Satisfaction	PR states that they like what they do, enjoy their work, enjoy their workplace, OR do not like what they do	“I like what I do”	
<i>DueDate</i>	Due Date	When they state their due date	“as of right now my due	

			date is October 22 nd	
<i>Unsure</i>	Uncertainty about any plans	When the PR discussing any uncertainty in their plans	“right now the plan is a little (laughs) up in the air” “like not being able to actually plan what or when you’re going on leave or when you’re”	
<i>Dissappoint</i>	Disappoint Others	When PR is discussing disappointing others, such as coworkers, supervisors, clients, family, friends	“I don’t want to, like, let them down”	
<i>Cowork</i>	Coworkers	PR discusses their coworkers		
<i>Sup</i>	Supervisor or Boss	PR discusses their supervisor		
<i>Subs</i>	Subordinates	PR discusses their subordinates, people they are in charge of		
<i>Partner</i>	Spouse / Partner / Husband	When PR discussing their partner		
<i>PartnerLv</i>	Paternity Leave	If PR discusses their partner taking leave	“my work has 0 paternity leave and my husband and I work at the same place”	Could be same sex couple
<i>TellPreg</i>	Telling people they are pregnant	When the PR discuss telling their workplace, boss, coworkers they are pregnant	“I mean it’s not like I’m an announcer about my life so”	

<i>HR</i>	Human Resources	PR mentions having HR, not having HR, talking to HR, telling HR they are pregnant		
<i>NonWrkAdvice</i>	Non-work advice	PR taking advice from friends, family about parental leave, OR talking about not taking advice		Could be their answer to the question “did you speak with any family members or friends / take advice about the process”
<i>WrkAdvice</i>	Work advice	PR taking advice from coworkers, HR, boss, etc. anyone at work OR not getting advice	“I feel like you aren’t given any guidance about that one when you’re an employee”	Could be their answer to the question “did you speak with any coworkers / take advice about the process”
<i>React</i>	Reaction to pregnancy	When PR discusses how people at work reacted to their pregnancy	“I think they’re happy for me”	Could also code “excited” as a related in vivo code
<i>Incivil</i>	Incivility	When PR discusses a negative reaction to pregnancy	“I work with this guy that it’s a little bit, I don’t think that he really gets it, but like every day he’ll be like “Oh my gosh, you’re so big, you get bigger every day”.”	Comments about size, etc.
<i>ContactOnLeav</i>	Contact to work on leave	When PR discusses if they will stay in contact with work while on leave		

<i>CultInflu</i>	Cultural Influence	When PR discusses culture, answer to the question		Could just be answer to culture question: "I don't think, none." Could be racial/ethnic, OR national level culture.
<i>FamInflu</i>	Family Influence	When PR talks about what their parents or in-laws did, aunts, uncles, talk about what they did		NOT talking with husband about plans
<i>ReligInflu</i>	Religion Influence	Any explicit mention of having or not having		
<i>TopFactors</i>	Top Influencing Factors	Response to the question about what is influencing them the most.		Could also be brought up in other questions
<i>LeadersShould</i>	How leaders could better support	Answers given to the interview question, or brought up in other answers.	"I would definitely push for paid parental leave because"	
<i>BossGender</i>	Boss' Gender	PR discusses or states boss's gender	"I have female CEO at my work"	

Appendix F.

Revised Codebook

ABBREVIATION	CODE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	NOTES
First –Level (Descriptive) Codes				
in vivo	In Vivo	Anything you think is meaningful in the data, like a word or short comment, that should be added	“Its difficult working while pregnant” “a big planner”	You would highlight the word or segment in the transcript and make it an In Vivo Code.
BPlan	Birth Plan	Answer to the birth plan question, anything about birth plan (epidural, planned c-section, midwife)	“it’s not 100 percent finished” “I prefer not to use any pain medication”	Could be about a drug free birth, at home or hospital, “just want a healthy baby”
Feed	Feeding child	Breastfeeding or pumping, and talk of planning to do this.	“um I am 100 percent into breastfeeding ”	If they say they breastfed their previous baby, if they said their mother or sister breast fed, any talk of it.
FeedWork	Integrating feeding, pumping and working	Talking about feeding at work, integrating feeding and driving to work, pumping at work		Could be talking about plans to breastfeed while working, pumping at work, or working from home and breastfeeding
Accom	Accommodations	Parking pass, feeding rooms, leaving desk, except from living, changing shifts.		NOT flextime, these are more tangible things, or changing how they do their work for the pregnancy.
PlannedPreg	Planned Pregnancy	If the PR discusses if their pregnancy was planned or unplanned		

