

Psychological Contracts of Mothers: Does Breach Explain Intention to Leave the
Workforce?

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all hard-working women and mothers who continually inspire my research.

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ABSTRACT

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS OF MOTHERS: DOES BREACH EXPLAIN INTENTION TO LEAVE THE WORKFORCE?

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Recent evidence suggests mothers with infants are leaving the workforce (Cohany & Sok, 2007; Johnson, 2008), but research has not yet identified *why* mothers make such a decision. I propose that mothers form psychological contracts including content related to family that supervisors may not fulfill resulting in intention to leave the organization and ultimately, the workforce. In a study of 181 first-time mothers, participants reported experiencing breach that was exacerbated when mothers perceived promises were intentionally broken. Results also suggested supervisors have the opportunity to control the outcomes of breach and retain mothers by effectively managing perceptions of fair treatment (i.e., interactional justice). This is the first empirical research to indicate that mothers' intentions to leave depend on fulfillment of their psychological contracts related to family and fair treatment in the workplace, rather than personal preferences to spend time with children.

Introduction

Recent labor statistics suggests mothers with young children are leaving the workforce (Cohany & Sok, 2007; Johnson 2008) igniting debate over the controversial argument that talented women prefer to devote their energy towards family (i.e., “opt out revolution”; Belkin, 2003) rather than inflexible workplaces or bias forcing women out of organizations. Despite efforts to explain this finding (see Belkin, 2003 and Williams, Manvell, & Bornstein, 2006), research has not yet identified *why* mothers may make the decision to leave the workforce. A critical juncture for this decision may occur immediately following maternity leave. This is a time of transition and ambiguity during which new moms begin to negotiate the challenge of balancing work and motherhood.

Mothers and their supervisors likely have expectations for a range of work-family issues including flexible work arrangements, type of work and workload, and support for family that mothers will encounter upon returning to work. However, the expectations of mothers and their supervisors may not align with one another (e.g., Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002). Furthermore, characteristics of the situation (e.g., lapse in time, novelty, change; Morrison & Robinson, 1997) create high potential for differing perceptions about what mothers owe the organization and what the organization owes mothers (Shore & Tetrick, 1994). Given that supervisors are “gatekeepers” of

knowledge, resources, and work-life management (King, 2001, 2004), they likely possess power and control when a mother transitions back to work after maternity leave.

Therefore, the employment relationship between individual and supervisor is critical as the supervisor is the likely party, or agent of the organization, that is responsible for the fulfillment (or lack thereof) of the psychological contract (Lester et al., 2002), rather the “terms and conditions” of the employment relationship. The psychological contract specific to family, and between mother and supervisor is vital in mothers’ transition back to work, as the supervisor has the potential to become a mother’s advocate or adversary.

The primary purpose of the current research is to investigate the psychological contracts of first-time mothers related to family, and unfulfilled promises as an explanation for mothers’ exit from the workforce. That is, I will consider whether, and how, the psychological contracts of mothers are broken by their supervisors. Knowledge of mothers’ perceived promises, particularly related to family, provide organizations information on how to appropriately prepare for and manage mothers’ return to work. A second purpose is to consider how to manage mothers’ perceptions of fairness after unfulfilled promises and to reduce, or even prevent, feelings of violation and ultimately intentions to leave the workforce. This is critical as supervisors may be primarily responsible for fair treatment of mothers and ultimately their departure from work. In summary, I theorize that unfulfilled psychological contracts, and how supervisors manage such situations, may explain mothers’ decisions to leave the workforce.

Psychological Contracts

A psychological contract is “an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party. Key issues here include the belief that a promise has been made and a consideration offered in exchange for it, binding the parties to some set of reciprocal obligations” (Rousseau, 1989, p. 123). Contracts are based on implicit or explicit promises that communicate future intention and action (e.g., organizational policy, written or oral communication; Rousseau, 1989). The core of the psychological contract is the individual’s *perception* of obligation. Psychological contracts are inherently subjective in nature and are often argued to be more of a reality than what others deem real (Morrison, 1994; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). In fact, contracts are formed even when employees have formal contracts (Shore & Tetrick, 1994). Ultimately, employees’ (i.e., mothers’) perceived promises comprise the psychological contract.

It should be further noted that the obligations in the contract do not necessarily have to be shared by agents or parties (e.g., supervisors). However, Guest (1998) argued that the original conceptualization of a psychological contract was a two-way reciprocal agreement. Other authors established the importance of the employment relationship between supervisor and employee (Lester et al., 2002) and distinguished between the organization and supervisor as separate parties in the contract (Marsh, 2005). Therefore, supervisors may play a unique role in the employment relationship as their own understandings of the psychological contract between employee and organization influences fulfillment (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994; Shore & Tetrick, 1994).

A failure to meet the content of the contract is considered psychological contract breach (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). In effect, the individual acknowledges the employer has not honored their end of the perceived mutual agreement. Psychological contract violation is conceptually and empirically distinct, as it is the emotional experience arising from the cognitive interpretation process of contract breach (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Violation is characterized by feelings such as disappointment, frustration, anger and resentment (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1989). A plethora of research has demonstrated the negative effects of unfulfilled promises including reduced trust, job strain, job satisfaction, performance, extra-role performance, and intentions to leave (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003; Robinson et al., 1994; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003; Turnley & Feldman, 2000; Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007).

Mothers' Psychological Contracts

Shifting characteristics for today's workforce suggests the content of the psychological contract is evolving (e.g., from job performance to innovation; Anderson & Schalk, 1998) and there is a greater focus on integrating elements of family into work (e.g., flexibility) (Giga & Cooper, 2005). This may in part be due to the fact that there is now more buzz around work-family balance than ever before and employees, particularly mothers, may have greater expectations for supportive policies and positive family-friendly cultures. Work-life management strategies including family-friendly policies are often directly aimed at helping employees manage the demands of both work and family (Marston, 2005). In addition, preliminary research suggests that mothers do form

psychological contracts and experience changed psychological contracts from pregnancy to return to work, particularly related to performance expectations (Millward, 2006).

However, this research does not specifically explore contracts related to family. Given the changing nature of the workforce towards a more family-friendly environment combined with shifting attitudes emphasizing balance may cue mothers to expect to take advantage of family-friendly policies and work in family-friendly organizations. Given this emphasis on more “family-friendly” workplaces, it begs the question: do employees, particularly mothers, hold psychological contracts specific to work-family obligations?

Psychological contract research specifies that contracts involve *expectations* about reciprocal obligations that may or may not be shared with others (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1989). The content of employees’ expectations can be derived from research on retention and turnover that is rooted in job satisfaction. Therefore, insight into key employee expectations may provide insight into the factors that comprise the psychological contract and ultimately increase job satisfaction and retention, as well as reduce turnover.

Inventories and measurement tools such as the Job Description Inventory (JDI; Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969), Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS; Hackman & Oldham, 1976), and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MNSQ; Dawes, Dohm, Chartrand, & Due, 1987) assessed various facets or characteristics of the job tapping satisfaction. The facets or characteristics of job satisfaction typically include: work itself, pay, promotional opportunities and policies, pay, security, supervision and coworkers. Psychological contract research often uses these facets to assess how well jobs fulfilled workers’ needs

or rather, what perceived obligations were met (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005; Marsh, 2005; Robinson, 1996; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Turnley & Feldman, 1999).

However, Rothausen-Vange, Arnold, and Power (2008) raised the question of whether facets derived over 40 years ago still apply to today's workforce and to all groups (e.g., women). These authors demonstrated through a survey of workers who voluntarily left their organizations that there are facets of the job that are unique to family including support for dependent care, flexibility, and coworker support for family. These findings were confirmed in a series of interviews with mothers (Botsford & King, 2008) who described expectations for their return to work after maternity leave related to family-friendly policies and organizational culture. Similarly, Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, and Hanson (2008) demonstrated that Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors (FSSB) (i.e., behaviors exhibited by the supervisor that are supportive of families) are distinguishable from traditional measures of supervisor support and are significantly predictive of work-family conflict, job satisfaction, and intentions to leave. Together, these studies provide preliminary evidence that facets of the job that drive satisfaction, and ultimately may influence mothers' perceived obligations, are different today than in the past, as they are specific to work and family needs. Therefore, mothers may not only form psychological contracts surrounding categorically "traditional" aspects of work (e.g., pay), but may also hold obligations including aspects specific to family (e.g., support for dependent care). Therefore, I propose that mothers' psychological contracts include content related to family.

As previously stated, several authors have proposed (Turnley & Feldman, 2000), and empirically suggested, the link between psychological contract breach and intention to leave the organization (Turnley & Feldman, 1999). Furthermore, in a meta-analysis, Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, and Bravo (2007) demonstrated the link between breach and turnover intentions ($\rho = .42$). Although this relation is somewhat well established, research has not considered this relation for psychological contract breach research related to family. Given there is historical precedent and societal norms suggesting mothers are the caretakers and homemakers (Hochschild, 2000; Williams, 2000), psychological contract breach may facilitate mothers' questioning of their decision to perform paid work, and may in fact be an impetus for mothers departure from work. I propose that psychological contract breach related to family may be particularly salient and therefore damaging for mothers who are juggling both paid work and a young child. New mothers likely view their roles as worker and new parent as important and therefore breach of new mothers' psychological contracts related to family may be just as, if not more, damaging than breach related to traditional work factors.

Perhaps most importantly is the potential for breach to not only result in intention to leave the organization, but also intention to leave the workforce. Research typically explores turnover intentions, but does not clarify whether the individual intends to leave the particular job, organization, career field, or paid work, in general. In order to begin to examine whether psychological contract breach predicts mothers' departure from work, this study examines mothers' intention to leave the workforce. This study makes the distinction between intention to leave the organization versus intention to leave the

workforce in an effort to provide preliminary evidence for a theoretical explanation as to why mothers with young children are increasingly making the decision to stay home rather than participate in paid work.

Perceived Supervisor Psychological Contract Breach

Supervisors play a unique role in the employment relationship, as their own understandings of the psychological contract often influences fulfillment (or lack thereof) (Lester et al., 2002; Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994; 1994; Shore & Tetrick, 1994). Supervisors are the intermediaries, or stepping-stones, to organizational-level rules, policies, and resources. This is particularly the case in today's workforce where there is a growing trend towards customization to meet the personal needs of employees (i.e., "i-deals"; Rousseau, 2005). It is typically the supervisor that shapes the experiences of the employee.

Although there has been a shift to more family-friendly organizations, there is evidence that simply creating family-friendly policies is not enough to shape individual attitudes and behavior (Allen, 2001; Premeaux, Adkins, & Mossholder, 2007). Thus, supervisors' perceived obligations towards mothers returning to work from leave may not include such beliefs regarding work-life management. Although two of the most widespread forms of i-deals relate to flexible scheduling of work hours, and special opportunities for skill and career development (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau & Kim, 2006), these are not understood as obligatory aspects of work; these are more exceptions than the rule. Therefore, it is likely that supervisors do not understand mothers' perceptions regarding work and their idiosyncratic views of balancing work and family.

Traditional beliefs regarding the ‘ideal worker’ persist which may fuel attitudes and expectations on the part of the supervisor. The ‘ideal worker’ is classified as a worker with the typically male characteristics including dedication to work and freedom from family responsibility (Williams, 2000). Although the U.S. is going through a restructuring in order to integrate work and family, and therefore include men and women in the workforce, the pervasive norms of the ideal worker persist. This may be particularly true for first time moms who are making the initial transition to motherhood. The supervisor may expect that once the new mother has made the commitment to return to work she will return as “normal” (i.e., the way it was prior to becoming a mother). Supervisors may even fulfill the traditional content of psychological contracts (e.g., pay, career development), but fall short on the more family-oriented content of the contract (e.g., support for family life, flexible work arrangements). Perceptual differences in obligations between mothers and supervisors set the stage for unfulfilled promises in mothers’ psychological contracts, and ultimately their departure from work.

It is also possible that supervisors who are largely responsible for fulfilling employees’ (i.e., mothers’) psychological contracts are not privy to information regarding messages from other organizational representatives, or other sources of the perceived obligations. Alternatively, supervisors may have the power to choose to disregard certain rules, norms, or policies. Policies are driven from the top-down, and although the organization as an entity may support such policies, this does not ensure that every individual (e.g., supervisors) endorses or “obeys” such policies and family-friendly ideals. For example, mothers may expect to take advantage of a human resource policy

regarding the use of lactation rooms, but the supervisor may not be aware of this policy or perceive this as not important to the mother. Although mothers may create psychological contracts based upon information from the organization, the supervisor is unlikely to be able or willing to meet, or acknowledge, all of these expectations and therefore breach occurs.

As previously discussed, psychological contract breach leads to a variety of negative outcomes including lessened intention to remain with the organization (Robinson et al., 1994; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003; Turnley & Feldman, 2000; Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007). Given the growing emphasis on work-life balance, it is likely that unfulfilled promises related to family are as damaging, if not more, given their importance to mothers than unfulfilled promises related traditional work factors. Therefore breach of family-related obligations may offer an explanation as to why new mothers are not only leaving their organizations, but also leaving the workforce. Thus,

H1: Mothers' breach related to family predicts intention to leave the organization (H1a) and the workforce (H1b) above and beyond breach related to traditional work factors.

Perceived Cause of Breach

Psychological contract breach involves a cognitive interpretation process (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). The individual's reaction to the breach is in part determined by the individual's perception as to *why* the breach occurred (Rousseau, 1995; Turnley & Feldman, 1999; Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2000). In

effect, the individual seeks a reason for the breach (i.e., an attribution) that may ultimately influence the individual's response to the breach. Individuals, in general, view breach as intentional or unintentional, in an effort to explain and ultimately determine the appropriate reaction to the breach.

As Morrison and Robinson (1997) noted, renegeing is the most obvious condition in which an employee is to experience breach. Renegeing occurs because an agent (i.e., supervisor) of the organization is either unable or *unwilling* to fulfill a specific obligation or promise. In the context of the employment situation between mother and supervisor, the supervisor may change or deny previously made promises with the mother. In interviews with over 20 mothers, Botsford and King (2008) found evidence that supervisors were in some cases unable and unwilling to fulfill explicit promises. One new mother reported that her supervisor explicitly promised that she could work part-time, but later decided the arrangement “wasn't working out” and informed the mother that her only option was full-time work. This mother consequently left the organization. This is one example of how an unwillingness to fulfill the promise made to the mother resulted in contract breach, violation, and turnover. It is impossible to know whether the original promise was malicious or made in good faith. Regardless, from the mother's perspective it breached her contract with the organization. Supervisors' unwillingness to be flexible with the needs of new moms may create situations where promises made to mothers are renegeed. In summary, mothers may attribute the breach to renegeing if the supervisor is unwilling to fulfill the contract, and thereby exacerbating the negative effect of breach.

The more subtle explanation for psychological contract breach (Robinson & Morrison, 2000), but also potentially damaging for mothers, is incongruence. Incongruence is likely to occur in situations where employee and agent (i.e., supervisor) possess differing schema, or there is ambiguity and lack of communication (Morison & Robinson, 1997). As previously discussed, mothers and supervisors likely approach a mother's transition back to work with different expectations due to conflicting perceptions of the ideal worker and mothers' expectations of family-friendly workplaces. Differing schema between mother and supervisor regarding what the mother expects or is obliged to receive may create a situation where promises go unfulfilled. For example, although a mother may have not explicitly asked her supervisor whether she could take advantage of an existing flex-time policy she may assume this will be allowed. However, the supervisor, due to expectations and prior experiences with the mother may assume that the mother will not be asking for flex-time. The acknowledgement of differing schemas for approaching a mothers' transition back to work may cause a mother to attribute breach to incongruence. If the mother perceives there was an honest difference in opinion than she is likely able to understand or even justify the breach. This is consistent with work of Bies and Shapiro (1987) who argued that adequate justification is necessary to minimize perceptions of unfairness among the employee. Although this rationalizing of the breach may not prevent the mother from experiencing withdrawal cognitions, it may, at a minimum, not increase the negative outcomes of breach.

Although perceptions of both renegeing and incongruence offer an explanatory reason for the breach, it is likely that when the breach is attributed to renegeing rather than

incongruence there is a stronger negative effect. This is consistent with Robinson and Morrison's (2000) theorizing that the relationship between perceived contract breach and violation is strong to the extent that the employee attributes the breach to renegeing. Renegeing is particularly damaging to mothers because these promises cannot be rationalized or attributed to a miscommunication. Therefore, renegeing may be interpreted as a personal attack directed towards the mother. Renegeing, regardless of inability or unwillingness, is salient to the individual and likely elicits a strong, negative reaction. Furthermore, Botsford and King (2008) revealed anecdotal evidence from interviews with two mothers' who experienced renegeing (i.e., promised to work part-time, but then told it was a full-time position only). Both mothers made the decision to leave their jobs when their original "deal" was taken away. This is consistent with research (Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003) that examined employees' attributions for the breach. The authors' demonstrated that when employees believed the breach was due to renegeing rather than incongruence, there was a decrease in citizenship behaviors and in-role performance. Therefore, the attribution one makes regarding renegeing or incongruence may indeed influence the outcome.

