Spring 5-2016

A Qualitative Study of Workplace Perceptions by Postpartum Women

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by

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May, 2016

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

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This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

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Lindenwood University, School of Education

Dr. Rhonda Bishop, Dissertation Chair — 5-26-16 Date

Dr. Sherry DeVore, Committee Member — 5-26-16 Date

Dr. Tommy Burnett, Committee Member — 5/26/16 Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

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Acknowledgements

This process has been quite a journey, and I am thankful for everyone who has shared guidance and support. I could not have accomplished this alone. I am eternally grateful for the team of people who provided support for me during this process.

I must first acknowledge and give praise to Dr. Rhonda Bishop, my dissertation committee chair. She continuously provided positive feedback and inspiration. Her motivational skills are second to none, and I would have been lost without her.

Dr. Sherry DeVore, Dr. Julie Williams, and Dr. Kathy Grover each shared editing expertise and words of encouragement. For that, I am eternally grateful. Dr. Tommy Burnett was the first person to ever encourage my continued studies after completing a master's degree. To my mentor and friend, I could not share enough kind words.

The participants in my research made this study possible. Upon hearing their stories, I went from an interested student to a life-long activist. My appreciation and respect can hardly be expressed in words.

Completing a doctoral program is the most humbling endeavor. I would like to thank my classmates and colleagues who helped me maintain my focus and encouraged me to reach the finish line. I would also like to thank, Lindsey Smotherman, who assisted me with my research.

Finally, many thanks to my family who gave me the strength drive to be the person I have become. My mother and late stepfather deserve special thanks for the unconditional support I have always been given—even when life threw curveballs. God has blessed me with more than I could ask for.

Abstract

Working mothers face the challenge of balancing multiple roles while adhering to or rejecting the societal norms associated with those roles. The unique perceptions of the effects motherhood places on the working mother can shed light on the current and best practices in providing support for working women transitioning into working mothers. The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate workplace and relationship perceptions of postpartum women employed in higher education. A qualitative, case study approach was developed and framed with three theoretical perspectives: the theory of work adjustment, role theory, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. To complete this study, 10 subjects were chosen from a Midwestern college based on the age of their children and higher education employment at the time of maternity leave. Results of this study included the emergence of six relevant themes: (a) mothers acting as superwoman, (b) fulfillment as mothers and employees, (c) inconsistency and decentralization, (d), decisions to place jobs on hold versus assigning task completion, (e) level of satisfaction based on job type, (f) strive for self-actualization, and (g) prioritization. The findings of this study were supported by previous research on the topics of work-life balance and need for social and organizational support for new mothers. Perspectives of supervisors, human resource professionals, and working fathers should be further explored in future research.

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Chapter One: Introduction

A feminist can be defined as someone who believes in social, political, and economic equality for the sexes (Sandberg, 2013). Yet, people who believe in equality among genders may not identify themselves as feminists because of the negative stigma attached to the term (Sandberg, 2013). While the idea of equality seems like a given, the fact remains there are differences among men and women which create workplace separation each gender can seek to overcome (Anthony, 2011; Sandberg, 2013).

One way in which men and women are fundamentally different is one gender is capable of childbirth, and the other is not (Jones & Lopez, 2014). Pregnancy and motherhood can automatically create a lack of fairness in the workplace (Anthony, 2011; Baker, 2011; Sandberg, 2013). Although working mothers are faced with situations in the workplace not experienced by their male counterparts, these differences do not mean women should perceive the workplace as unfavorable or unfair (Sandberg, 2013).

In this chapter, the background for a qualitative study of workplace perceptions by postpartum women is presented. The theoretical framework that guided this study is identified, and the significance of this research is made available. Additionally, research questions, assumptions, and limitations, and key terms are listed and described.

Background of the Study

While there is research depicting many aspects of a pregnancy from conception through childbirth and beyond, research in the United States specifically describing a woman's perception upon returning to the workforce after maternity leave is limited (Satyanarayana, Lukose, & Srinivasan, 2011). Physiological experiences of pregnant women are more often studied as opposed to the relationship women have with the

workplace (Satyanarayana et al., 2011). Women may go to great lengths to stay viable in the workplace, while away on maternity leave or caring for young children (Sandberg, 2013). Many employees in the 21st century are expected to take work home with them, but a mother tends to carry more responsibilities as the caregiver and homemaker as well as to provide a second income to her family, or possibly, the sole family income (Anthony, 2011; Sandberg, 2013).