DrApp	Doctors Appointment	When discussing going to or arranging for doctors appointments	“... doctors appointment s I think that’s difficult and having people understand like” “I have to be gone for doctor’s appointments”	
DrInfo	Information from Doctors	Information learned from doctor		Might be information about their pregnancy, high risk, updated due date, restrictions at work
Complication	Complications	Anything medical, including miscarriage, gestational diabetes	“I have high risk pregnancy”	With past pregnancies or present. NOT morning sickness.
PsychHealth	Physical Health	Talking about morning sickness, having a cold, physical pain, fatigue/tired, blood pressure	“you get sick from having a toddler” “And I was physically and mentally exhausted from working the shifts” “I had surgery last year”	NOT talking about morning sickness. Could be pain do to pregnancy.
MentalHealth	Mental Health	Talking about counseling, directly about mental health, or using the terms depression, anxiety, etc.	“I also struggle with anxiety and depression so I go to therapy”	Depression, anxiety, post partum depression

			“And I was physically and mentally exhausted from working the shifts”	
Child	Other Children	When the PR has another child, indicates they have another child, or says this is their first pregnancy	“I have a three year old” “My daughter” “This is my first”	
PreviousPreg	Previous Pregnancy	When discussing a previous pregnancy	“So what they did before was...” “I had her a week and a half past my due date” “worked up until past my due date”	Could be talking about any pre-leave experiences with past pregnancies. Only during the time they were pregnant (not talking about previous on leave time) NOT when the PR says this is their first pregnancy
TO	Time Off	When the PR discusses any paid time off (having it or not having it, wanting it, wishing they had more). This could be vacation time, sick days, etc.	“So I started out back to work after my daughter with no sick time available, no vacation, no personal days ” “Little sick time” “no sick time available”	Use anytime they mention paid time off or other types of time off.
FMLA	Family Medical Leave Act	Anytime FMLA is mentioned		

WhenLeave	When to Take Leave	When the PR discussing when they will stop working	“I am not sure if I want to go early ”	In this example, the first half of the sentence would be “unsure” code.
CatchUp	Catching up with work, or working more/extra , for time that was or will be missed	When the PR discussing having to work extra or catch up on work for time that was taken for docs, or sick, previous preg, or surgery.	<p>“I was kind of trying to have to catch up on sick time”</p> <p>“Make up for that by working more”</p> <p>“Work through my lunch”</p> <p>“So im having two and a half hours basically every week that I have to make up”</p>	Could be coming in early, but to make up for missed work or to gain hours for benefits NOT the same as flextime.
Position Org	Position Org	When the PR describes working as a boss, or as a subordinate, could be discussion their new job or job title (e.g., promotion). Gender composition (coworkers), size of office, structure of work team	<p>“I’m at the same department”</p> <p>“it’s just a really small office here”</p> <p>“Different title but the same job basically”</p> <p>“my job is can be done from home”</p> <p>“I do more of a one person thing”</p>	<p>Could be talking about a new position they have taken on recently, the job they had with a previous pregnancy, if they are a boss.</p> <p>PR describes working as a boss, or as a subordinate, could be discussion their new job or job title (e.g., promotion</p>

			“because I’m in the process of starting my own business ”	
JobTasks	Job tasks	Lifting, sitting at desk, driving, travel to work, meetings,	<p>“I am constantly in contact with lawyers and I take a file from start to finish”</p> <p>“I don’t really, um, do heavy lifting “</p>	HOW they do their job, WHAT tasks they do for their job. Or what they do not do.
PosOL	Position On Leave	When the PR is describing what is going to happen to their position while they are on leave, who is going to take over	<p>“so she took over and did my job”</p> <p>“girls in my branch is going to probably take over the majority of the stuff that I’m doing,”</p> <p>“pass the baton”</p> <p>“what before other people could pick up the slack”</p> <p>“so when I leave that’s kind of a headache to everybody else to take it over”</p>	could be talking about what is going to happen to their job, who is going to take over their tasks, could also be a previous leave experience