H2: The perceived cause of breach related to family moderates the relation between the frequency of breach and intention to leave the organization (H2a) and the workforce (H2b) such that the relation is stronger when the mother more often attributes the breach to renegeing than not.

Perceptions of Fair Treatment

Fairness is the heart of the psychological contract. Fairness judgments involve several dimensions of fairness and how each influences subsequent attitudes and behavior (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). This study explores one dimension of fairness judgments: judgments about how fairly one was treated. In effect, the interpersonal fairness between employee (i.e., mother) and supervisor. Morrison and Robinson (1997) proposed this notion to be very similar to interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986). Interactional justice deals with a person's evaluation or judgments of how they were treated interpersonally in the process of a particular event. In effect, the outcome can be unpleasant (i.e., breach), but if the employee feels as though he or she was treated honestly and respectfully throughout the process than perceptions of fairness may mitigate or prevent feelings of violation. Despite the potential importance of the role of fairness in the psychological contract, there are a limited number of empirical studies integrating the role of justice (Thompson & Heron, 2005).

There are a few notable studies that test fair treatment or interactional justice. First, Robinson & Morrison (2000) demonstrated when there was lack of fairness and respect shown, and the psychological contract was breached, employees were more likely to express frustration and negative emotions than when fairness was present. Second, using a sample of customer service personnel, Jones and Skarlicki (2003) empirically demonstrated that the link between distributive justice and turnover was higher when interactional justice was low. In effect, perceptions of fairness can offset the negative effects of distributive injustice. Finally, Thompson & Heron (2005) revealed a three-way interaction among breach, procedural, and interactional justice in predicting commitment

such that commitment was higher only when interactional justice was high. This suggested the nature of the exchange relationship between employee and their supervisor was key to determining important outcomes (Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002).

Following this line of reasoning, if mothers are treated respectfully, honestly, and given adequate justification for the outcome associated with psychological contract breach, their feelings of violation and intentions to leave may be reduced or avoided altogether. A situation where an employee perceives breach and also feels as though he or she has been mistreated interpersonally results in the most severe outcomes (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). Thus, when both breach and unfair treatment are present, it is likely mothers will experience lessened desire to remain at the organization, or even in the workforce. However, supervisors have the power to control the effects of the breach by demonstrating respect for mothers' dual roles of mother and worker. For example, a supervisor may alter a promise made to a mother regarding the number of days out of the week she is able to telecommute. If the supervisor simply informs the mother of this change with no explanation or appropriate rationale, then the mother will likely respond negatively (e.g., Kickul, Neuman, Parker, & Finkl, 2001). However, if the supervisor initiates a conversation with the mother expressing concern for how this will affect her situation and asks for other ways in which the supervisor may alleviate other stressors from the mother she may not have the same negative reaction. For example, Botsford and King (2008) found that one mother's supervisor scheduled a mandatory meeting during the time the mother was regularly scheduled to leave work to pick-up her children from school. Although this action was inconsistent with the psychological contract

established between the mother and supervisor, her supervisor talked to her in advance and explained the rationale for the meeting time. This example illustrates one way that supervisors may reduce negative reactions related to psychological contract breach.

Rothausen-Vange et al.'s (2008) research demonstrated that respect for whole identify is an important factor in today's workforce. Botsford and King (2008) echoed this finding in their work with mothers, suggesting that mothers wanted to feel respected for their work as both mother and worker. Respect for mothers may be critical in the workplace, as Cronin (2004) and Botsford and Elder (2007) demonstrated there were meaningful outcomes for the target (mothers) when they were respected (e.g., listening, attention, attributes of worth). Therefore, the extent to which supervisors can demonstrate respect by treating mothers fairly, especially in the midst of breach, the supervisors may have the opportunity to reduce negative outcomes, including mothers' intention to leave the workforce. Thus, supervisors are central in mothers' psychological contracts, and may not only be responsible for unfulfilled promises, but also for mitigating or preventing the negative effects of breach. Thus,

H3: Interactional justice moderates the relation between breach related to family and intention to leave such that the extent to which mothers perceive greater interactional justice from their supervisors, the effect of breach on intention to leave the organization (H3a) and the workforce (H3b) is weakened.

As previously discussed, Morrison and Robinson (1997) were the first set of researchers (Robinson & Morrison, 2000; Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainus, 1988; Turnley & Feldman, 1999) to distinguish between psychological contract breach and

violation. Whereas breach includes the cognitive evaluation that one's expectations have not been met or that promises have gone unfulfilled, violation is the more affective component that typically follows a cognitive appraisal of unfulfilled promises. However, it is important to note that breach does not always result in violation. Although violation is often a mediator of the relation between breach and other reactions (Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Morrison & Robinson, 1997), it is necessary to test the relations between breach, violation and leave before being able to test an overall model. Thus,

H4: Violation towards the supervisor mediates the relation between mothers' breach related to family and intention to leave the organization (H4a) and the workforce (H4b).

Finally, the overall model must be tested. Although Morison and Robinson's (1991) theoretical model lends support for the proposed overall model (see Figure 1), there is limited research demonstrating the interactive effect of interactional justice (e.g., Robinson & Morrison, 2000) with this set of constructs. Furthermore, there is only one study that explicitly examines interactional justice in relation to the supervisor, and the effects were not significant (Thompson & Heron, 2005). Therefore, perceived supervisor breach related to family, interactional justice, the interaction of the two, and violation towards supervisor will be examined as a set of variables explaining intention to leave the organization, and intention to leave the workforce (see Figure 1). Specifically,

H5: Violation mediates the relation between the interaction term (breach related to family x interactional justice) and intention to leave the organization (5a) and the workforce (5b).

Method

Participant Recruitment and Sample

Participants consisted of 181 mothers from multiple mother-oriented organizations across the U.S. Participants were recruited to participate via electronic listservs and newsletters of mothers associations and groups. The majority of participants were members of BSM Media (60%). The remaining participants were members of Mommy Track'd[®] (25%), local mothers listservs in the Boston (8%) and Washington, DC metropolitan areas (7%). There were three requirements for participation. First, all mothers were first-time or “new” moms. A “new” mom was defined as a mother who had an infant (approximately 1 yr or less). This time frame was consistent with research by Cohany and Sok (2007), who demonstrated that the characteristics of mothers of infants varied differently, and mothers of infants were slightly more likely to leave the workforce than mothers of older children. Second, mothers worked a minimum of ten hours per week. The ten hours of work per week requirement ensured mothers were working, but also allowed for a range of work situations (e.g., part-time, flex-time). Finally, mothers returned to work at the same organization at which they were employed prior to maternity leave. This ensured the saliency of the event for the mother and the supervisor, as well as provided adequate time to develop a psychological contract prior to maternity leave.

Approximately 23,000 mothers received the recruitment message with 891 completing the survey for a response rate of 4%. However, of the participant responses, approximately 20% or, 181 mothers, met the requirements for inclusion in this study.

Participants were primarily Caucasian (83%) and married (89%), with a median age of 33 years. The majority of participants completed a Master of Arts or Master of Business Administration degree (67%). The mean of the statement “my income meets my needs” was 3.3 on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The median hours worked per week was 40, the median tenure at the organization was 5.75 years, and the median tenure with their current supervisor was 3 years. On average, participants took maternity leave for 3 months. Participants were in a variety of industries (13% Education, 12% Medical, 9% Customer Service, 9% Computer Software/IT, 13% Public Health, 7% Finance, 7% Government, 6% Law, 6% Manufacturing, and 5% Consulting). Participants represented the vast majority of geographic regions in the U.S. (32% East Coast, 26% Midwest, 19% Southeast, 11% West Coast, 6% Southwest, 3% Northwest, 3% Mountain).

Measures

Breach Related to Traditional Work Factors. Perceived supervisor psychological contract breach related to work was assessed using a 10-item measure tapping the traditional dimensions of the employment relationship related to work (e.g., pay, training opportunities). This approach was used in several studies although the authors varied the perceived obligations (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005; Marsh, 2005; Robinson, 1996; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). Consistent with Turnley and

Feldman (2000), the participants were asked to “please indicate whether you received more or less than what your supervisor was obliged to provide you.” The ten aspects related to work included the following: Money, Training opportunities, Advancement opportunities, Career development, Overall benefits package, Health care benefits, Input in decision-making, Autonomy, Appropriate challenge in the tasks of my job, and Constructive feedback on job performance. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*received much more than promised*) to 7 (*received much less than promised*). Breach was determined by only using responses that indicated receiving less than promised. This was a three-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (*received a little less than promised*) to 7 (*received much less than promised*). The coefficient alpha for this scale was .90.

Breach Related to Family. Perceived supervisor psychological contract breach related to family was assessed using a 10-item measure tapping the dimensions of the employment relationship related to family (e.g., family-friendly policies; Botsford & King, 2008; Rothausen-Vange et al., 2008). Consistent with Turnley and Feldman (2000), the participants were asked to “please indicate whether you received more or less than what your supervisor was obliged to provide you.” The ten aspects related to family included the following: Support for my family life, Communication with my supervisor, Family-friendly policies, Respect from coworkers, Work that is meaningful, Flexible work hours, Reasonable workload, Flexible work arrangements, Availability of part-time work, and Mentorship. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*received much more than promised*) to 7 (*received much less than promised*).

Breach was determined by only using responses that indicated receiving less than promised. This was a three-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (*received a little less than promised*) to 7 (*received much less than promised*). The coefficient alpha for this scale was .89.

Breach as scale was used in all analyses except the moderated regression of breach related to family and perceived cause of breach on intentions to leave. In this set of analyses, breach as frequency was used. Breach as frequency consisted of the number of times, or the amount, that the mother reported experiencing less than promised. If the mother evaluated the family-related aspect of her contract as a 5 (*received a little less than promised*), 6 (*received a good deal less than promised*), or 7 (*received much less than promised*) it was counted as breach of contract. The sum of the number of times mothers experienced breach was calculated and used as the independent variable.

Perceived Cause of Breach. Perceived cause of breach was assessed by asking mothers to “please indicate the single best explanation for why they thought the organization had failed to fulfill that aspect of the psychological contract” (Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002; Turnley, Bolino, Lester, Bloodgood, 2003). This was completed for each of the 20 aspects of the psychological contract. Response options included categories based upon theoretical work of Morrison and Robinson (1997). There were five responses options: 1) “My supervisor could have kept his/her promise, but he/she chose not to” reflects reneging; 2) “A situation beyond my supervisor’s control made it impossible for him/her to keep his/her promise” reflects disruption; 3) “There was an honest misunderstanding between myself and my supervisor

regarding what he/she would provide” reflects incongruence; 4) “I failed to keep my obligations; thus, my supervisor was no longer obligated to keep his/her side of the deal” reflects nullification; and 5) “Not applicable” reflects fulfilled promises. The frequency with which participants selected each category (e.g., reneging) for the 10 aspects of the psychological contract related to family was calculated and used in analyses.

Interactional Justice. Interactional justice was assessed using a 10-item measure (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is “My supervisor treats me with respect.” The coefficient alpha for this scale was .97.

Violation towards Supervisor. Psychological contract violation was assessed towards the supervisor using a 3-item measure adapted from Robinson & Morrison (2000) and used by Marsh (2005). This scale was adapted to capture feelings of violation associated with the supervisor. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is “I feel extremely frustrated by how I have been treated by my supervisor.” The coefficient alpha for the supervisor and organization scale is .96.

Intention to Leave the Organization. Intention to leave the organization was assessed using a 3-item measure from Seashore, Lawler, Mirvis, & Cammann’s (1982). Two additional, items were developed for this study and used to capture intention to leave including, “I often question whether to stay at my current job” and “I am looking for a change from my current job.” All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale

ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The coefficient alpha for this scale was .95.

Intention to Leave the Workforce. Intention to leave the workforce was assessed using a 3-item measure developed for this study. These items included “I often think about quitting to stay home. “I have plans to leave the workforce altogether”, and “It is likely that I’ll leave the workforce to stay home.” All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The coefficient alpha for this scale was .89.

Demographics. Demographic information was collected and included both personal (age, race, education, marital status, geographic location, and satisfaction with income) and work (tenure at organization and with supervisor, length of maternity leave, time spent working since birth of child, and industry) variables.

Results

The overall scale means, standard deviations, and correlations are provided in Table 1. All hypotheses were tested using hierarchical or moderated regression (Aiken & West, 1991), and/or mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Furthermore, only the controls that were significant predictors were entered in the first step of all regression analyses. When controlling for all demographic variables, there were similar patterns of effects across all analyses. In order to test hypotheses 1a and 1b, satisfaction with income and time working since child's birth were entered as controls in Step 1. In Step 2, breach related to traditional work factors was entered. And, in Step 3, breach related to family was entered. Hypothesis 1a that mothers' breach related to family predicted intention to leave the organization above and beyond breach related to traditional work factors was supported ($\beta = .26$, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .05$). Hypothesis 1b that mothers' breach related to family predicted intention to leave the workforce above and beyond breach related to traditional work factors was supported ($\beta = .41$, $\Delta R^2 = .06$, $p < .01$). Overall, the results of hypothesis 1 suggested that breach of mothers' psychological contracts related to family was important beyond the traditional content of contracts, and led to turnover intentions.

In order to examine hypotheses 2a and 2b, moderated regression (Aiken & West, 1991) was used. In Step 1, the significant controls were entered (satisfaction with income, time working since child's birth, and industry) including breach related to traditional work factors. In Step 2, the main effects for breach related to family (breach as frequency) and the perceived cause of breach (frequency for renegeing) were entered. Prior to entering the interaction term, the main effects were centered in order to avoid multicollinearity (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). In Step 3, the interaction term of perceived breach x perceived cause of breach was entered. Hypothesis 2a that the perceived cause of breach related to family moderated the relation between the magnitude of the breach and intention to leave the organization was supported ($\beta = -.32$, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .05$). Although only accounting for an additional 2% of the variance the interaction suggested that the relation between breach and intention to leave was stronger when mothers more often attributed the breach to renegeing than not (see Figure 2). In effect, the more often the mother reported experienced breach attributed to renegeing the more likely she was to report increased intentions to leave the organization and workforce. An unexpected finding was that when breach related to family was low and perceived cause of breach was high, there was the greatest intention to leave the organization. It was hypothesized that when breach related to family was higher and there was greater renegeing, intention to leave the organization would be the greatest. The related hypothesis, H2b, testing the interaction of breach related to family and perceived cause of breach on intention to leave the workforce was also supported ($\beta = .32$, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .05$). In summary, the more often mothers' reported experiencing breach related to

family and attributed this breach to renegeing than not, the greater the mothers' intentions to leave the workforce.

Moderated regression was also used to test H3a and H3b (Aiken & West, 1991). The controls in Step 1 included satisfaction with income and breach related to work. In Step 2, the main effects were entered, breach related to family and interactional justice; and, in Step 3, the interaction term of breach related to family x interactional justice was entered. As hypothesized, interactional justice moderated the relation between breach related to family and intention to leave such that when mothers perceived greater interactional justice from their supervisors, the effect of breach on intention to leave was weakened ($\beta = .19$, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, when considering the interactive effects on intention to leave the workforce, hypothesis 3b, was also supported ($\beta = .18$, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .01$) (see Figures 4 and 5). The overall pattern of effects suggested that fair treatment from a mother's supervisor mitigates the negative effects of breach by reducing intention to leave her organization as well as the greater workforce.

In order to test hypothesis 4a, that violation mediated the relationship between mothers' breach related to family and intention to leave the organization, the Baron and Kenny (1996) approach was employed. In the first model, after entering all controls intention to leave was regressed on breach related to family ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$). In the second model, violation was regressed on breach related to family ($\beta = .39$, $p < .01$). In the third model, intention to leave was regressed on breach related to family and violation towards supervisor, and the relation between the mediator and the dependent has a significant, unique effect, $\beta = .66$, $p < .01$, suggesting full mediation. The Sobel test

statistic was 5.76 ($p < .01$), supporting the hypothesis (H4a) that violation towards supervisor mediated the relation between breach related to family and intention to leave the organization. When using the same method, but with replacing intention to leave the organization with intention to leave the workforce, the Sobel test statistic was 3.71 ($p < .01$) which lent support for hypothesis 4b, and the notion of a mediated relation.