As working mothers are faced with multiple roles after leaving the office, research has indicated women often feel victimized or fearful at work after becoming pregnant, which may create difficulty in reaching a work-life balance (Anthony, 2011; Baker, 2014; Bakst, 2012; Dodson, 2013; Greenhouse, 2014; Keenan, 2014; Kendzior, 2014; Leventhal-Weiner, 2014; Mäkelä, 2012; Sandberg, 2013; Wattis, Standing, & Yerkes, 2013; Williams, Devaux, Fuschetti, & Salmon, 2013). According to a survey conducted by Mäkelä (2012), five working women who participated in the study indicated a direct supervisor began displaying acts of discrimination upon learning the news of the women becoming pregnant. The women in the study were denied training opportunities, were victims of threats, and had to tolerate criticism in regard to their physical appearance (Mäkelä, 2012). How a woman is treated during her pre-, peri-, and post-natal periods, both positive and negative, can impact her desire to return to work and may be critical enough to cause her to explore new job opportunities (Mäkelä, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

In order to understand how a woman's organizational role can change based on personal changes she experiences by becoming a mother, three theories were utilized in this study: role theory, the theory of work adjustment (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck,

2008; Bretz & Judge, 1994), and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954). The theories used represent different, and sometimes opposing, aspects of life (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008; Biddle, 1986; Maslow, 1954). In this study, each theory was intertwined to create a connection between the organization and the employee.

Role theory was used as the catalyst connecting the theory of work adjustment and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Biddle, 1986; Maslow, 1954; Moustakas, 1994). Role theory is the subscription of thought explaining how people hold places in social positions that define the norms and expectations for human behavior (Biddle, 1986). Expectations based on one's role exist for a number of established social positions, among them: women, mothers, and working mothers (Sandberg, 2013). Role theory connects the organization/employee fit with the human need for self-actualization (Maslow, 1954). Motherhood and ideal work performance may be viewed as conflicting roles if work-life balance cannot be achieved (Sandberg, 2013).

Role theorists may argue three separate paradigms to define behavioral expectations and establish roles: social norms, beliefs, or personal preferences (Biddle, 1986). While these criterions are all different sources of role expectations, the belief expectations are formed out of experience and awareness are generally accepted (Biddle, 1986). Organizational role theory is the perception giving attention to multiple role norms one might face in an organization creating opposing expectations or role conflict (Biddle, 1986). Role theory from an organizational perspective ties to the premises of the theory of work adjustment. The premise of the theory of work adjustment is the higher the level of needs met between organization and employee, the higher level of job satisfaction for the employee (Winter, 2014).

The theory of work adjustment, also known as person-environment correspondence theory, was utilized in this study to determine a possible connection between the working mother and the work environment (Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Winter, 2014). First established in 1964, the theory of work adjustment, one of five career development theories, is rooted in the idea continuous adjustments on the part of both the employee and the work environment lend to successful work relations (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008; Bretz & Judge, 1994). Dawis, England, and Lofquist founded the theory of work adjustment in 1964 as a method of explaining the process of finding person-job "fit" (as cited in Bretz & Judge, 1994, p. 294). In this study, working mothers were asked to share perceptions of their work environments from the time pregnancy was announced at work through the time of returning to work after childbirth to evaluate job satisfaction based on met or unmet workplace needs (Maslow, 1954; Winter, 2014).

In order for an employee to feel satisfied at work, as described in the theory of work adjustment, the employee's abilities or job skills must closely match the requirements of the employee's job (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Winter, 2014). According to Bretz and Judge (1994), the theory of work adjustment was initially developed as a tool to study how well an employee meets the needs of his/her occupation and vice versa, but the theory of work adjustment can also be applied to the organizational setting. The organizational setting or work environment was the focus of this study.

To further support the emotional and physical changes and experiences a mother feels in all her environments, but specifically in her personal life, Maslow's (1954)

hierarchy of needs is used to explain how a person achieves his or her highest potential. Maslow described a five-tiered pyramid depicting one's rise from basic physiological needs, such as food and bodily comfort, to the highest level of self-fulfillment (McLeod, 2014). On the road to self-actualization, a person must satisfy needs on lower levels before moving up the pyramid (Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014; Taormina & Gao, 2013). Motivation drives humans from one level to the next (McLeod, 2014; Taormina & Gao, 2013). Employment needs often come from the employer's position as opposed to that of the employee, limiting an employee's job satisfaction (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008) and reducing the ability to reach higher levels of life satisfaction (Taormina & Gao, 2013).