TeleCom	Tele Commute	When a PR discussing being able to telecommute (work from home vs. having to work in the office) or not being able to work from home	“so I have to go to the office , so I can’t make up anything, um, like at home or anything ”	In this example, the middle section “so I can't make anything up” would actually be coded with CatchtUp.
FlexTime	Flexible Work Arrangement	Being able to come in early and leave early or stay late, talking about the desire to have flextime.	“its either coming in early or I can't stay late because I have to get my daughter” “...like you said a flexible schedule or being able to come back, um, I mean I guess that would fall under flexible schedule”	NOT coming in early or staying late to make up for missed work. Could be related
HealthIns	Health Insurance	Anytime PR discuss health insurance	“trying to make it like work through lunch to be able to still get a full amount of hours to be able to go through my insurance basically”	
CCare	Childcare	When PR discusses childcare plans for after the baby is born	“like my mom might be able to watch her” “daycare”	

Cost	Monetary cost of something	Any time someone talks about the cost of something	“daycare is really expensive ” “ridiculously expensive”	Not talking about saving money or making money
Income	Income	PR discussing their income or spouse/partner income		Could be discussing loss of income during paid leave
Saving	Monetary Saving / budgeting	Talking about budgeting, saving.		
RTW	Return to Work Timing	PR is talking about when they plan to return to work	“now I am not sure about my return to work ” “right after my daughter” “returning to work”	Not talking about a “yes” or “no” to returning to work. The “right after my daughter” the PR is talking about their previous RTW experience.
RTW_D	Return to Work Decision	Yes, no, unsure.	“I am not sure about my return to work ” “like not being able to actually plan what or when you’re going on leave or when you’re” “I am still very indecisive”	The first part of this example, “I am not sure” would be coded as Unsure
JobSat	Job Satisfaction	PR states that they like what they do, enjoy their work, enjoy their workplace, OR do not like what they do	“I like what I do”	

DueDate	Due Date	When they state their due date	“as of right now my due date is October 22 nd ”	
Unsure	Uncertainty about any plans	When the PR discussing any uncertainty in their plans	<p>“right now the plan is a little (laughs) up in the air”</p> <p>“I still fully don’t know myself”</p> <p>“like not being able to actually plan what or when you’re going on leave or when you’re”</p> <p>“I am not sure about my return to work”</p> <p>“I am not sure yet”</p>	
Dissappoint	Disappoint Others, Guilt, burden, or let down	When PR discusses being guilty, fears or worries about disappointing others, or letting people down	<p>“I don’t want to, like, let them down”</p> <p>“Try not feel bad about it you know”</p>	
Grat	Gratitude	Blessed, lucky, thankful, grateful, appreciative	“ luckily I haven’t had any issues”	
Cowork	Coworkers	Any mention of their coworkers	<p>“Temp come in from a different department”</p> <p>“girls in my branch is going to</p>	

			probably take over”	
Sup	Supervisor or Boss	Any mention of their boss.	<p>“I’ have a pretty good relationship with my boss”</p> <p>“he was really helpful”</p> <p>“my boss has always been pretty flexible um which is nice, as far as being pregnant”</p>	
Subs	Subordinates	Talking about people they are in charge of		They could be discussing their position as a team lead, be mindful to glean if they are in charge of someone or not.
Partner	Spouse / Partner / Husband	When PR discussing their partner		Could be same sex
PartnerLv	Paternity Leave	If PR discusses their partner taking leave	“my work has 0 paternity leave and my husband and I work at the same place”	Could be same sex
TellPreg	Telling people they are pregnant	When the PR discuss telling their workplace, boss, HR, coworkers they are pregnant	“I mean it’s not like I’m an announcer about my life so”	
HR	Human Resources	PR mentions having HR, not having HR, talking to HR,		Could be negotiating benefits with HR
NonWrkAdvice	Non-work advice	PR taking advice from friends, family about	“ I would say mostly it’s all	Could be their answer to the question “did you

		parental leave, OR talking about not taking advice	advice from friends”	Speak with any family members or friends / take advice about the process”
WrkAdvice	Work advice	PR taking advice from coworkers, HR, boss, etc. anyone at work OR not getting advice	“I feel like you aren’t given any guidance about that one when you’re an employee”	Could be their answer to the question “did you speak with any coworkers / take advice about the process”
ReactToTell	Reaction to pregnancy tell	When PR discusses how people at work reacted to their pregnancy	<p>“I think they’re happy for me”</p> <p>“I don’t know if excited is the right word but he was fine with it”</p>	Could also code “excited” as a related in vivo code
PerceivedSupp	Perceived Support from people at work	This could be coworkers, supervisors, HR, general statements; Understanding from other	<p>“...doctors appointments I think that’s difficult and having people understand like”</p> <p>“just having people understand”</p> <p>“my boss has always been pretty flexible um which is nice, as far as being pregnant”</p> <p>“coworkers have of course been there when I</p>	NOT accommodations. Could also be perceptions of lack of support.