Finally, hypothesis 5a, that violation explained the effect of the interaction term (breach related to family x interactional justice) on intention to leave the organization, (5a) was tested using mediated moderation (Edwards & Lambert, 2004). In Step 1, the controls and main effects were entered. In Step 2, the interaction term of breach related to family x interactional justice was entered. In Step 3, violation towards supervisor was entered. In order to test the effect of the interaction term through violation towards supervisor on intention to leave the organization, the interaction term should be significant in Step 2, and then no longer significant in Step 3. In effect, the entry of violation towards supervisor mediates the relation between the interaction of breach related to family and interactional justice on intention to leave the organization. As hypothesized, the interaction term significantly predicted intention to leave the organization ($\beta = .19, p < .05$), and when violation towards supervisor was added ($\beta = .56, p < .01$), the effect of the interaction on intention to leave the organization was no longer significant ($\beta = .06, p = .43$). A Sobel test confirmed this finding (2.08, $p < .05$). As hypothesized, this suggested that violation towards supervisor mediated the relation between the interaction term (breach related to family x interactional justice) on intention to leave the organization (see Figure 1). A similar procedure was used to determine

whether violation towards supervisor mediated the relation between the interaction term (breach related to family x interactional justice) on intention to leave the workforce (5b). Step 2 was significant ($\beta = .23, p < .01$), however, Step 3, the effect of violation towards supervisor on intention to leave the workforce was not significant ($\beta = .21, p = .11$). Thus, violation towards supervisor did not mediate the relation between the interaction term (breach related to family x interactional justice) and intention to leave the workforce.

Discussion

The overarching purpose of this study was to examine mothers' psychological contract breach as an explanation for their departure from work, as well as to investigate the influence of fair treatment from supervisors in mitigating the outcomes. Results from the study suggest that psychological contract breach related to family helps to explain mothers' intention to leave the organization and the workforce above and beyond psychological contract breach related to the traditional work factors (e.g., pay, training opportunities). Furthermore, results suggested that mothers' attributions for the breach exacerbated the negative outcomes. In effect, when mothers experienced breach and believed that their supervisors intentionally broke promises, their intentions to leave the organization and workforce increased. However, even when mothers perceived psychological contract breach, their supervisors had the opportunity to mitigate the damaging effects through fair treatment. In short, when fairness and respect were shown to the mother by the supervisor, she was less likely to intend to leave the organization and the workforce.

As previously discussed, shifting characteristics of the workforce suggest that the content of the psychological contract is evolving to integrate elements of family into work (Giga & Cooper, 2005). This may be particularly true for new mothers, as they are

often responsible for caretaking and household responsibilities (Hochschild, 2000; Williams 2000) in addition to performing paid work. This is not to say that the traditional, or work related aspects of the contract are *not* important to mothers, but that the family related variables may similarly predict outcomes of psychological contract breach. As expected, the results demonstrated that the psychological contract breach related to family predicted intention to leave the organization, and intention to leave the workforce, above and beyond breach related to traditional work factors. This finding offered support for the notion that family variables were part of mothers' perceived promises from their supervisors. Therefore, the role of the supervisor may play an even larger role in new mothers' careers, as they may in part determine mothers' experiences upon returning to work from leave and ultimately in their retention.

Upon experiencing breach it is natural to desire an explanation or understand the situation. Similarly, individuals who experienced breach often make an attribution as to the cause of breach of contract, and when the perceived cause is perceived to be intentional there is a more negative response (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Hypotheses 2a and 2b suggested that when mothers experience breach that they experience as renegeing, there is increased intention to leave the organization. Findings for hypothesis 2a suggested that higher amounts of renegeing, regardless of the frequency of breach, led to intention to leave. In fact, when mothers reported fewer instances of breach yet attributed the breach to renegeing there was actually the greatest intention to leave (see Figure 2). This was unexpected and perhaps explained by arguing that although there were fewer instances of breach they were perceived as egregious, and therefore resulted in mothers'

experiencing severe violation and withdrawal cognitions. However, when considering outcomes of intention to leave the workplace, hypothesis 2b, findings revealed that the most negative outcome came when there was greater amount of breach and more frequent renegeing. In summary, the role of the supervisor is important in determining the outcomes associated with psychological contract breach. Mothers' perception influences not only the promises from their supervisor, but also when these promises are breached the cause for such breach influences mothers' withdrawal cognitions.

This study proposes the role of the supervisor is critical to retaining new mothers in the workplace. However, this study does not suggest that it is through extra instrumental or emotional support. Ironically, Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2005) demonstrated that psychological contracts are even more important where there was lack of supervisor support. Therefore, it is perhaps precisely the situations where there is lack of supervisor support where supervisors, at a minimum, must effectively manage fair treatment of mothers (i.e., interactional justice). Hypotheses 3a and 3b explored whether supervisors' fair treatment of mothers could mitigate the damage caused by the breach. There was support for both hypotheses suggesting that even in the face of breach supervisors have the opportunity reduce the negative outcomes through demonstrating respect and fair treatment of the mother. This could, for example, simply be by explaining the rationale for the breach, or perhaps trying to renegotiate the terms of the reciprocal obligations to restore the relationship. This finding is potentially very beneficial, as it clearly identifies a means to reduce mothers' withdrawal from the workplace. In summary, supervisors have the power to break perceived promises of

mothers, yet at the same time, are able to repair the damage through fair treatment towards the mother.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study is the data came from a single source at one point in time. The same source approach opens the door to common method variance where the correlations among variables may be inflated and therefore weakens the case for causal inferences (Doty & Glick, 1998; Jianzheng, Guoxiang, Jingping, 2005). However, researchers have recently written that this problem is overstated (Spector, 2006; Vandenberg, 2006). An alternative approach would have been to collect supervisor data in order to further examine the reciprocal obligations between mother and supervisor. In fact, Rousseau (2001) called for more research understanding reciprocal obligations. Although this approach may have reduced common method bias, it may have generated other concerns, namely validity of the data. Given that psychological contracts are inherently subjective in nature they must rely on the self-reports of the individual, as breach of contract lies only in the eye of the beholder (Morrison, 1994; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Thus, although supervisor data may have added a different perspective in which to understand the psychological contract, breach is ultimately a perceptual concern of the employee (i.e., mother).

A second limitation of the study is the retrospective nature of the design. Researchers have cautioned against this approach due to inaccuracies in individuals' memories (Armenakis, Buckley, & Bedeian, 1986), while other researchers have proposed it is an effective design (Terborg, Howard, & Maxwell, 1980). In an effort to reduce concerns

regarding the methodology, every attempt was made to limit the sample to first time mothers who are currently going through the re-entry process (e.g., returned to work less than 2 years ago). Although time since returning to work from maternity leave was controlled for in all analyses, it is possible that the somewhat retrospective nature of the study design impacted mothers' attitudes. For example, some mothers may have rationalized their experiences over time, or may have downplayed aspects of their experiences that were inconsistent with their current beliefs and position (i.e., cognitive dissonance).

An alternative to this approach would have been to conduct a longitudinal design. A longitudinal design would appropriately capture the formation, and breach, of psychological contracts of first mothers by following mothers from pregnancy disclosure through the return to work process. Although this would be challenging, there is no doubt a longitudinal design from pregnancy disclosure to return to work would most definitely shed light on the formation of mothers' psychological contracts as well as potential breach of contract.

Implications

Approximately 80% of U.S. women become mothers (Fried, 2000; Johnson, 2008), making mothers roughly 38% of the workforce (Williams, Manvell, & Bornstein, 2006). Accordingly, it is imperative for researchers and practitioners to dedicate effort towards understanding mothers' perceived expectations in the workplace and how interpersonal treatment may alter mothers' career paths. There is growing evidence that there are changing expectations with greater focus on integrating family into work (Giga

& Cooper, 2005), which must be accounted for not only by organizations, as an entity, but also within the individual-level contracts and the interpersonal relationships between mother and supervisor.

Theoretical

There are several implications of this study for theory and scholarship. First and foremost, this study begins to explain *why* mothers may leave the workforce. In opening this paper, the “Opt-Out Revolution” (Belkin, 2003) was referenced as the term coined to exemplify the anecdotal experiences of talented women rejecting the workplace and choosing to devote their time and energy to raising children and developing their family. However, also noted was the slew of controversy regarding whether mothers are *choosing* or being *forced* out of their jobs (Williams, Manvell, & Bornstein, 2006). Although researchers have studied the complexities of women’s and mother’s career paths including rationale for their departure from work (Hill, Martinson, & Ferris, 2004; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Powell and Mainiero, 1992; Stroh & Reilly, 1999), no study has empirically tested a theory as to why mothers leave the workforce. Thus, this is the first empirical research to indicate that mothers’ intentions leave the workforce may depend on fulfillment of their psychological contracts and fair treatment in the workplace, in addition to personal preferences to spend time with children. This is particularly relevant to work-family research, as it reinforces a larger body of research encouraging integration of family considerations at work.

Furthermore, although there is much buzz surrounding the integration of work-life management and the need for growing “family-friendly” workplaces, there is limited

empirical evidence (Botsford & King, 2008; Rothausen-Vange, Arnold, & Power, 2008) demonstrating the importance of family in characteristics of today's jobs. And, although researchers have begun to consider the role of family as part of the evolving psychological contracts of the contemporary workforce (Giga & Cooper, 2005), no research has empirically tested the role of family related content in psychological contracts. Therefore, this study contributes to this gap in the literature and should encourage future researchers to thoroughly examine aspects of the psychological contract that are related to family in order to more accurately capture the psychological contracts of today's workforce, including mothers.

Finally, this study contributes to larger theoretical models integrating psychological contracts into psychosocial capital models. Recently, Leanna and Rousseau (2005), as well as Giga and Cooper (2005), presented models linking psychological contracts to healthier societies. These authors proposed that psychological contracts (e.g., mutual obligations, respect, trust) contribute to increased psychosocial capital, which leads to increased human capital, economic capital, and intellectual capital. The authors' further proposed that this fuels healthy organizations and in turn health societies. This study contributes to the model by presenting evidence of the link between psychological contracts related to family and human capital (i.e., retention). However, future researchers should conduct psychological contract research that further develops their link to important organizational-level outcomes (i.e., human, economic, intellectual).

Practical

There are both economic and social consequences of mothers' departure from work. It is estimated that the monetary cost of an employee's turnover is 150% of their salary (Ramlall, 2003). Furthermore, given that women tend to be more educated and receive more honors (US. Census Bureau), as well as hold approximately 50% of managerial positions, there is a need to retain this talent pool. In short, there is a very real bottom-line to the retention of mothers in the workplace.

Effective retention policies include problem-responsive strategies that target management practices to the needs of a specific group (Steel, Griffeth & Hom, 2002). Therefore, organizations' retention policies must specifically target mothers and provide special consideration for their needs. This research calls for greater attention to first-time mothers' return to work and the promises they perceive have been exchanged. This research also suggests that supervisors must be aware of mothers' psychological contracts and attempt to fulfill, or at a bare minimum, appropriately manage the breach of contract through fair treatment.

It is now common for work-life management strategies to include family-friendly policies directly aimed at helping employees manage the demands of both work and family (Marston, 2005). These are often derived from adapting existing, or developing new, strategies specifically focused on retention. Although these are strides towards more fully integrating family into work, this study echoes research by Allen (2001) that simply implementing human resources policies is not enough. This study reveals that the relationship between mother and supervisor may be a critical predictor of mothers'

intention to leave the organization, and the workforce. Specifically, fair treatment of the mother can mitigate the negative effects of the breach.

It is likely challenging for human resource professionals to appropriately train supervisors to handle this time period in a women's career, as well as provide supervisors with knowledge of all resources potentially available to new mothers. It is also unlikely to expect that all supervisors will be supportive and understanding of mothers' changes and aware of their perceived promises during this time period. However, this is precisely the situation where the psychological contract becomes even more important (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005). Therefore, if is unrealistic for supervisors to appropriately fulfill all aspects of mothers' psychological contracts, they can, at a minimum, treat mothers with fairness. Perhaps human resource professionals should shift their efforts to ensuring that above all, supervisors treat mothers with respect and fairness. In sum, human resource professionals must recognize that although managing a mother's perceived promises when she returns to work from leave may not fall under the umbrella of traditional human resource management plans, that in order to win the game for talent, attention must be paid to these promises to reduce intentions to leave the organization, and the larger workforce.

Table 1.

Scale Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations ($N = 181$)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Income	3.31	1.13	-								
2. Time Working Since Child	3.34	3.85	-.12	-							
3. Industry	7.38	4.23	-.06	.08	-						
4. Breach Related to Work	.28	4.78	-.20**	.05	-.07	-					
5. Breach Related to Family	.29	.49	-.22**	.06	-.11	.78**	-				
6. Perceived Cause of Breach	3.15	3.97	-.13	.11	-.09	.85**	.87**	-			
7. Interactional Justice	3.82	1.02	.19*	-.09	.11	-.57**	-.62**	-.68**	-		
8. Violation towards Supervisor	2.03	1.27	-.21**	.09	-.06	.67**	.68**	.72**	-.78**	-	
9. Intention to Leave Organization	2.67	1.32	-.28**	.04	-.17*	.49**	.50**	.51**	-.58**	.69**	-
10. Intention to Leave Workforce	2.31	1.18	-.22**	-.14	.04	.25**	.36**	.26**	-.28**	.34**	.52**

Note. $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .05^*$

Table 2.

Breach Related to Family Predicting Intention to Leave the Organization and the Workforce

	Intention to Leave the Organization		Intention to Leave the Workforce	
	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2
Step 1:		.07**		.08**
Income	-.17**		-.17*	
Time Working Since Child's Birth	-.01		-.18**	
Step 2:				
Breach Related to Work	.23*	.18**	-.10	.05**
Step 3:				
Breach Related to Family	.26*	.03*	.41**	.06**

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; N = 181.

Table 3.

Breach Related to Family and Perceived Cause of Breach Predicting Intention to Leave the Organization and the Workforce

	Intention to Leave the Organization		Intention to Leave the Workforce	
	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2
Step 1:		.27**		.12**
Income	-.21**		-.17*	
Time Working Since Child's Birth	.00		-.18*	
Industry	-.13*		.08	
Breach Related to Work	.18		-.24	
Step 2:				
Breach Related to Family	.09	.04**	-.48*	.02
Perceived Cause of Breach	.49*		-.25	
Step 3:				
Breach Related to Family x Perceived Cause of Breach	-.32*	.02*	.32*	.02*

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; N = 181.

Table 4.

Breach Related to Family and Interactional Justice Predicting Intention to Leave the Organization and the Workforce

	Intention to Leave the Organization		Intention to Leave the Workforce	
	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2
Step 1:		.26**		.38**
Income	-.15**		-.04	
Breach Related to Work	.14		-.11	
Step 2:		.12**		.23**
Breach Related to Family	.21		.36**	
Interactional Justice	-.43**		-.53**	
Step 3:		.02*		.02**
Breach Related to Family x Interactional Justice	.19*		.18**	

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; N = 181.

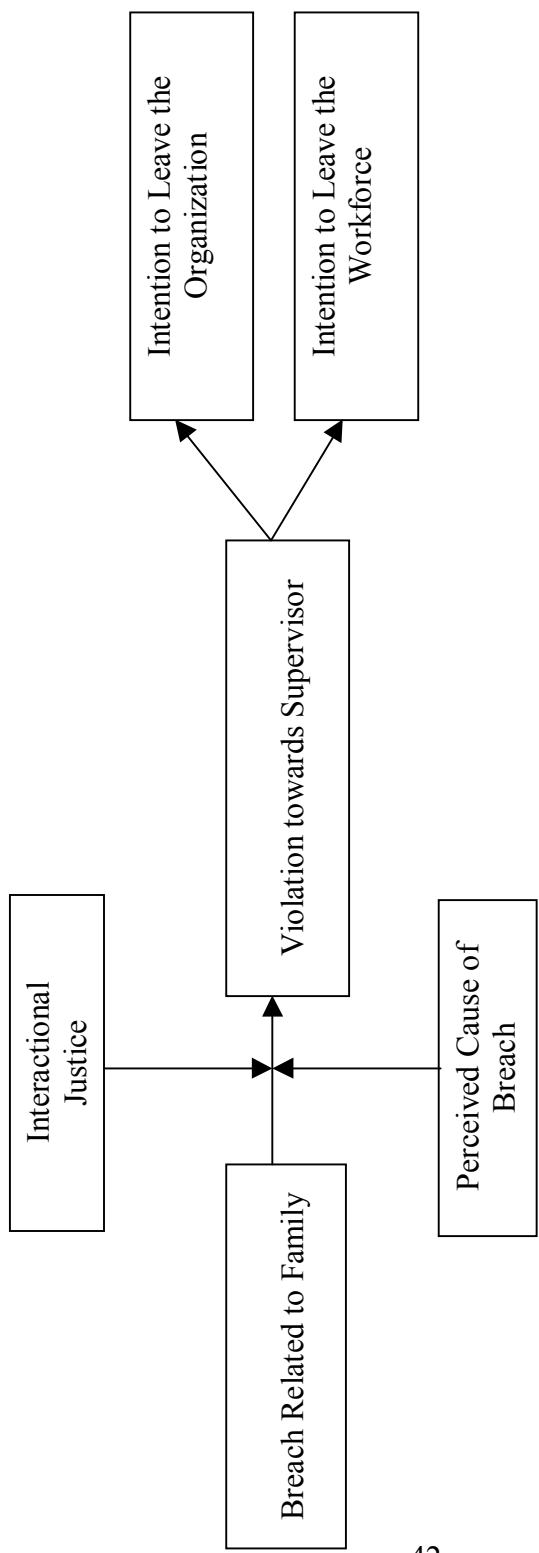


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework for Study Hypotheses

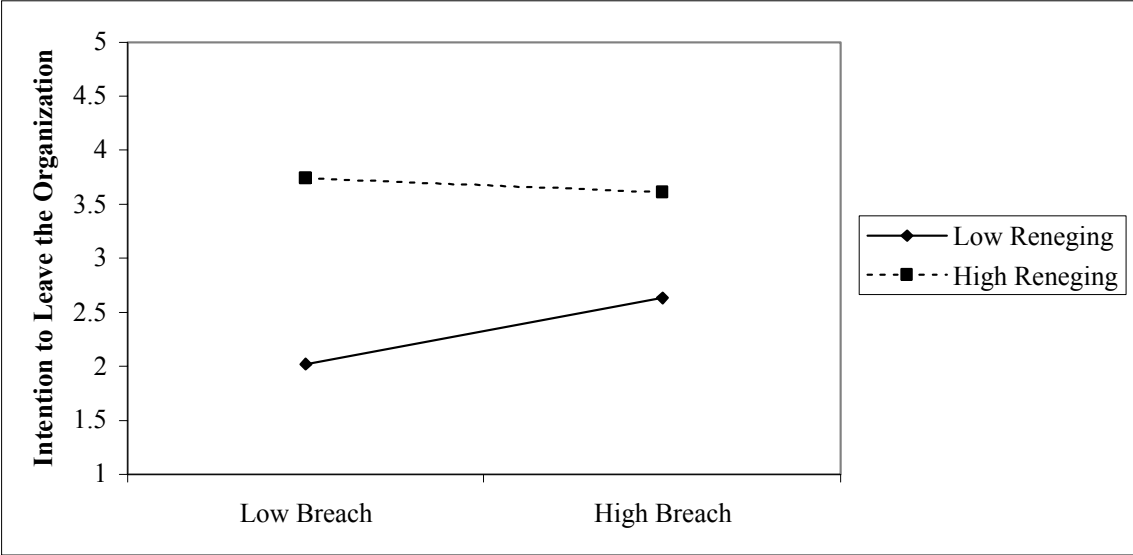


Figure 2. *Interaction of Breach Related to Family and Perceived Cause of Breach on Intention to Leave the Organization*