Each of these theoretical positions addresses a valuable part of a mother's life (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008; Biddle, 1986; Maslow, 1954). First, the theory of work adjustment considers any given job requires a specific set of skills and uses specific measurements and re-enforcers to promote those skills (Winter, 2014). While the knowledge to do the job is important, Maslow's hierarchy of needs addresses the assumption if basic needs are not met; in this case, relationships in the workplace and the knowledge caregiving is a role now associated with a working mother, the fit of the workplace and the work conducted can suffer (McLeod, 2014). Role theory is an important tool in the convergence of the theory of work adjustment and Maslow's work because the premise, according to Biddle (1986), is it is important to know and understand a person's role and how it can be useful in predicting and assuming one's pre-determined actions based on the stereotypes subsequently determined to fit into that role. The theory of work adjustment adheres to the notion job satisfaction is created when

employee skills match those required at work (Winter, 2014). The workplace environment cannot be addressed based on skills and qualifications alone (Biddle, 1986). A visual of the connecting theoretical frameworks is presented in Figure 1.

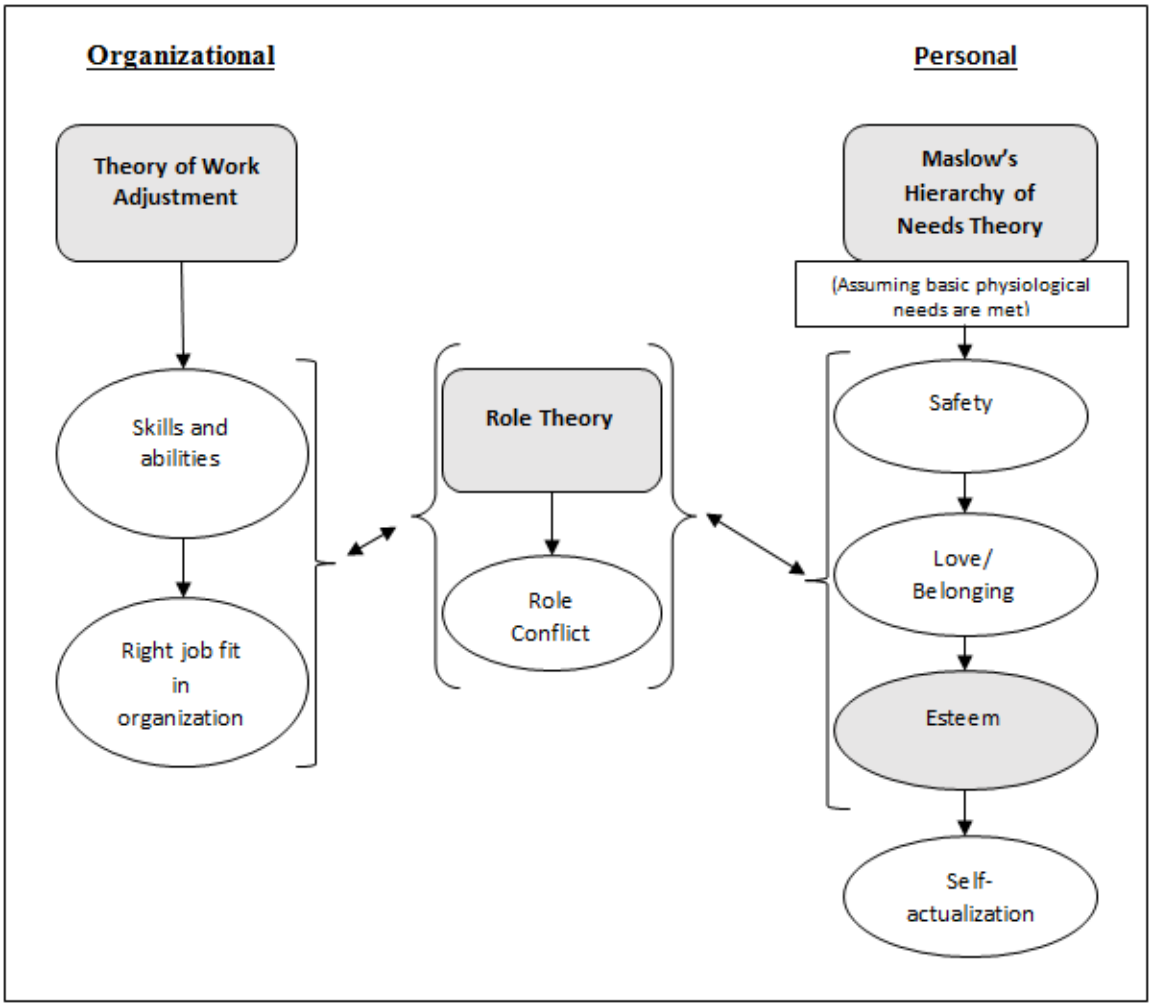

Figure 1. Interrelationship between Theory of Work Adjustment (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Winter, 2014), Role Theory (Biddle, 1986), and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Research has shown a female employee will likely see diminished earning potential should she enter into motherhood (Baker, 2011; Pregnancy and Return to Work Discrimination, 2014; Williams et al., 2013). Multiple studies from the United Kingdom,

United States, Australia, and Germany were cited in Baker (2011) as evidence career earning potential of a female employee, should she enter into motherhood, could decrease by up to 12% in some cases. Although the data encompasses both mothers who have and who have not taken maternity leave, Baker's (2011) research revealed taking maternity leave can have a major impact on future wages for mothers.

Unfortunately, providing higher wages for women does not necessarily mean a woman will find more fulfillment at work (Anthony, 2011; Mäkelä, 2012; Sandberg, 2013; Sieger &Wiese, 2011). There are many factors that go into job satisfaction, such as financial gain, work-life balance, and achievement (Anthony, 2011; Mäkelä, 2012; Sandberg, 2013; Sieger &Wiese, 2011). Women, as well as other employees, are often motivated by more than monetary gain (Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). For working mothers, these factors are less likely to be shared with the rest of the workforce (Sandberg, 2013). Women admit to often feeling victimized at work after becoming pregnant (Mäkelä, 2012). As previously noted, Mäkelä's (2012) study exposed women can be faced with discriminatory practices including denial of training opportunities, threats, and criticism of physical appearance. Discriminatory treatment affects the way a woman feels when returning to work and, in some cases, may become a motivator to explore new job opportunities (Coulson, Skouteris, & Dissanayake, 2012; Mäkelä, 2012).