			<p>haven't been so they've had to pick up, you know, some of the additional work."</p> <p>"because I'm pregnant or she just encourages us to go outside and sit down"</p> <p>"so there's actually no one that I could actually go and actually speak about that"</p>	
Incivil	Incivility	When PR discusses a negative reaction to pregnancy	<p>"I work with this guy that it's a little bit, I don't think that he really gets it, but like every day he'll be like "Oh my gosh, you're so big, you get bigger every day"."</p>	Comments about size, etc.
ContactOnLeav	Contact to work on leave	When PR discusses if they will stay in contact with work while on leave	<p>"so I will have my computer at home and probably still involved in some projects to some extent,</p>	Could also being working while on leave at home.

			um, not logging in every day hopefully” “but I don’t think I would be speaking about the job while I’m on leave.”	
CultInflu	Cultural Influence	When PR discusses culture		Could just be answer to culture question: “I don’t think, none.” Could be racial/ethnic, OR national level culture.
FamInflu	Family Influence	When PR talks about what their parents or in-laws did, aunts, uncles, talk about what they did		NOT talking with husband about plans
ReligInflu	Religion Influence	Any explicit mention of having or not having		You can code “Thank God”s and we can go back to see if in the context it seems like a figure of speech or tied to religion
TopFactors	Top Influencing Factors	Response to the question about what is influencing them the most.		This is likely going to be in their answer to my direct question.
LeadersShould	How leaders could better support	Response to the question specifically asking about how leaders could better support. Could also be brought up in other responses.	“I would definitely push for paid parental leave because”	
BossGender	Boss’ Gender	When the PR indicates if their boss is male, female, etc.	“I have female CEO at my work”	

			<p>“my supervisor, I think, so she”</p> <p>“he was really helpful”</p>	
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Appendix G.

Calculating Intercoder agreement

After codebook development, the researchers underwent a series of coder trainings, codebook edits, and intercoder agreement calibrations averaging at a kappa value of .62. To achieve a higher range of agreement and better code the data, we segmented the data based on units of meaning in accordance with Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, and Pedersen's method (2013). We calculated kappa values using the equations provided in Fleiss's example of measuring agreement among more than two raters (1971).

$$\kappa = \frac{\bar{P} - \bar{P}_e}{1 - \bar{P}_e}$$
$$P_i = \frac{1}{n(n-1)} \sum_{j=1}^k n_{ij}(n_{ij} - 1)$$
$$\bar{P} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N P_i$$
$$\bar{P}_e = \sum_{j=1}^k p_j^2$$

Let N represent the total number of segments, n the number of codes per segment (can also be interpreted as the number of coders), and k the number of codes that can be assigned for each transcript. Let the subscript $i = 1, \dots, N$ represent the segments and the subscript $j = 1, \dots, k$ represent the codes possible. n_{ij} is defined as the number of coders who assigned the i th segment to the j th code. P_i can be interpreted as the proportion of agreeing pairs out of all possible pairs of assignments. \bar{P} can be interpreted as agreement without accounting for agreement due to chance. \bar{P}_e can be interpreted as agreement due to chance. (Fleiss, 1971)

All values were calculated in Microsoft Excel. After segmentation, coders calibrated to a kappa value of .90, which we considered to be nearly perfect according to the benchmarks provided by Landis and Koch (1977). Once we achieved this level of agreement, we began first-level coding.

Intercoder Agreement Scores by Transcript

Transcript Title	Value of kappa (2 coders)
1	.73
2	.57
3	.67
4	.74
5	.75
6	.71
7	.70
8	.73
9	.76
10	.67
11	.65
12	.71
13	.78
14	.73
15	.59
16	.83

Notes: $N = 16$, $M = .7$