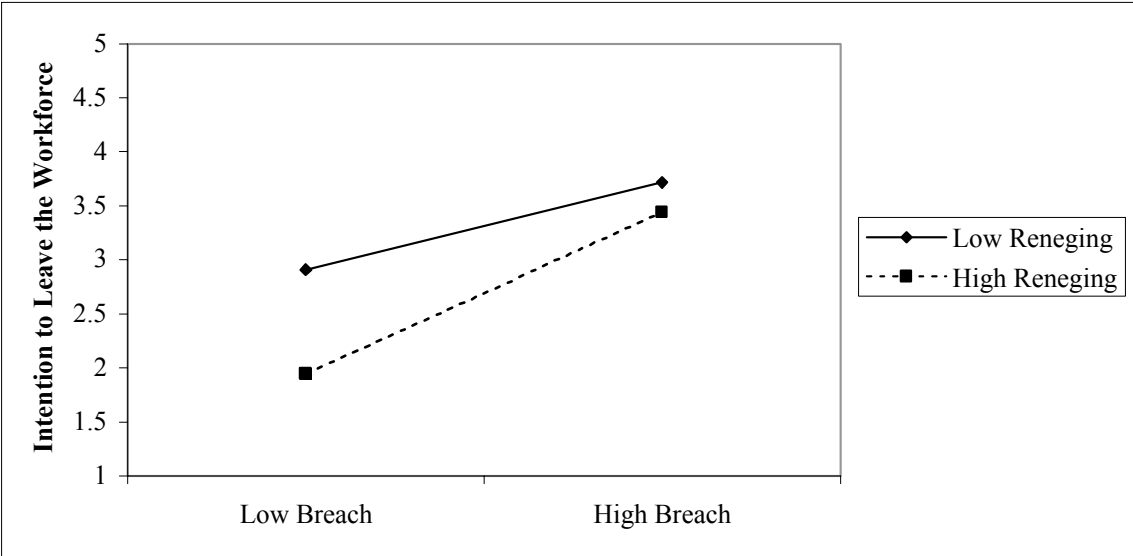


Figure 3. *Interaction of Breach Related to Family and Perceived Cause of Breach on Intention to Leave the Workforce*

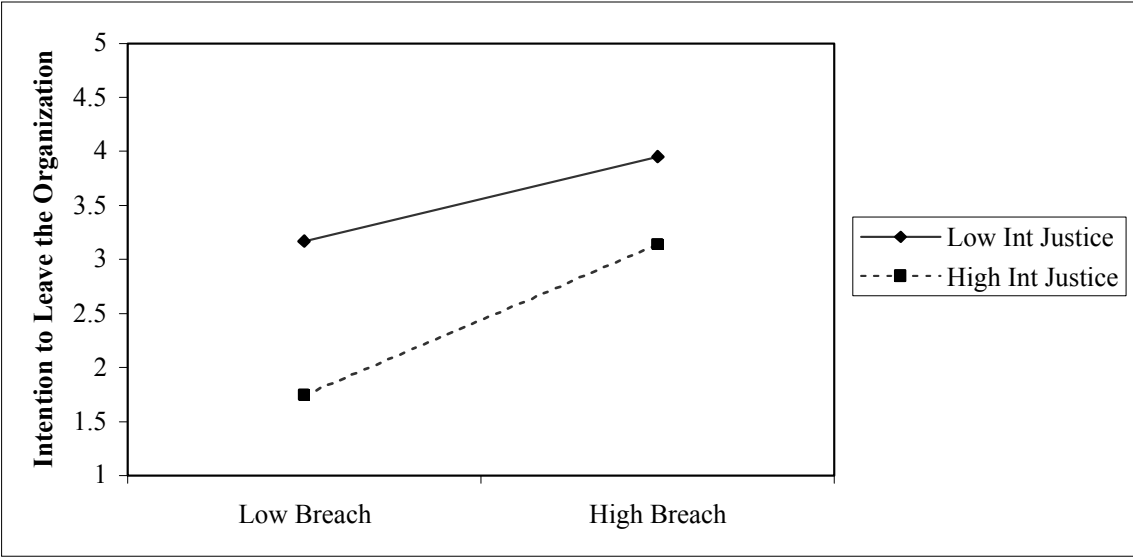


Figure 4. *Interaction of Breach Related to Family and Interactional Justice on Intention to Leave the Organization*

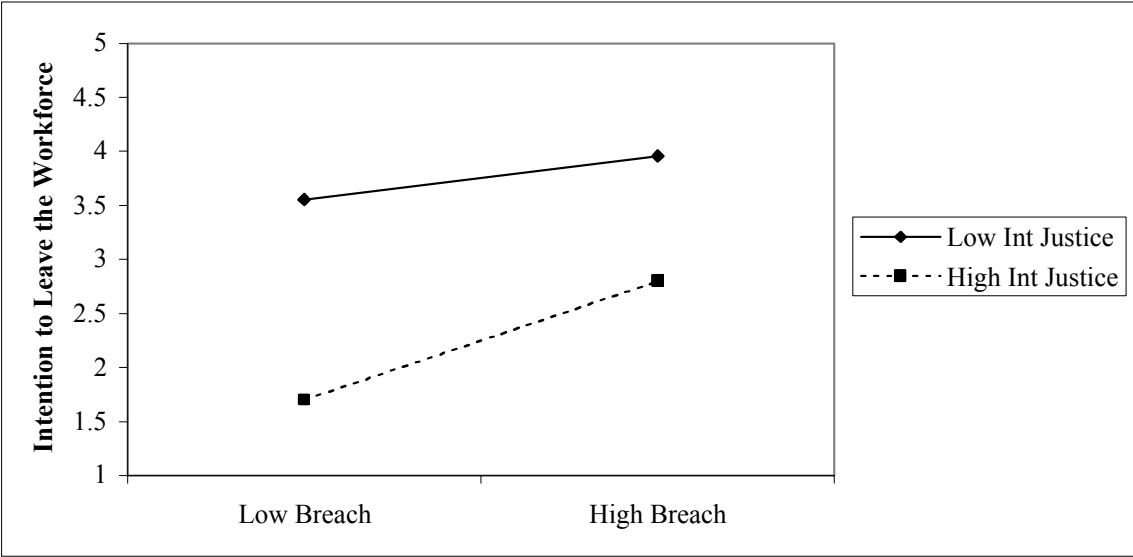


Figure 5. *Interaction of Breach Related to Family and Interactional Justice on Intention to Leave the Workforce*

Appendix A: Dissertation Proposal Literature Review

There is a growing body of literature citing the complexities and challenges of women (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Melamed, 1995; Powell & Mainiero, 1992) and mothers' (Hill, Martinson, & Ferris, 2004; Jackson & Scharman, 2002) career paths. Balancing work and relationships is the core of this literature, which is particularly relevant to mothers, as they often shoulder the majority of household and childcare responsibilities (Hochschild, 2000; Williams 2000). Recent evidence suggests mothers (married mothers with infants) are leaving the workforce altogether (Cohany & Sok, 2007) igniting debate over the controversial argument that talented women prefer to devote their energy towards family (i.e., "opt out revolution"; Belkin, 2003). Despite efforts to explain this finding (see Belkin, 2003 and Williams, Manvell, & Bornstein, 2006), research has not yet identified why mothers may make the decision to leave the workforce.

A critical juncture for this decision may occur immediately following maternity leave. This is a time of transition and ambiguity, as new moms begin to negotiate the challenge of balancing work and motherhood. Both mothers and their supervisors likely have a set of expectations for a range of work experiences including family-friendly policies, type of work and workload, and interactions with coworkers that mothers will encounter upon returning to work. However, the expectations of mothers and their supervisors may not align with one another (e.g., Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002). Furthermore, characteristics of the situation (e.g., lapse in time, novelty, change; Morrison & Robinson, 1997) create high potential for differing perceptions about what mothers owe the organization and what the organization owes the mother (Shore & Tetrick, 1994). Given that supervisors are "gatekeepers" of knowledge, resources, and work-life management (King, 2001, 2004), they likely possess power and control when a mother transitions back to work after maternity leave. In fact, Friedman, Christensen, and DeGroot (1998) stated that supervisors have the ability to shape experiences beyond, or even in place of, organizational policies. Therefore, the employment relationship between individual and supervisor is critical as the supervisor is the likely party, or agent of the organization, that is responsible for the fulfillment (or lack thereof) of the psychological contract (Lester et al., 2002). I propose the psychological contract between mother and supervisor is vital in mothers' transition back to work, as the supervisor has the potential to become a mother's advocate or adversary.

The primary purpose of the current research is to investigate potential misalignments in the perceived obligations of mothers and their supervisors as an explanation for mothers' exit from the workforce. That is, I will consider whether the psychological contracts of mothers are breached by their supervisors. Knowledge of mothers' perceived promises, particularly related to family, provide organizations information on how to appropriately prepare for and manage mothers return to work. A second purpose is to consider how to manage mothers' perceptions of fairness after a breach and to reduce, or even prevent, feelings of violation and ultimately intentions to leave. This is critical as supervisors may be primarily responsible for fair treatment of mothers and ultimately their departure from work. In summary, I theorize that

psychological contract breach, and how supervisors manage the breach may explain mothers' decisions to leave the workforce.

Psychological Contract Breach

A psychological contract is “an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party. Key issues here include the belief that a promise has been made and a consideration offered in exchange for it, binding the parties to some set of reciprocal obligations” (Rousseau, 1989, p. 123). Contracts are based on implicit or explicit promises that communicate future intention and action (e.g., organizational policy, written or oral communication) (Rousseau, 1989). Ultimately, employees’ (i.e., mothers’) perceived promises comprise the psychological contract.

It should be further noted that the obligations in the contract do not necessarily have to be shared by agents or parties (e.g., supervisors). However, Guest (1998) argued that the original conceptualization of a psychological contract was a two-way reciprocal agreement. Other authors established the importance of the employment relationship between supervisor and employee (Lester et al., 2002) and distinguished between the organization and supervisor as separate parties in the contract (Marsh, 2005). Therefore, supervisors may play a unique role in the employment relationship as their own understandings of the psychological contract between employee and organization may influence fulfillment (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994; 1994; Shore & Tetrick, 1994).

Conditions Leading to Breach

A plethora of research has demonstrated the negative effects of unfulfilled promises including reduced trust, job satisfaction, performance, extra-role performance, and intentions to leave (Robinson et al., 1994; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Turnley & Feldman, 2000; Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007). However, as Robinson and Morrison (2000) pointed out, “it is vital to understand the conditions under which perceptions of psychological contract breach arise” (p. 525). Morrison and Robinson’s (1997) model elegantly specified the antecedents of psychological contract breach and violation. For the purpose of this paper, I focus on the two conditions described in the model that may elicit psychological contract breach: reneging and incongruence.

Reneging. Reneging occurs when “agents of the organization recognize that an obligation exists but they knowingly fail to follow through on that obligation” (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 233). Reneging can occur in two situations, and both are explicit instances of breach. The first is the inability of the agent to fulfill the obligation. An example related to mothers is that a supervisor may have promised a mother that she would be the team lead for an interesting project. However, when the mother returns to work she finds that the position of project lead had been given to a coworker. Although this promise was initially made in good faith, the circumstances are such that the supervisor can no longer fulfill the obligation. Another situation where reneging occurs is unwillingness, which occurs when, “agents do not *want* to fulfill specific terms of the employment agreement” (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 233). This may indicate that the agent never intended to fill the obligation or decided they no longer wish to fulfill that promise. An example related to mothers is that a supervisor may have originally told the

mother that she would be eligible for promotion within six months of her return to work. However, after this time period elapsed the supervisor made no mention of her promotion and in fact, felt as though the mother was not ready to make that jump. This demonstrates unwillingness on behalf of the supervisor to act as the mother's advocate, as originally promised. In summary, renegeing may occur as a result of a supervisor's inability or unwillingness to fulfill the contract.

Incongruence. Incongruence is a much more subtle instance of breach whereby the agent of the organization sincerely perceives that they have met all obligations and fulfilled all promises but the employee does not perceive that the agent has followed through on such promises (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Robinson & Morrison, 2000). In effect, there is disagreement between the supervisor and employee about the promise and/or its fulfillment. Incongruence is likely to occur when there are divergent schemata, ambiguity, and lack of communication (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Schemata are cognitive frameworks that represent ideas about the "typical" employment relationship. This framework guides the interpretation of promises within the employment relationship. Although schemata may facilitate the contract between employer and agent, divergent schemata may increase the likelihood that there is incongruence. Complexity and ambiguity may further increase the likelihood of incongruence, as they create a situation where neither party can clearly identify or construe meaning. Rousseau and Greller (1994) noted that, for example, implicit or casual remarks are susceptible to differing interpretations. Thus, the extent to which the parties in the contract can reduce ambiguity, the more likely it is to reduce incongruence. One method of achieving congruence is through effective communication (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Moreover, lack of communication between parties may foster situations that lead to breach. Accurate and effective communication does not always take place in organizations and between individuals, therefore increasing the likelihood of breach. A lag of time from when the promise is made to when it is fulfilled may contribute to situations where even explicit promises go unfulfilled. In summary, divergent schemata, ambiguity, and lack of communication may foster incongruence.

Mothers' Psychological Contracts

In order to understand the conditions that give rise to psychological contract breach, it is necessary to explore mothers' expectations or perceived promises as well as those of supervisors. Turnley and Feldman (1999b) outline three sources of employees' expectations: the specific promises made to them by organizational representatives, their perceptions of the organization's culture, and their own idiosyncratic expectations as to how the organization operates. Furthermore, shifting characteristics for today's workforce suggests there may be aspects of the psychological contract that are unique from the past and focus on integrating elements of family into work (e.g., flexibility). Differing expectations from each of these sources may lead to unmet promises between mothers and supervisors, feelings of violation, and ultimately mothers' intentions to leave.

The content of employees' expectations can be derived from research on retention and turnover that is rooted in job satisfaction. Inventories and measurement tools such as the Job Description Inventory (JDI; Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969), Job Diagnostic

Survey (JDS; Hackman & Oldham, 1976), and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MNSQ; Dawes, Dohm, Chartrand, & Due, 1987) assessed various facets or characteristics of the job tapping satisfaction. The facets or characteristics of job satisfaction typically include: work itself, pay, promotional opportunities and policies, pay, security, supervision and coworkers. Psychological contract research often uses these facets to assess how well jobs fulfilled workers' needs or rather, what perceived obligations were met (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005; Marsh, 2005; Robinson, 1996; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). However, Rothausen-Vange, Arnold, and Power (2008) raised the question of whether facets derived over 40 years ago still apply to today's workforce and to all groups (e.g., women). These authors demonstrated through a survey of workers who voluntarily left their organizations that there are facets of the job that are unique to family including support for dependent care, flexibility, and coworker support for family. These findings were confirmed in a series of interviews with mothers (Botsford & King, 2008) who described expectations for their return to work after maternity leave related to family-friendly policies and organizational culture. Similarly, Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, and Hanson (2008) demonstrated that Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors (FSSB) (i.e., behaviors exhibited by the supervisor that are supportive of families) are distinguishable from traditional measures of supervisor support and are significantly predictive of work-family conflict, job satisfaction, and intentions to leave. Together, these studies provide preliminary evidence that facets of the job that drive satisfaction, and ultimately may influence mothers' expectations, are different today than in the past, as they are specific to work and family needs. Therefore, mothers may not only create psychological contracts surrounding traditional aspects of work (e.g., pay), but might also hold expectations including aspects unique to family (e.g., support for dependent care).