As women make up more than half the population of the United States and represent a growing percentage of the workforce (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016), an argument can be made for a shift in workforce culture (Anthony, 2011). Pregnant employees and working mothers may seek special accommodations at work, but women

can still be expected to perform and remain assets to their organizations (Bakst, 2012; Mäkelä, 2012; Williams et al., 2013). This study was conducted in an attempt to determine the perceived concerns from the employee perspective.

Purpose of the Study

While research depicting many biological changes women experience during pregnancy and early motherhood exists, research describing a woman's perceptions upon returning to the workforce after maternity leave was proven to be less readily available during the course of this study (Satyanarayana et al., 2011). Working mothers will see hurdles in the workplace that males and non-mothers will be exempt from experiencing (Sandberg, 2013). Because these experiences are unique to mothers, documenting their perceptions can provide insight, which may benefit everyone in the workplace. Understanding a woman's perceptions of her workplace after returning from maternity leave may help improve an employer's responsiveness to her needs. This study could potentially lead to programs and training that may assist in supporting working mothers in assimilating into the workforce after maternity leave.

A pregnant employee or a mother returning to work may have little to no control over her work environment (Anthony, 2011; Mäkelä, 2012; Seiger & Wiese, 2011; Williams et al., 2013). There may be work policies not intended to be pregnancy-friendly, because the general population at work does not require any special provisions (Williams et al., 2013). Work policies aside, pregnant employees and working mothers may encounter situations with coworkers and supervisors that can be perceived as discriminatory in nature because of the circumstances which place the employees in different classifications (Mäkelä, 2012; Pregnancy and Return to Work Discrimination,

2014). Negative situations at work can decrease job satisfaction for these women, which could also lead to diminished performance potential (Anthony, 2011; Mäkelä, 2012; Seiger & Wiese, 2011).

Research questions. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do women who work in higher education perceive their job performance after they return to work from maternity leave as compared to their perception of job performance prior to maternity leave?

2. How do women in higher education perceive treatment toward them from coworkers and superiors after maternity leave as compared to before maternity leave?

3. To what extent does the gender of a woman's supervisor change her perceptions of her job performance prior to maternity leave as well as upon returning to work post-maternity leave, if at all?

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Feminism. Someone who believes in social, political, and economic equality for the sexes (Sandberg, 2013).

Fit. A state of congruence between individual and environmental characteristics (Bretz & Judge, 1994).