As Turnley and Feldman (1999b) proposed, one source of employees' expectations is the specific promises made to them by organizational representatives (e.g., supervisors). Using a sample of Executive MBA students, Lester et al. (2002) empirically demonstrated that subordinate and supervisor perceptions were most likely to differ when related to pay, advancement, and a good employment relationship. Organizational agents include a variety of individuals within the organization (e.g., supervisors, human resource personnel, executives) that communicate promises either verbally (e.g., face-to-face meetings) or in written form (e.g., employee manuals). For example, Rousseau and Greller (1994) showed that statements in personnel materials (e.g., manuals) created expectations on the part of employees that become part of their psychological contracts. Such expectations may be related to traditional aspects of work such as job challenge or related to more contemporary aspects of work including family such flexible work schedules. Although supervisors may be largely responsible for fulfilling employees' (i.e., mothers) psychological contracts, it is likely that they are not privy to information regarding messages from other organizational representatives. Alternatively, supervisors may have the power to choose to disregard certain policies. Policies are driven from the top-down and therefore although the organization as an entity may support such policies, this does not ensure that every individual (e.g., supervisors) endorses or "obeys" such policies and family-friendly ideals. For example,

mothers may expect to take advantage of a human resource policy regarding the use of lactation rooms, but the supervisor may not be aware of this policy or perceive this as not important to the mother. Although mothers may create psychological contracts based upon information from the organization, the supervisor is unlikely to be able or willing to meet, or acknowledge, all of these expectations and therefore breach occurs.

Employees' expectations are also derived from their perceptions of the organizational culture as well as their own idiosyncratic perceptions of how the organization operates (Lester et al., 2002; Turnley & Feldman, 1999b). In effect, each employee has their own set of perceptions regarding the organizational practices and processes. These may be based upon prior experiences, observing the experiences of others, or organizational trends. Furthermore, self-serving biases influence individuals' perceptions and therefore mothers may interpret aspects of the psychological contract that benefit themselves. Therefore, as Lester et al., (2002) proposed, it is reasonable to predict that there will be disagreement between mothers and their supervisors with regard to their reciprocal obligations. This may in part be due to the fact that there is now more buzz around work-family balance than ever before and employees, particularly mothers, may have greater expectations for supportive policies and positive family-friendly cultures. Specifically, work-life management strategies (e.g., Booz Allen's Parents' Forum, Deloitte's Women's Initiative) including family-friendly policies (Mass Career Customization, Best Buy's Results Only Work Environment) are often directly aimed at helping employees manage the demands of both work and family (Marston, 2005). Together, the changing nature of the workforce towards a more family-friendly environment combined with shifting attitudes emphasizing balance may cue mothers to expect to take advantage of family-friendly policies and work in family-friendly organizations.

H1: Mothers' psychological contracts include aspects related to family (e.g., flexibility, dependent care support).

Supervisors may not possess or share such beliefs regarding work-life management. Although there has been a shift to more family-friendly organizations, there is evidence that simply creating family-friendly policies is not enough to create a supportive culture (Allen, 2001). It is likely that supervisors do not understand mothers' perceptions regarding work and their idiosyncratic views of balancing work and family. Furthermore, traditional beliefs regarding the 'ideal worker' persist which may fuel attitudes and expectations on the part of the supervisor. The 'ideal worker' is classified as a worker with the typically male characteristics including dedication to work and freedom from family responsibility (Williams, 2000). Although one may argue the U.S. is going through a restructuring in order to integrate work and family and therefore include both men and women in the workforce, it is likely the pervasive norms of the 'ideal worker' persist. This may be particularly true for first time moms who are making the initial transition to motherhood. The supervisor may expect that once the new mother has made the commitment to return work she will return as "normal" (i.e., the way it was prior to becoming a mother). In summary, new mothers and supervisors likely hold differing expectations of mothers' return to work after maternity leave. Perceptual differences in

obligations between mothers and supervisors set the stage for unfulfilled promises in mothers' psychological contracts.

H2: There is misalignment in the perceived obligations of new mothers and their supervisors.

Mothers and supervisors may perceive aspects of the employment contract differently. As discussed, mothers and supervisors may perceive different obligations for returning to work after maternity leave. Mothers' perceived obligations are defined as the set of expectations that each mother feels she owes the organization and the organization owes to her. Supervisors also have a set of expectations for a mother's return to work that comprises a supervisor's perceived obligations of the mother. It is the misalignment between these sets of expectations, or perceived obligations, of mother and supervisor that may contribute to psychological contract breach.

Although a psychological contract is a two-way reciprocal agreement between employee and agent of the organization (e.g., supervisor), contracts do not have to be shared between employee and employer. Furthermore, supervisors may possess their own understanding of the psychological contract between employee (i.e., mother) and organization that may influence fulfillment (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994; 1994; Shore & Tetrick, 1994). Thus it is ultimately the employees' (i.e., mothers') perceived promises that comprise the psychological contract.

Breach of the psychological contract occurs when the employee (i.e., mother) perceives promises go unmet. In effect, the mother is cognitively aware that employer has failed to meet one or multiple aspects of their promises. Breach is repeatedly shown to have negative consequences for the employer (supervisor and organization). Negative consequences for breach may include feelings of violation, reduced trust, job satisfaction, performance, extra-role performance, intentions to leave (Robinson et al., 1994; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Turnley, Bolino, Lester & Bloodgood, 2003; Turnley & Feldman, 2000; Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007) and even retaliation (Marsh, 2005). Therefore, when mothers' experience breach they are likely to experience negative outcomes including feelings of violation and intention to leave.

H3: Mothers' psychological contract breach leads to feelings of violation and intention to leave.

The form that psychological contract breach takes is important as it helps to understand the circumstances precipitating the breach. As Morrison and Robinson (1997) noted, reneging is the most obvious, or explicit, condition in which an employee is to experience breach. Reneging occurs because an agent (i.e., supervisor) of the organization is either *unable* or *unwilling* to fulfill a specific obligation or promise. In the context of the employment situation between mother and supervisor, the supervisor may change or deny previously made promises with the mother. In interviews with over 20 mothers, Botsford and King (2008) found evidence that supervisors were unable and unwilling to fulfill explicit promises. One new mother reported that her supervisor explicitly promised that she could work part-time, but later decided the arrangement "wasn't working out" and informed the mother that her only option was full-time work. This mother consequently left the organization. This is one example of how an unwillingness to fulfill the promise made to the mother resulted in contract breach,

violation, and turnover. It is impossible to know whether the original promise was malicious or made in good faith. Regardless, it breached the mother's contract with the organization. Supervisors' unwillingness to be flexible with the needs of new moms may create situations where explicit promises made to mothers are reneged. Thus, supervisors who are unable or unwilling to fulfill explicit promises breach mothers' contracts and this may lead to feelings of violation and intentions to leave.

H4a: New mothers experience psychological contract breach through reneging.

H4b: Reneging leads to feelings of violation and intentions to leave.

The more subtle condition for psychological contract breach, but potentially damaging for mothers is incongruence, or implicit promises. Incongruence is likely to occur in situations where employee and agent (i.e., supervisor) possess differing schema, or there is ambiguity and lack of communication. As previously discussed, mothers and supervisors likely approach a mother's transition back to work with different expectations due to conflicting perceptions of the ideal worker and mothers' expectations of family-friendly workplaces. Differing schema between mother and supervisor regarding what the mother expects or is obliged to receive may create a situation where promises go unfulfilled. For example, although a mother may have not explicitly asked her supervisor whether she could take advantage of an existing flex-time policy she may assume this will be allowed. However, the supervisor, due to expectations and prior experiences with the mother may assume that the mother will not be asking for flex-time. These differing schemas for approaching a mothers' transition back to work may create a situation of incongruence and thus, psychological contract breach. The novel and ambiguous nature of the situation may also facilitate unclear expectations on behalf of the mother and supervisor. As Morrison and Robinson (1997) noted, one way to reduce the likelihood of breach is through communication. Given there are not "rules" for how mothers discuss becoming a new mom with their employer, it creates a situation where some moms may explicitly discuss their return to work and others do not. This reduced communication likely increases the possibility that promises go unfulfilled. Thus,

H5a: New mothers experience psychological contract breach through incongruence.

H5b: Incongruence leads to feelings of violation and intentions to leave.

As previously discussed, conditions for breach is divided into reneging and incongruence. I propose to test how these two conditions relate to feelings of violation and intentions to leave. Specifically, I explore whether the attribution a mother makes (reneging or incongruence) regarding the breach influences feelings of violation and intentions to leave. Although both reneging and incongruence are conditions for unmet promises, I propose that reneging is more salient to mothers, as it is an explicit breach of contract, and therefore has stronger effects on feelings of violation and intentions to leave. This is consistent with Robinson and Morrison's (2000) theorizing that the relationship between perceived contract breach and violation is strong to the extent that the employee attributes the breach to reneging. Reneging is particularly damaging to mothers because these promises cannot be rationalized or attributed to a miscommunication. Therefore, reneging is particularly damaging as it may be interpreted as a personal attack directed towards the mother. Reneging, regardless of inability or

unwillingness, is salient to the individual and likely elicits a stronger and more negative reaction. Furthermore, Botsford and King (2008) revealed anecdotal evidence from interviews with two mothers' who experienced renegeing (i.e., promised to work part-time, but then told it was a full-time position only). Both mothers made the decision to leave their jobs when their original "deal" was taken away. This is consistent with research (Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003) that examined employees' attributions (i.e., renegeing, disruption, incongruence) for the breach. Using a less conservative significance level, the authors' demonstrated that when employees believed the breach was due to renegeing rather than incongruence, there was a decrease in citizenship behaviors and in-role performance. Therefore, the attribution one makes regarding renegeing or incongruence may influence the outcome. Thus, I propose psychological contract breach through renegeing is more strongly correlated with feelings of violation and intentions to leave than breach through incongruence.

H6: The attribution that the mother makes when she experiences psychological contract breach moderates the relationship between the magnitude of the breach and feelings of violation and intention to leave such that the relationship is stronger when the mother attributes the breach to renegeing than incongruence.

Perceptions of Fairness

Morrison and Robinson (1997) were the first set of researchers (Robinson & Morrison, 2000; Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainus, 1988; Turnley & Feldman, 1999) to distinguish between psychological contract breach and violation. Whereas breach includes the cognitive evaluation that one's expectations have not been met or that promises have gone unfulfilled, violation is the more affective component that typically follows a cognitive appraisal of unfulfilled promises. Violation is characterized by feelings such as disappointment, frustration, anger, and resentment (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1989). An important aspect of this distinction is that breach does not always result in violation. Employee perceptions of how fairly he or she was treated influence whether the employee experience violation. In fact, Morrison and Robinson (1997) argued that employee perceptions have little to do with actual procedures and policies, and often are not even aware of them. Therefore, a major reason why breach may result in violation is because the employee feels mistreated. Morrison and Robinson (1997) proposed this notion be very similar to interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986). Interactional justice deals with a person's evaluation or judgments of how they were treated interpersonally in the process of a particular event. In effect, the outcome can be unpleasant (i.e., breach), but if the employee feels as though he or she was treated honestly and respectfully throughout the process then perceptions of fairness may mitigate or prevent feelings of violation. Bies and Shapiro (1987) also argued that adequate justification is necessary in order for the employee to feel as though he or she was fairly treated. Clearly, a situation where an employee perceives breach and also feels as though he or she has been mistreated interpersonally results in the most severe outcomes (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). Using a sample of customer service personnel, Jones and Skarlicki (2003) supported this notion by empirically demonstrating that the link between distributive justice and turnover is higher when interactional justice is low. In effect, perceptions of fairness can offset the negative effects of distributive justice.

Based upon this line of research, supervisors have the opportunity to mitigate the potentially damaging effects of psychological contract breach by appropriately managing how mothers are treated interpersonally. If mothers are treated respectfully, honestly, and given adequate justification for the outcome associated with psychological contract breach, their feelings of violation and intentions to leave may be reduced or avoided altogether. In effect, supervisors may be able to control the effects of the breach by demonstrating respect for mothers' dual roles of mother and worker. This is consistent with justice literature suggesting interactional justice plays a role when the exchange is between individuals and the supervisor (Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002). The supervisor has the opportunity to treat the subordinate fairly in the midst of psychological contract breach. For example, a supervisor may willingly decide to renege on a promise made to a mother regarding the number of days she is able to telecommute. If the supervisor simply informs the mother of this change with no explanation or appropriate rationale, then mother may respond negatively (e.g., Kickul, Neuman, Parker, & Finkl, 2001). However, if the supervisor initiates a conversation with the mother expressing concern for how this will affect her situation and asks for other ways in which the supervisor may alleviate other stressors from the mother she may not experience violation (e.g., anger, resentment). For example, Botsford and King (2008) found that one mother's supervisor scheduled a mandatory meeting during the time the mother was regularly scheduled to leave work to pick-up her children from school. Although this action was inconsistent with the psychological contract established between the mother and supervisor, her supervisor talked to her in advance and explained the rationale for the meeting time. This example illustrates one way that supervisors may reduce negative reactions related to psychological contract breach.

Rothausen-Vange et al.'s (2008) research demonstrated that respect for whole identify is an important factor in today's workforce. Botsford and King (2008) echoed this finding in their work with mothers, suggesting that mothers want to feel respected for their work as both mother and worker. Respect for mothers may be critical in the workplace, as Cronin (2004) and Botsford and Elder (2007) demonstrated there are meaningful outcomes for the target (mothers) when they are respected (e.g., listening, attention, attributes of worth). Therefore, the extent to which supervisors can demonstrate respect by treating mothers fairly, especially in the midst of breach, the supervisors may reduce negative outcomes, including mothers' turnover. Thus, supervisors are central in mothers' psychological contracts, and may be responsible not only for unmet promises, but also for the mitigation or prevention of the negative effects of breach.

H7: Interactional justice moderates the relationship between breach and violation such that when mothers perceive interactional justice from their supervisors, the effect of breach on violation is weakened.

Appendix B: Qualitative Study

Clarifying the Career Decisions of Mothers by Exploring the Content of Work Experiences

One of the most dramatic changes in the American workforce in the past 50 years involves the increased participation of women, specifically working mothers with young children. In fact, it is estimated that over 80% of U.S. women will become mothers (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000). Despite this increase in mothers working, women still perform the majority of both housework and childcare (Hochschild & Machung, 2003; Williams 2000). Given the centrality of both work and family to adults' lives (Barnett & Hyde, 2001), this often presents mothers with the unique situation of striving to achieve success in their career while managing the demands of housework and childcare.

Despite the influx of mothers in the workforce, recent research reveals that increases in the labor force participation rates of married mothers with young children has come to a halt (Cohany & Sok, 2007). In fact, married mothers' labor participation has declined across all educational levels, ages, and number of children in the past decade (Cohany & Sok, 2007). Furthermore, 1.2 million more mothers stayed home with their children in 2005 than did 10 years ago (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). This developing trend supports the controversial label of the "Opt-Out Revolution" (Belkin, 2003), a term coined to exemplify the anecdotal experiences of talented women rejecting the workplace and choosing to devote their time and energy to raising children and developing their family. Importantly, controversy revolves around whether mothers are *choosing* or being *forced* to leave their jobs (Williams, Manvell, & Bornstein, 2006).

This debate has ignited the responses of organizations (see Heller Ehrman's "Opt-in Project", 2007), media (see "Part-Time Looks Fine to Working Moms", St. George, 2007; "Off to Work She Should Go", Hirshman, 2007), research centers (see "Fewer Mothers Prefer Full-time Work", Taylor, Funk, & Clark, 2007), and sociological and psychological researchers (e.g., Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). However, research currently lacks an understanding of mothers' work experiences when returning from maternity leave. Specifically, it is not yet clear what (if any) workplace experiences might explain the career decisions of mothers (e.g., stay, change, or leave). Extant theoretical (see Heilman, 1983; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004) and empirical research (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008) suggests mothers are subject to stereotyping and disadvantage in the workplace. However, the nature of these experiences and the degree to which they impact mothers' decisions about work has not been previously tested.

Thus, we seek to explore mothers' workplace experiences as potential determinants of their career decisions. That is, the purpose of this paper is to identify the content of mothers' work experiences (i.e., reasons why she may stay or leave) in an effort to better understand and explain career decisions. We first discuss current conceptualizations of mothers' careers and review theory as to why mothers may encounter disadvantage in the workplace. We then propose three categories (procedural, interpersonal, and individual) of experiences that may drive mothers career decisions. Finally, we briefly address the

opt-out versus forced-out debate by focusing on the work experiences of mothers' who left the workforce.

Career Dynamics

Traditional ideas of career success include money, power, upward movement, and reward/recognition (Greenhaus, 2003). Research now supports and recognizes the notion that each person's career does not look the same, nor follow the same upward path (Greenhaus, 2003). This change is particularly true for mothers, as they are redesigning careers as a "lattice" instead of a "ladder" (Galinsky, Eby & Peer, 2008), reflecting greater flexibility in how mothers define their career. Powell and Mainiero (1992) were among the first to capture the complexities of women's careers by recognizing dual concerns (i.e., work and relationships). More recent studies support their initial ideas in finding that mothers are making work changes that are perceived to better fit with their definition of career success (i.e., integrating work and life), and are not simply mapping the needs of a woman's career onto a male model of careers (see Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Stroh & Reilly, 1999). Given these changes, it is important to understand how women, specifically mothers, interpret their careers and how their experiences at work influence decisions related to career.

Despite recognition that the definition of 'career' and 'success' has changed, in practice, organizations (and individuals within organizations) often times do not always acknowledge or provide for these revised conceptualizations (e.g., reward systems; see Williams, 2000). Societal conceptualization of career is based upon assessment of one's achievement and progress with a reference group (i.e., males) as the point of comparison (Melamed, 1995). Therefore, the predominantly "male model" (i.e., upward mobility, power) of work becomes the baseline for comparison for women. This may be particularly detrimental to mothers who not only bear the burden of childcare, but also may experience the daily struggles of working within the constraints of a "male model" of work. Indeed, recent research suggests what was previously termed the "glass ceiling" is more accurately described as the "maternal wall" (Barnett 2004; Crosby, Williams & Biernat, 2004), as barriers in the workplace have actually become an issue of "mother" versus "other." In summary, women, particularly mothers, may conceptualize career success as managing both work and relationships, but the reality is that the workplace may not support such conceptualizations.

Theoretical Rationale

Several theories help build a framework to understand negative perceptions of, and discrimination toward, mothers. The first, social role theory, suggests that the distribution of men and women into breadwinner and homemaker roles creates stereotypes that support the maintenance of these roles (Eagly, 1987). Women are viewed as communal which consists of selflessness, concern for others, and a desire to be with others (Eagly, 1987). Men, however, are viewed as agentic which consists of self-assertion, self-expansion, and the urge to master (Eagly, 1987). These stereotypic expectations maintain what people observe – women in the domestic role and men in the employee role. Therefore, if there is a perceived violation of this expectation (i.e., woman in a stereotypically male job), she is likely to be rejected or potentially punished for this violation. These stereotypes may help to explain why women are "pushed out" of work

and expected to be the caretakers or homemakers. A second, complementary theory that may also explain sex-role stereotypes is the lack of fit model (Heilman, 1983). This theory purports that an individual's success in a particular job is determined by a comparison of the perception of the individual's attributes (i.e., motherhood) to the perception of the job requirements (i.e., skills and abilities). Perceived incongruity may lead to outcomes such as career choice and advancement (self-limiting behavior) or selection and performance appraisal (discrimination). Empirical research demonstrates that lack of fit explains perceptions of reduced competence in mothers potentially leading to adverse consequences (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008) that may impact their career decisions. Finally, recent theoretical research on status characteristics reveals that stereotypes towards women may be enhanced when women become mothers (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). A status characteristic is a widely held societal belief about worthiness and competence that is associated with one category of the group (e.g., non-mothers), but not the other (e.g., mothers). If a status characteristic (e.g., motherhood) is salient to the individual then they may act accordingly, or others' implicit expectations may influence the encounter. For example, mothers may be perceived as not capable of handling challenging work and therefore not provided with developmental experiences (King, Botsford, Smith, Hebl, & Kazama, 2007). In sum, stereotypes towards women may become more salient when women become mothers therefore presenting mothers with unique challenges that may be manifested in their experiences within the workplace.

Each of these theories on their own presents an explanation as to the negative experiences encountered by women in the workplace. The extension of these ideas to mothers, in particular, may in fact be even more crucial as pregnant women and mothers are the archetypal women and embody the most feminine attributes (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004; Hebl, King, Glick, Singletary, & Kazama, 2007). Taken together, this set of ideas lays the theoretical groundwork to help explain why mothers may encounter stereotyping and disadvantage in the workplace. These theories provide a more complete picture of the nature and progression of biased attitudes including the distribution of men and women into specific roles, the perceived incongruities that may arise when in these roles, and the enhanced discrimination against mothers. Drawing from this literature, we seek to explore the content of mothers work experiences as these experiences may help us to better understand the career decisions of mothers, specifically departure from work.

Turnover

Employee turnover is expensive, costing the organization approximately 150% of the employee's salary (Ramlall, 2003). Furthermore, organizations often invest in recruitment, selection, and training for new employees that are difficult or impossible for organizations to regain when an employee leaves the workforce. Organizations must recognize and promote employee retention, as we have an increasingly specialized workforce where human capital is key to business success (Steel, Griffeth, & Hom, 2002). However, it is impossible to develop retention policy without a thorough understanding of 1) who quits and 2) why they leave.

The focus of this paper is on the declining labor participation rates of mothers (see Cohany & Sok, 2007). In short, statistics suggests that mothers are leaving, but we cannot yet explain *why*. Retention research typically utilizes two complementary theories,

process theory and content theory, to explain turnover (Lee & Mitchell 1994; Steel et al., 2002). Process theory is focused on the flow or ordering of inputs to outcomes. Content theory is focused on why the needs change or the factors that explain why an individual may leave (e.g., McClelland's theory of motivation). Turnover research suggests that the primary reasons individuals leave are rooted in job satisfaction (Jackofsky & Peters, 1983) and perceived job alternatives (Hulin, Roznowski, & Hachiya, 1985). In effect, "push" factors are those related to the individual's perception of the job whereas "pull" factors are those external to the individual. The combination of "push" and "pull" factors may add value to understanding mothers' decision to leave. This paper largely focuses on the aspects of the job, or work experiences, and therefore attempts to identify "push" factors or perceptions of the job that explain why mothers may leave.

We propose there are three general categories of experiences (procedural, interpersonal, individual) that influence career decisions of mothers. Both the procedural and individual categories are explored in related research on women's careers (see Powell & Mainiero, 1992). We discuss each of the three factors in more detail in an effort to present the potential experiences encountered by mothers who return to work after maternity leave that may ultimately drive career decisions.

Procedural Factors. Procedural factors, or sources, of mothers' career decisions include aspects of the organization that are characterized as formal. Formal aspects of the organization may include policies (e.g., leave, flexible work arrangements), procedures (e.g., pay and bonus structure), or how work is distributed (e.g., through the supervisor). Recent research shows that mothers face discrimination in the workplace. Sociological statistics indicate that mothers earn 60 cents for every dollar earned by fathers (Waldfogel, 1998) and that women endure a 5% penalty in wages for each child they parent (Budig & England, 2001). In fact, Crittendon (2001) noted that, "the gender gap in compensation has become an issue of 'mother' versus 'other' (as cited in Crosby, Williams & Biernat, 2004; 675)."

Interpersonal Factors. Individuals hold perceptions of women's ability and commitment to work that are most likely strengthened through the status characteristic of motherhood. These persistent stereotypes may lead individuals in which they interact with (i.e., supervisors and coworkers) to treat mothers differently than non-mothers, especially today as research shows that more interpersonal forms of discrimination are more likely to occur than formal forms of discrimination (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002). Interpersonal discrimination is characterized by interpersonal cues (e.g., decreased eye contact and interaction time) that signals liking or collegiality to the individual (Hebl et al., 2002; Hebl et al., 2007). These interpersonal cues directed towards stigmatized groups (i.e., mothers) may be a "much more sensitive indicator of hostile biases in occupational contexts" (Hebl et al., 2007: 1501). Therefore, it is likely that mothers may experience similar negative interpersonal experiences in the workplace.

Individual Factors. Social role theory suggests that men and women are distributed into breadwinner and homemaker roles, respectively (Eagly, 1987). As a result of these distributions, there is a societal mandate for women to feel they should be responsible for homemaker responsibilities *in addition to* paid work; men, however, feel they should *only* be responsible for paid work. Thus, it is not uncommon for women to participate in paid

work, perform the majority of household duties (Hochschild & Machung, 2003) and bear the burden of childcare responsibilities (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002). Williams (2000) estimates that women perform between 70-80% of child-related responsibilities regardless of work status. Given the majority of balancing the demands of both work and family rests on women, it is likely that mothers may be experiencing unique outcomes because of these dual and demanding roles. The challenge of juggling these dual roles may lead mothers to experience internal conflict or individual experiences (e.g., career self-efficacy, guilt, and involvement) that may facilitate their decision to leave the workforce (e.g., Botsford & King, 2008; Livingston & Judge, 2007).

In summary, although existing theory explains how expectations of mothers may emerge, we lack understanding of the manner in which such expectations are experienced by mothers, and the potential implications of these experiences for mothers' career decisions. In this qualitative study, we explore the nature of procedural, interpersonal, and individual experiences and their effects on mothers' career decisions.

Method

Qualitative research allows for richness and depth in data collection that is particularly useful in addressing exploratory, experiential questions such as the ones posed here (Bachiochi, Weiner, & Rogelberg, 2002). There are several approaches to qualitative research including action research, case study, ethnography, and grounded theory (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablinski, 1999; Locke, Golden-Biddle, & Rogelberg, 2002). Grounded theory was employed in this study as this method seeks to reveal theoretical explanations for existing phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is typically completely inductive in nature and allows the conversation to drive the theory through a comparative process of data collection and analysis back to data collection (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Participants

Participants consisted of 27 women (22 mothers, 5 non-mothers) in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area. The age range was 23-45 with a mean of 35 years. The sample was predominantly Caucasian (93%), and two individuals reported their ethnicity as Hispanic (7%). Participants were highly educated with 15% holding a Bachelor's degree, 41% holding a Master's degree (M.A., M.S., or M.B.A.), and 30% holding a Doctorate degree (Ph.D., J.D., or M.D.). The vast majority of participants were married, 85%, and of the participants who were mothers the mean number of children was 1.86. Of the mothers, 23% were homemakers, 9% worked part-time (20 hours or less per week), 23% worked part-time (30 hours), and 45% worked full-time (or full-time with flexible work arrangements). Of the non-mothers, all 5 worked full-time. There were a range of industries including consulting, public and international health, law, biology, ecology, medicine, government, academia, and non-profit. Finally, 86% of participants that responded to the item asking the extent to which "my income meets my needs" reported either "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" with the statement.

In order to be eligible to participate, the only requirement was that individuals had to be currently working or have worked in a professional role. Furthermore, the individuals who were non-mothers were required to have interacted with at least one

coworker who was pregnant and returned to work from maternity leave. There were no other restrictions than parental status, as described above.

Central to grounded theory is theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical sampling is an approach that allows the researcher to direct the sampling based upon the previously collected data, analysis, and interpretation in order to maximize the richness of the data. This allows for the researcher to explore specific areas as well as develop under-explored areas, as the researcher sees the theory emerging. In sum, “this process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 45). Thus, the goal of theoretical sampling is not to collect a random sample of participants, but to let the theory emerge from conceptual categories. There was an effort to achieve an initial sample (N = 8) of participants representing mothers. Initial interviewees identified others interested in participating (N = 9) in an effort to replicate or test emerging theories (Yin, 1989). Convenience sampling was used to identify the remaining interviewees (N = 7). This was in an effort to ensure all groups (mothers working, mothers not working, and non-mothers) were represented. Finally, there was one focus group conducted (N = 3) that was comprised of non-mothers.

Procedure

Grounded theory suggests the researcher should be an “active sampler” when identifying participants in an effort to get accurate “slices” of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In an effort to accomplish this goal and achieve theoretical saturation, participants were recruited through several means. First, women were invited to participate via e-mail through several professional listservs in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan area (i.e., mothers’ groups). Second, the primary investigator attended a local mothers’ association membership meeting and invited mothers to participate. Finally, a convenience sample was used where members of a university listserv were asked to nominate individuals in their organizations that met the criteria for participation. The convenience sampling approach ensured a sufficient sample size and, in effect, tested the emerging theory (Yin, 1989). Sixty-three percent of the participants were from listservs, 8% were from membership meetings, and 30% were from convenience sample.

The first author completed a total of 24 face-to-face, semi-structured interviews and 1 focus group (N = 3). There was one exception to the face-to-face interviews (phone interview). The first author completed the phone interview because the mother interested in participating in the study appeared to have experiences relevant to the developing theory, but could not find the time in her schedule to meet in person. The interviews and focus groups were conducted at a location of the participant’s choosing. This consisted of local coffee shops, cafes, and homes of the participants. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour. All participants indicated their consent to participate and 78% agreed to audio tape-record the conversation for the purpose of data analysis.

At the onset of the meeting, participants completed a demographics page consisting of information on their age, race, education, marital status, number of children, socio-economic status, as well as position, level and tenure in her organization. The first author described the purpose of the research, how the results would be used, and the structure of the 1-hour interview/focus group.

Participants began by sharing as much or as little information as they liked regarding the demographic questionnaire they completed. Next, participants responded to a series of open-ended questions, followed by probes to acquire information regarding the procedural, interpersonal, and individual factors they experienced upon returning to work after maternity leave. The first author requested that the interviewee focus all responses on their first year at work after returning from maternity leave. This was done in an effort to provide similar context for their experiences and to facilitate comparisons across participants. Although the purpose of the interview was to explore the proposed categories of factors, the participants were invited to share ideas that came to mind or related topics, anecdotes, or experiences that they felt were relevant to their own situation. Participants were requested to be as specific as possible when describing situations and provided detailed examples exemplifying their experiences. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were reminded of the purpose of the study, how the data would be used, and of confidentiality. To close each interview, the first author thanked participants for their time and asked whether they had any final thoughts they were unable to share during the interview.

Data Analysis

Given that grounded theory resides in the notion of simultaneous data collection and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), comparisons were made across the interviews through the duration of the process. When necessary, the interview guide was adapted in order to delve into unforeseen areas of importance to the overarching research question. Each interview was open coded (i.e., broken down and compared) for proposed and emergent themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Any emerging themes in the earlier interviews were integrated (when appropriate) into later interviews. The first author originally identified a total of 32 themes. The categories were then consolidated using open coding focused on identifying and describing phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This reduced the number of themes to 13. The themes were categorized by procedural, interpersonal and individual factors of mothers' career. In order to be considered as a key theme at least 4 participants must have provided information that developed the theme. Although content analysis or coding is not an element of grounded theory (Suddaby, 2006), frequencies were recorded in an effort to selectively code and demonstrate internal validity (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each emerging theme was coded for both positive and negative experiences described upon returning to work after maternity leave decisions (see Appendices B, C, and D for complete category descriptions and frequencies). A combination of representative quotes and frequencies are presented in the following pages to balance the "showing" (i.e., raw data) and "telling" (i.e., interpreting findings) aspects of qualitative research presentation (Golden-Locke & Biddle, 2007). Although raw data is typically not presented when using grounded theory (Suddaby, 2006), this is done intentionally to indicate to the reader the type of language (positive or negative) that described each of the emerging themes and the impact on mothers' career decisions.

Results

Procedural Findings

Policies and Procedures. There has been an influx of organizational policies specifically directed at employees who juggle work and family. These “family-friendly policies” range from flexible work arrangements, lactation rooms, child- or elder-care resource and referrals, and leaves of absence. Allen (2001) suggested these policies “are a means of increasing a competitive advantage, raising morale, and attracting and retaining a dedicated workforce” (415). Furthermore, Ryan and Kossek (2008) noted that work-life policies can facilitate or hinder an inclusive workplace. Although almost all mothers interviewed had access to some form of family-friendly policies, the vast majority of the mothers expressed difficulty in identifying information regarding such policies (e.g., leave) or taking advantage of the policies (e.g., onsite daycare) (see Table 5). This was a major issue for leave policies, as many of the mothers tried to craft or customize their leave time with unpaid leave, sick leave, and vacation time in order to maximize time with their young baby and ease back into work. The lack of readily available information made it challenging for mothers to generate plans to present to their supervisors or human resources departments as to what would be best for them.

All mothers mentioned that securing an appropriate, affordable, and safe daycare option was challenging. Approximately one third of mothers interviewed expressed an interest in onsite daycare or at a minimum back-up daycare. However, none of the mothers were actually able to take advantage of this policy if their company had it because the waiting list to get into the daycare center was extraordinarily long. One family-friendly policy that approximately half of the mothers interviewed mentioned was a lactation room (“mother’s room”) onsite (see Table 5). Concerns of when and where the mothers could pump were prevalent with some mothers reporting having to pump in their cars and undesignated bathrooms. For those mothers who did have access to a pumping room where there was a sink, cleaning/sanitizing supplies, and quiet areas expressed how much easier this made their transition as this removed a major stressor from their life (see Cardenas & Major, 2005). These mothers felt it set a tone in the work environment that mothers were accepted and taking “breaks” to pump should not be looked down upon. In effect, mothers felt it increased the family supportive organizational perceptions (FSOP) (Allen, 2001).

Flexible Work Arrangements. Family-friendly policies, particularly policies that afford employees more time or flexibility may be precisely the types of policies that may allow mothers to maintain both work and family roles. There are a growing number of organizations that offer some form of flexible work arrangements (FWA) and thus reduce face time for employees. There is evidence that FWA can lead to reduced strain (Thomas & Ganster, 1995) and intentions to leave (Rothausen, 1994), as well as increased commitment (Grover & Crocker, 1995) for individual employees. Consonant with this research, mothers’ who arranged for a flexible work arrangement at work (e.g., telecommuting, flex-time) expressed satisfaction with their situation. The majority of mothers took part in either telecommuting or some form of flex-time. Even mothers who only telecommuted one day per week framed this as a major facilitator of their employment. Similarly, mothers who were able to customize their schedule to what met their needs, explained this was very important as it allowed them to be home with children at a consistent time of day (e.g., early mornings).

In addition, approximately one fifth of mothers mentioned that they would very much like to participate in job-sharing. “Job sharing means that two (or more) workers share the duties of one full-time job, each working part time, or two or more workers who have unrelated part-time assignments share the same budget line” (Department of Labor, 2008). Although job-sharing is recognized by the Department of Labor, the Fair Labor Standards Acts does not include job-sharing and is therefore only arrived at through informal agreement between employer and employee. Mothers felt that job-sharing was a way for them gain the benefits of working while ensuring the organization was fully staffed. As discussed in the following paragraph, mothers often were told that part-time was not “good enough” and therefore mothers maintained their full-time (30 hours, 40 hours with flex) schedules. Mothers saw job-sharing as a means to meet both their own and the organization’s needs. Three mothers mentioned they suggested job-sharing to their supervisor or human resource professional, but none of them would move forward with the idea. In fact, one mother wrote a job-sharing proposal, but it was rejected. In summary, job-sharing seemed desirable from the perspective of the mothers, but not yet acceptable on the part of the organization or its representatives (i.e., supervisors).

Although FWA allowed mothers to improve balance between work and family, mothers did express concerns about using FWA including negative perceptions and reduced visibility at work. Mothers felt that even though the flexibility was critical to their balance, mothers also expressed some concern that taking advantage of such policies was negatively impacting their reputation and advancement at work. The mothers raised issues of reduced visibility or face time that they felt resulted in difficulty in obtaining quality work. This was particularly true for mothers who were in a consulting-type field where the project and/or type of work are key to overall evaluation. Importantly, the non-mothers interviewed echoed these sentiments of mothers by reiterating that they themselves or others forget that mothers are part of the team when they are not as visible on a daily basis.

Desire for Part-Time Work. A recent study showed that dual-earner couples participated in paid work an average number of 91 hours per week (Bond et al., 2002). Hill, Martinson, and Ferris (2004) noted that this is especially problematic for working mothers and proposed a “new-concept part-time” (NPT) where dual-earners each reduce their number of hours at paid work in order to provide more time for family without sacrificing one person’s career or taking too large of a pay cut. A large-scale study of NPT demonstrated that couples reported greater job flexibility, improved family satisfaction, and reduced work-family conflict (Hill, Mead, Dean, Hafen, Gadd, Palmer, & Ferris, 2006; Van Rijswijk, Bekker, Rutte & Croon, 2004). Over half of the mothers interviewed here expressed a desire to participate in part-time paid work. However, the majority of the organizations were not supportive of part-time work. Three of the mothers were explicitly told that it was full-time or nothing. With that said, some mothers did have access to part-time work and reported that this was beneficial to their work-family balance. Several of the mothers indicated that they had to forego benefits (e.g., healthcare, bonus pay) when shifting to this type of schedule. Even though they were able to achieve the positive aspects the part-time schedule, few received formal benefits above and beyond the reduced number of hours at work. In summary, mothers were interested

in part-time work, at least for the time period when their children were not in school, but this was not always possible. And, as previously discussed, there was clear interest specifically in job-sharing as a way for organizations to facilitate this desire.

Performance Evaluation. Performance evaluation including rewards (e.g., bonus) and promotion may help to explain mothers' career decisions. Mothers may be particularly susceptible to experiencing negative performance evaluations (see Halpert, Wilson & Hickman, 1993) or needing to prove their worth in the workplace. Of the mothers who shared information regarding their performance evaluation, the majority of the mothers reported that they perceived the evaluation to be fair and received positive reviews. However, mothers did note that although they received positive reviews, this did not always translate into a tangible reward (e.g., bonus). For example, one mother was not able to receive a bonus due to her part-time status. Another mother's billable hour rate increased, but her organization would not increase her hourly wage. Overall, mothers did not perceive discrimination during the evaluation process. And, in fact, mothers reported receiving high reviews during their evaluation periods.

Promotion is one of the ultimate rewards and recognition for successful performance, but when comparing the advancement of men and women, previous findings suggest that that women are significantly less likely to be promoted than their male counterparts (Lyness & Judiesch, 1999) and mothers are more likely to experience bias in screening recommendations (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008). Of the mothers who discussed promotions during the interview, half reported they felt limited in their opportunity for advancement. Mothers specifically commented on the fact that they realized it would take them longer to advance now that they had a child. There was some implicit understanding that once they made the "choice" to have children it would necessarily slow their career. Thus, the mothers expressed feeling limited in their ability to achieve promotion at the same rates as before, but felt that over time this could be achieved. Interestingly, even though several of the mothers acknowledged they did not see potential for advancement they were comfortable with the situation. They reported being satisfied with being able to balance work and family, and that it was not as important to move as quickly in their career.

Quality and Quantity of Work. The type and amount of work may influence mothers' career decisions. Anecdotal evidence suggested that mothers returning to work after maternity leave were given less challenging or prestigious work (Williams et al., 2006). There are two possible explanations for this behavior. Mothers were perceived to have lost competence or capability during their leave of absence (Williams et al., 2006). Alternatively, due to ideas of "helping" rooted in benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996) supervisors assumed that they were doing mothers a favor by making things "easier" by providing less challenging or demanding work. This is most likely driven by societal expectations for working mothers to fulfill, or even prioritize, their role as mother (Eagly, 1987).

Approximately 40% of mothers in this study discussed either the quality or the quantity of their work (see Table 5). These mothers noticed a change upon returning to work mostly in the type of work they were given. Mothers noted that they felt their work was less interesting than prior to having a child and also noted that they perceived the

work to be more low-quality (e.g., “paper-pushing”). Four of the five non-mothers interviewed confirmed that from their experiences they felt mothers received more low-quality work and assignments. In fact, one non-mother shared that sometimes she does not want to work on a project with mothers because of their time constraints and sometimes inability to stay late at work. Almost all of the mothers presented the caveat when describing these perceptions that they realized that since they have a part-time, flex schedule, or just need to be home by a certain time they cannot always be present when the really interesting work is taking place. They noted that often times the interesting or high-quality work translates to late nights at work that mothers were either not willing to participate in or are not given the option in which to participate. Mothers recognized they couldn’t have this type of work even though they desired it due to the demands of their schedule.

Insert Table 5 about here

Interpersonal Findings

Relationship with Supervisor. In the context of work-life balance, perhaps the most critical person in an organization to offer support is the supervisor. The supervisor is often the person who shapes the attitudes of the worker (Bernas & Major, 2000) and therefore plays a key role in the support (or lack thereof) of the subordinate. In this study, mothers confirmed the importance of support (defined broadly) on behalf of the supervisor. This included tangible support such as demonstrating flexibility with schedules and changes to schedules, as well as willingness to customize or negotiate a work plan that met everyone’s needs. This also included intangible support including support for dependent care needs, demonstrating open and honest communication, and trust between the supervisor and the mother. Many of the mothers had positive interactions and relationships with their supervisor, but most focused on the characteristics were particularly beneficial or that they would like to see in supervisors. In fact, three of the mothers said that when they made the decision to leave their job their supervisors reiterated that they would like the mothers to stay and tried to negotiate an arrangement that would work for them.

In addition, supervisors have the ability to shape the experiences of the worker beyond (or in place of) organizational policies and/or culture (Friedman, Christenson, DeGroot, 1999). The majority of mothers reported that the supervisor essentially had the capability to trump human resource policies regarding leave and/or FWA. In some cases, this capability actually benefited mothers, as it allowed the supervisor to customize aspects of the job to meet their needs. In fact, one of the non-mothers interviewed was a supervisor and allowed two of her subordinates (mothers) to participate in job-sharing. She not only reported how successful the job-sharing was working out, but also that she felt lucky because she actually was getting double the brain-power by having two mothers for one position. However, in other cases, mothers reported supervisors being extremely inflexible or not understanding of their situation and as a result prevented mothers from engaging in FFP or FWA. In three instances supervisors actually retracted “deals” (i.e., renegeing) made prior to the mothers’ maternity leave when the mother

returned to work resulting in what amounts to a psychological contract breach (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1989) (see Table 6). In summary, the role of the supervisor is critical to mothers' transition back to work and in her career decisions.

Perceptions of Commitment. One of the most pervasive stereotypes of pregnant women and/or mothers is that they are no longer committed to their work or organization (Halpert et al., 1993). Strong gendered norms of the roles of men and women lead us to believe and perceive that women want or should be in the home (Eagly, 1987) and therefore cannot possibly be dedicated to the work. Approximately one-third of mothers mentioned perceptions of their commitment to work. The most often cited comment was that they felt (or were told explicitly) that they made the choice to have children, inferring they must suffer the consequences of such a choice (see Table 6). Interestingly, the non-mothers interviewed shared their impressions of the mothers in the office and three of the five non-mothers reported that the general belief in their workgroup was that mothers lack commitment. Finally, a few mothers discussed the importance of feeling respected for what they do (i.e., work and motherhood). Conveying respect for mothers' dual-roles affirmed their behaviors and seemingly increased the importance of maintaining both roles.

Role Modeling/Mentoring. Mentoring is an essential development resource for organizations interested in maintaining and improving human capital (Noe, Greenberger, Wang, Ferris, & Martocchio, 2002). Mentors have several roles including providing supportive environments for which protégés may share issues or problems (Noe, 1988), giving advice, and offering encouragement and praise. Approximately one-third of mothers raised the issue of role modeling or mentoring in the workplace (see Table 6). However, the majority of these mothers discussed the lack of role models or mentors in the workplace. Several mothers expressed the fact that they were one of the first women in their work group to have a child and therefore were responsible for "trailblazing" this path, and in one case, one mother felt she became the "poster-child" for working moms. The mothers did not discuss this idea in an entirely negative light, but they lamented the lack of role models to turn to for advice in navigating this path. The lack of role models or mentors in the workplace was not portrayed as hindering mother's success, but the mothers did express clear desire to have such individuals to facilitate the transition back to work and offer advice along the way.

Insert Table 6 about here

Individual Findings

Pressure. Over half of the mothers' interviewed expressed experiencing pressure once they became a working mother. Most often reported was the pressure that was placed upon them to be both a "good" mother and worker. This pressure often resulted in feeling as though they could do neither role at 100%. They reported feeling distracted because of their other role and what needs to be done in order to continue to be successful. Three mothers reported their distraction lead to feeling guilty about their children (e.g., leaving them at home, not giving enough time) that in turn led to the mother feeling conflicted about her decisions. In fact, four mothers reported this pressure

to perform both roles lead to sleeplessness or sleep deprivation to the point where it was impacting their ability to think and perform. In summary, perceived and self-induced pressures were prevalent in mothers and this pressure manifested itself in various ways (e.g., guilt, sleeplessness) depending upon the mother's specific situation (see Table 3).

Challenge Brain / Use Degree. Over half of the interviewees shared that returning to work helped them to feel mentally fulfilled. Mothers noted that they enjoyed engaging in challenging work that required critical thinking and problem solving skills. They were very clear that they loved their time with the child(ren), but also that the time away reminded them of why they pursued advanced degrees. Mothers also reported feeling good about being a financial provider to their family. They reported that this made them feel like they were not only helping their family, but also that they could see themselves as an equal to their significant other. Finally, several mothers reported that they felt they had become better at problem solving and creative thinking, as they were constantly faced with challenges of balancing work and family. Overall, many of the mothers appeared to have positive self-efficacy as a result of their paid work.

Adult Interaction. One of the most positive elements of paid work for mothers was that it fulfilled their need for adult interaction. Mothers emphasized the importance of needing to be their "own self" and not let children or family time consume or take-away from who they are as an individual (see Table 7). Mothers explained that sometimes they felt selfish for having these thoughts, as previously discussed, but that they felt better about themselves when they had the opportunity to interact with adults in a work setting. Some mothers even said that feeling like their own person actually allowed them to be a better mother, wife, and person because they didn't feel as consumed by one role. A few mothers shared how thoughts of selfishness would creep in, but that for the large majority of mothers paid work fulfilled this need to interact with adults (see Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

Thoughts of Quitting. Approximately one-third of mothers shared that they considered leaving their paid work after having a child (see Table 7). Mothers seemed to constantly question if engaging in paid work was the best for their children. While many of the mothers acknowledged they would very much like to take a short period of time off from work to care for their child when they are very young, these same mothers expressed concerns over taking that time away from work or "off-ramping." Mothers specifically mentioned concerns that it would be too difficult to return after a substantial leave, and that they would be passed over in interview and promotion situations because of their time away from work. All of the mothers who raised this concern were currently working. Perhaps this awareness of the challenges of "on-ramping" provided motivation to remain engaged in paid work or perhaps they felt forced into paid work, as they didn't foresee a realistic alternative.

Proving Oneself. Lyness and Heilman (2006) suggested that women have to work harder and prove themselves in order to attain the same level in organizations as men. Their study demonstrated that performance evaluations of promoted women were significantly higher than those of promoted men, suggesting that women had to perform to a higher standard in order to be promoted. This experience may be particularly salient for mothers, as evidence by a clear emergent theme of proving oneself in the current study.

However, mothers felt they had to prove themselves in different ways. Some mothers commented on the fact that they felt it to be very important to prove themselves prior to becoming pregnant by demonstrating a “solid track record” of performance. Others described a constant need to proving themselves once they had their child by making sure their work was always of very high quality. Another mother’s strategy was to ensure there was never any reason to say anything negative about her work. Others reported feeling as though they needed to prove themselves and as a result refused to ask for help from others regarding work, scheduling, etc. in order to demonstrate they could manage work and motherhood. Although “proving oneself” took on different forms, there was a clear theme among the mothers of needing to go above and beyond the expectations (see Table 7).

Insert Table 7 about here

Opt-out vs Forced Out

Given the retrospective nature of the study, we were able to examine mothers’ experiences when returning to work from maternity leave, as well as capture their career progression and current work status. Table 8 provides a summary of whether each mother’s experiences at work (by category) were considered to be overall positive, overall negative, or a combination of positive and negative experiences. The table also outlines whether each mother expressed a desire to be working (when they returned from leave) or if they would have preferred to be at home. Finally, the table is organized by whether the mother experienced a change in her work status after having a child. This allows one to better interpret how mothers’ experiences may lead to changes in career.

Mothers seem to encounter a mix of positive and negative experiences related to the policies and procedures in the job. In addition, although the majority (N = 13) of mothers had positive experiences with the type of work and their performance evaluation, there were very few who had a mix of positive and negative experiences. This may suggest that the type of work and perceived fairness of the performance evaluation is described as either entirely positive or entirely negative. There may be less room for ambiguity and therefore this may be an area that deserves specific attention, as it appears quite divisive.

Table 8 also reveals that of the 22 mothers, 64% reported wanting to work with an additional 32% reporting feeling torn between working and staying home. This suggests that the large majority of mothers do not simply want to leave the workforce. This notion is also supported by the fact that approximately 70% are still working in some capacity (contract, flex, part-time or full-time). However, approximately 90% of mothers experienced a change (shift to flex schedule, shift to part-time, job change, entrepreneurial work, or staying home) in their work status after having a child. This suggests almost every mother experiences change, to differing degrees, after having a child. These numbers suggest that even though the majority of mothers desire to work, they do make a career change after having a child. Thus, there may be legitimacy to the “forced-out” argument if mothers express a desire to work yet find themselves in situations where they are working reduced-hour schedules or not working at all.

Insert Table 8 about here

Discussion

Although progress has been made toward reconceptualizing women's careers and toward understanding why mothers may face disadvantage in work contexts, neither line of research identifies the specific experiences that mothers encounter when returning to work after maternity leave that may contribute to their career progression. The results of this study suggest that mothers encounter both positive and negative procedural, interpersonal, and individual experiences at work. Moreover, these findings suggest that negative experiences at work can influence changes in mothers' career paths and even their departure from work. Thus, this is the first research to indicate that mothers' decisions to leave the workforce may depend on the policies of the organization and interpersonal experiences at work, rather than personal preferences to spend time with children.

When taking a broad view of the procedural, interpersonal, and individual factors that mothers discussed, general themes or undertones of incompatibility between mother and work experiences emerge. With regard to the procedural category, although mothers noted benefits of policies and FWAs, they were often not "enough" for mothers to truly balance both work and family. There was a theme of having a policy, but in reality not being able to take advantage of it (e.g., Thompson et al., 1999). The mothers rationalized this by being grateful for the time or resource that they were able to utilize. Similarly, perceptions of the type of work and performance evaluation reviews of the mother were often described as positive, but at the same time the mothers acknowledged there was not really room for advancement (at least, at a typical trajectory). Again, the mothers were comfortable, for the most part, with this situation, as they were pleased to be able to be working. Jackson and Sharman (2002) noted a similar finding in their study of how mothers describe family-friendly careers. They titled this notion "peaceful trade-offs" such that although the mothers may have experienced disadvantage or discrimination, they still reported satisfaction with their career given that it allowed them to manage both career and motherhood. An alternative to the "peaceful trade-off" interpretation is that there may be an underlying theme of denial of discrimination in the workplace.

A prevalent theme among the interpersonal experiences was the importance of the relationship with the supervisor. Specifically, mothers noted the importance of having a relationship with their supervisors that consisted of trust, honesty, and open communication. Mothers who experienced situations where they lacked these qualities or felt there was a violation of expected support or flexibility had thoughts of leaving. It seemed that mothers had a psychological contract (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1989) with their supervisor (Shore & Tetrick, 1994) regarding their expectations for how they would interact with their supervisor and what the supervisor could provide for them. Thus, the relationship between mother and supervisor is crucial, as the supervisor may become their advocate or their adversary.

Finally, although mothers expressed challenges from internal and external pressure regarding their work and family roles, the rewarding aspects of work (e.g., critical

thinking, problem solving, adult interaction) were extremely motivating to mothers, allowing them to connect with who they were prior to having children. Interestingly, the majority of mothers spoke positively about the work environment even though there were, admittedly, barriers including procedural aspects (e.g., lack of FWA) and negative perceptions directed towards them (e.g., lack of commitment). This is consistent with other researchers noting the challenges of the male model of work for women and mothers (e.g., Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Stroh & Reilly, 1999) as well as perceiving discrimination based upon one's lack of fit in the working world (e.g., Heilman, 1983; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Although previous research has shown these aspects of work to be important in affecting the work-family interface, this research is unique in that it demonstrates experiences at work can influence career decisions of mothers.

Limitations

As with any study, there are limitations to this research. First, the sample used in this study consisted of women from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The demographics of this sample (primarily White and well educated) may prevent us from extending the findings to other, different demographic groups. Furthermore, the location of these mothers is one where cost of living is high and therefore dual-income households may, to a certain extent, be required. Although the purpose of the sampling procedure in grounded theory is not to generalize the findings to the larger population, it is important to note these characteristics so that the reader and future researchers may consider this a limitation when interpreting and building upon the current work.

A second major limitation of this study is the retrospective nature of the design. The women who participated in this study were asked to reflect back upon a time period in their lives when they were first returning to work after maternity leave. For some mothers, this was just 6 months ago, however, for other mothers this required they think back 3-4 years. The retrospective nature of the study may impact the information provided. Mothers may have rationalized their choices over time, or may downplayed aspects of their experiences that were inconsistent with their decision (i.e., cognitive dissonance). It is important that future research take a longitudinal approach to understanding mothers' career decisions and measure experiences at work over time.

Practical Implications

There are several practical implications of this research. First, this research begins to explain why mothers may leave the workforce. Retention policy and effective management begins by understanding the existing circumstances where "problem-responsive strategies can be tailored to the needs/groups addressed by the retention policy's retention targets" (Steel et al., 2002: 150). This study provides practitioners with real-world examples of the experiences of mothers, thereby detailing circumstances and situations that may facilitate mothers' decisions to leave the workforce. Before human resource professionals implement changes in the workforce, however, more research is required to understand whether the themes of this study extend to other mothers returning to work after maternity leave. Human resource professionals may use this as a guide to begin to evaluate aspects of the work environment and develop ideas on how to create effective human resources strategies to retain working mothers.

Adapting existing, or developing new, human resources strategies has been a focus of organizations in the fight for talent. However, this study reveals that simply implementing human resources policies is not enough when trying to tackle the issue of retaining working mothers. Empirical research demonstrated that often work-family policies alone are not enough (Thompson et al., 1999). For example, individuals may be unwilling to taking advantage of family-friendly policies for fear of consequences or backlash. Although researchers have suggested human resources strategies that may better integrate women's career (i.e., work and family) goals (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005), this does not account for the potential effects of other more subtle forms of interpersonal discrimination (Hebl et al., 2002) on the decision-making process. Furthermore, this research demonstrates that there are other obstacles (e.g, societal pressures, lack of role models) that may exacerbate mothers' departure from work. Human resource professionals must recognize that although these types of challenges may not fall under the umbrella of traditional human resource management plans, that in order to win the game for talent, attention must be paid to a variety of factors influencing mothers' career decisions.

Theoretical Implications

The purpose of this research was to provide a theory of the specific work experiences that may impact mothers' career decisions. Indeed, the descriptions provided by mothers in this study suggest that career decisions are influenced by their experiences (perceptions and treatment) in the workplace. This work is intended to be a springboard for future researchers to tackle the issues presented in this study and delve deeper into the key challenges of juggling work and motherhood. One challenge for future researchers is to verify the findings in other populations and among a larger, empirical sample of working mothers. Future researchers should consider whether procedural, interpersonal, and individual experiences lead to differing job-related outcomes, including turnover. Specifically, what are the situations or conditions under which a mother may encounter negative experiences in the workplace yet continue to remain in this environment? What are the situations or conditions in which mothers do not encounter negative experiences? And based on the answers to these questions, how do we better manage mothers' return to work? Future research is required to understand the process by which these experiences link with job-related outcomes and ultimately career decisions. The current research is intended to be a first step in addressing the larger societal issue of mothers leaving the workforce.

Table 5.

Procedural Coding Categories

Procedural Coding Categories	N = 22	Quotes
1. Policies & Procedures for Mothers	82%	<p><i>So many hoops to jump through just to find out basic information about leave and policies.</i></p> <p><i>There was not a space to pump at work so I would pump in my car; It made me feel sad and never comfortable.</i></p> <p><i>I had 4 months paid leave which was huge.</i></p>
2. Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)	73%	<p><i>I was allowed to customize my schedule that let me work from home when I had a sick kid.</i></p> <p><i>I was able to structure my work to fit with my schedule.</i></p> <p><i>All negotiations go through the supervisor and if the supervisor isn't flexible then they won't work.</i></p> <p><i>I wrote a job-sharing proposal, but it was rejected.</i></p>
3. Part-Time Work	59%	<p><i>My chances of partner disappeared after reducing number of hours.</i></p> <p><i>Lose out on the chatting time because when I was at work I really had to do work; Made me less "visible".</i></p> <p><i>Attitude is they are giving you plenty of benefits and don't need part-time on top of that.</i></p>
4. Performance Evaluation	45%	<p><i>Challenging to be "fast-tracked", but there is opportunity for advancement.</i></p> <p><i>I always received great reviews, but my salary percent increase did not reflect this.</i></p>
5. Quality & Quantity of Work	41%	<p><i>Came back to find more work, but it was more of the dredge work.</i></p> <p><i>Went right back into my same role – no change.</i></p>

Table 6.

Interpersonal Coding Categories

Interpersonal Coding Categories	N = 22	Quotes
1. Relationship with Supervisor	55%	<p><i>Discretion of policies lies in the supervisor.</i></p> <p><i>I was asked “Why is everyone sick all of the time?”</i></p> <p><i>My boss sat me down and asked me to work harder and miss fewer days.</i></p> <p><i>I made arrangements with my supervisor and discussed a flextime situation, but when I came back to work he took the “deal” back.</i></p> <p><i>It was up to my supervisor to give me the “OK” for me to take the 2 extra weeks off.</i></p> <p><i>Supervisor was a “grandfather” type and just “got it.”</i></p>
2. Perception of Commitment	36%	<p><i>There is the perception of “great hours.”</i></p> <p><i>Felt like people thought I was “hanging out” the 6 weeks I was on maternity leave.</i></p> <p><i>My coworkers seemed sincere in their comments.</i></p> <p><i>I experienced a lot of social isolation when returning to work; Perception that they [women] have babies and are never here.</i></p>
3. Role Modeling	27%	<p><i>I didn’t have a role model. I was one of the first women to have a baby. It was perceived as unnatural at first, but then I think I helped others to see it [work and children] is possible.</i></p> <p><i>I trail-blazed the office.</i></p> <p><i>I become the “poster-child” for working moms.</i></p>

Table 7.

Individual Coding Categories

Individual Coding Categories	N = 22	Quotes
1. Pressure	59%	<p><i>I was so sleep deprived.</i></p> <p><i>I was physically exhausted.</i></p> <p><i>I felt guilty for not being home.</i></p> <p><i>I felt like a failure as a mother and a worker.</i></p> <p><i>I felt judged from stay-at-home moms because I work.</i></p>
2. Challenge Brian / Use Degree	55%	<p><i>Working helped to maintain my identity.</i></p> <p><i>Felt as though I should be doing more with my degree/brain.</i></p> <p><i>I wanted to be involved in complex problem solving.</i></p> <p><i>I wanted to me a role model for my daughter.</i></p>
3. Adult Interaction / Environment	45%	<p><i>One mother's proposed marker for whether a mother should work was "What is your capacity for playing lion?"</i></p> <p><i>I felt as though I was contributing to society. and benefiting people's lives.</i></p>
4. Thoughts of Quitting	36%	<p><i>Working for such a large organization makes you feel replaceable and that makes if feel safe and secure.</i></p> <p><i>I was anxious about the long-term consequences of not working.</i></p> <p><i>I questioned how long you can stay out of work and still be competitive.</i></p>
5. Proving Oneself	27%	<p><i>I made sure I never gave anyone any excuse to say something bad about me.</i></p> <p><i>I demonstrated a solid track record before having children.</i></p> <p><i>I had to demonstrate my worth and value.</i></p> <p><i>I tried to work harder to prove I could do it.</i></p>

Table 8.

Antecedents of Mothers' Career Decisions

	Procedural (Policies/ FWA)	Procedural (Work/ Evaluation)	Interpersonal (Supervisor)	Individual (Desire to Work)	Change in Career	Current Work Status
1.	+	+/-	+/-	Yes	Job Change	Full-time (Flex)
2.	-	-	-	Yes	Job Change	Full-time
3.	-	+	+/-	Yes	Job Change	Full-time
4.	+/-	-	+/-	Yes	Job Change	Full-time
5.	+	+	+	Yes	Job Change	Part-time (20 hrs)
6.	+	+	+	Yes	Flex Schedule	Full-time (Flex)
7.	+/-	+	+	Mixed	Flex Schedule	Full-time (Flex)
8.	+/-	+	+	Yes	Shift to part-time	Part-time (30 hrs)
9.	+/-	+/-	+	Mixed	Shift to part-time	Part-time (30 hrs)
10.	+/-	-	-	No	Shift to part-time	Part-time (30 hrs)
11.	++	+	+/-	Mixed	Shift to part-time	Full-time (30 hrs)
12.	+/-	+	+/-	Yes	Entrepreneur	Home (contract)
13.	+	-	+/-	Yes	Entrepreneur	Part-time (30 hrs)
14.	-	-	-	Yes	Entrepreneur	Full-time
15.	-	+	-	Mixed	Home	Home
16.	+/-	-	+/-	Yes	Home	Part-time (contract)
17.	+	-	+/-	Mixed	Home	Home
18.	-	+	-	Yes	Home	Home
19.	-	+	-	Yes	Home	Home
20.	+/-	+	+/-	Mixed	Home	Home
21.	-	+	-	Mixed	No Change	Full-time
22.	-	+	+	Yes	No Change	Full-time

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Appendix C: Survey Items

Perceived Supervisor Psychological Contract Breach

Think about each of the following 20 aspects of the job you were working when you returned from maternity leave. Please indicate whether you received more or less than what your supervisor was obliged to provide you.

- 1 = Received much more than promised
- 2 = Received a good deal more than promised
- 3 = Received a little more than promised
- 4 = Received about the same as promised
- 5 = Received a little less than promised
- 6 = Received a good deal less than promised
- 7 = Received much less than promised

Traditional Work Factors

- 1. Money (salary & bonus)
- 2. Training opportunities
- 3. Advancement opportunities
- 4. Career development
- 5. Overall benefits package
- 6. Health care benefits
- 7. Input in decision-making
- 8. Autonomy
- 9. Appropriate challenge in the tasks of my job
- 10. Constructive feedback on job performance

Family Factors

- 1. Support for my family life
- 2. Communication with supervisor
- 3. Family-friendly policies (e.g., leave, onsite daycare, lactation (“mothers”) room)
- 4. Respect from coworkers
- 5. Work that is meaningful
- 6. Flexible work hours
- 7. Reasonable workload
- 8. Flexible work arrangements (e.g., telecommuting, job-sharing)
- 9. Availability of part-time work
- 10. Mentorship (e.g., role models)

Perceived Cause of Breach

Please indicate the single best explanation for why you thought your supervisor failed to fulfill each of the following 20 aspects of the job you were working when you returned to work from maternity leave.

- 1 = My supervisor could have kept his/her promise, but he/she chose not to.
- 2 = A situation beyond my supervisor's control made it impossible for him/her to keep his/her promise.
- 3 = There was an honest misunderstanding between myself and my supervisor regarding what my he/she would provide.
- 4 = I failed to keep my obligations to my supervisor; thus, my supervisor was no longer obligated to keep his/her side of the deal.
- 5 = Not applicable. Fulfilled his/her promise.

Traditional Work Factors

- 1. Money (salary & bonus)
- 2. Training opportunities
- 3. Advancement opportunities
- 4. Career development
- 5. Overall benefits package
- 6. Health care benefits
- 7. Input in decision-making
- 8. Autonomy
- 9. Appropriate challenge in the tasks of my job
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Family Factors

- 1. Support for my family life
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- 4. Respect from coworkers
- 5. Work that is meaningful
- 6. Flexible work hours
- 7. Reasonable workload
- 8. Flexible work arrangements (e.g., telecommuting, job-sharing)
- 9. Availability of part-time work
- 10. Mentorship (e.g., role models)

Interactional Justice

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither Disagree or Agree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

When decisions are made about my job, my supervisor treats me with kindness and consideration.

My supervisor treats me with respect.

My supervisor treats me with dignity.

My supervisor is sensitive to my personal needs

My supervisor deals with me in a truthful manner.

My supervisor shows concern for my rights as an employee.

Concerning decisions made about my job, my supervisor discusses the implications of the decisions with me.

My supervisor offers adequate justification for decisions made about my job.

When making decisions about my job, my supervisor offers explanations that make sense to me.

My supervisor explains very clearly any decision made about my job.

Violation towards Supervisor

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither Disagree or Agree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

I feel like my supervisor has really let me down.

I feel extremely frustrated by how I have been treated by my supervisor.

I feel a great deal of anger toward my supervisor.

Intention to Leave

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither Disagree or Agree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

Intention to Leave the Organization

- I often think about quitting my job.
- I am looking for a new job.
- I feel it is likely I will leave my current job in the year.
- I often question whether to stay at my current job.
- I am looking for a change from my current job.

Intention to Leave the Workforce

- I often think about quitting to stay home.
- I have plans to leave the workforce altogether.
- It is likely that I'll leave the workforce to stay home.

Demographics

1. What is your race?
 - a. Caucasian
 - b. African-American
 - c. Asian
 - d. Native American
 - e. Hispanic
 - f. Mixed
 - g. Other _____
2. What is your age? _____
3. What is your highest level of education?
 - a. Some College
 - b. College
 - c. MA
 - d. MBA
 - e. MD/JD/PhD
4. What is your current marital status?
 - a. Single
 - b. Life Partner
 - c. Married
 - d. Divorced
 - e. Widowed
5. What is your geographic region?
 - a. West Coast
 - b. Southwest
 - c. Northwest
 - d. Mountain
 - e. Midwest
 - f. Southeast
 - g. East Coast
6. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?: My income meets my needs.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

7. How many children do you have? _____
8. What is the age of your youngest child? _____
9. For approximately how long did you take maternity leave? _____
10. For approximately how long have you been working since returning from maternity leave? _____
11. Did you work at your current organization prior to maternity leave?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
12. What is your tenure at your current organization? _____
13. What is your tenure with your current supervisor? _____
14. What is your industry?

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Selected Publications

King, E. B., & Botsford, W. E. (in press). Managing pregnancy disclosures: Understanding and overcoming the challenges of expectant motherhood at work. *Human Resource Management Review*.

King, E. B., & Botsford, W. E.* (2008). New individual and organizational strategies for the reduction of discrimination. *Equal Opportunities International: Professional Insights*, 27, 654-657.

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