Flex time. Flexibility in work schedules (Sandberg, 2013).

Maternal wall bias. A bias that exists between mothers and non-mothers (Williams et al., 2013)

Person-job fit. A fit between the abilities of a person and the demands of the job, or between the desires of a person and the attributes of a job (Yi-Chang et al., 2014).

Sex discrimination. Treating someone (an applicant or employee) unfavorably because of that person's sex (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Social norm. A standard shared by members of a social group (Biddle, 1986).

Wage penalties. Lower future wage growth (Baker, 2011).

Limitations and Assumptions

The following limitations were identified in this study:

1. The sample population of this study was bound by a population pool within one institution. The lack of diversity among participants could mean the results of this study are not applicable on a broader spectrum (Creswell, 2013).

2. Since participants who agreed to be a part of the study were volunteers, they may not represent the full population (Creswell, 2013).

3. Qualitative studies may include researcher bias. In this study, steps were taken, such as the use of an additional researcher to provide multiple reviews of data, to minimize the impact of researcher bias throughout the study and during data analysis (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2011).

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. The responses of the participants were offered honestly and without bias (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2011).

Summary

Women can often be seen working toward equality in all facets of life (United States Equal Opportunity Commission, 2015). When a person typically spends 40 hours or more at work any given week, workplace accommodations can be made to reduce or eliminate employee discomfort (Bakst, 2012; Mäkelä, 2012; Williams et al., 2013; United

States Equal Opportunity Commission, 2015). This study was created to focus on workplace perceptions of working mothers that could help create a more relaxed work environment and happier employees.

In this chapter, an outline of the rationale behind this study was provided. An introduction to the topic of perceptions of working mothers and soon-to-be-mothers was discussed with the inclusion of a background and history of the challenges and limitations women face in the workplace. Three separate but interlocking theories were identified as the theoretical framework for this study to guide the research and data analysis to seek and cultivate answers for the research questions. Additionally, key terms, limitations, and assumptions were listed.

Chapter Two consists of a review of literature found to be relevant to the research topic of this study. The chapter is divided into four sections including a deeper explanation of the theoretical framework for this study, an examination of the legal foundations of this topic, a review of the history and current state of women in the workplace, and factors pertaining to job satisfaction of mothers in the workforce.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Becoming a mother is a major life changing event (Elyada & Mizrahi, 2015; Sandberg, 2013). Learning how to adapt to motherhood on top of previously held societal roles can create conflict for many women (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008; Sandberg, 2013). Existing research on motherhood is lacking in areas of mental health as a new parent in favor of biological topics (Satyanarayana et al., 2011). While exploration of biological changes during pregnancy and early stages of motherhood are prevalent, vital changes also occur in a woman's psyche when she becomes a mother, while maintaining previously acquired roles, such as that of employee (Sandberg, 2013). Because of the dissension created when a woman simultaneously performs the roles of motherhood and employee, many women make the choice to pursue one role or the other to avoid this discord altogether (Sandberg, 2013).

This study was intended to shed light on how dual roles of employee and motherhood are interconnected with each other and how becoming a parent influences the perception of the workplace in regard to relationships and abilities. To understand how the role of a working mother has evolved throughout the past century, it is crucial to review both legal and personal aspects of the workplace to determine changes in role expectations (Biddle, 1986). Societal beliefs and personal pressures both play into the perceptions women have of themselves and their relationship with the workplace as a person pursing the highest level of self-satisfaction (Biddle, 1986; Maslow, 1954; Sandberg, 2013). The literature reviewed in the following section is broken into four major classifications: theoretical framework, legal foundations, women in the workplace, and job satisfaction.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by three theories to describe the connection between the perceptions and needs of mothers in a higher education setting and the obligations of higher education institution as an employer; the theory of work adjustment, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and role theory (Biddle, 1986; Maslow, 1954; Moustakas, 1994) were used simultaneously to describe the situations both mothers and institutions experience. Throughout the course of this study, literature and personal interviews of mothers in higher education were utilized to garner an understanding of how these three theories are interrelated in a mother's pursuit of job satisfaction. Role theory served as a connecting piece between the theory of work adjustment and Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Societal roles are directed by a set of expectations and norms (Biddle, 1986). However, when expectations and norms of an individual holding multiple roles do not match, a conflict occurs (Biddle, 1986). For working mothers, meeting the needs of family and children, while satisfying the commitments of employers, can create a conflict requiring continual adjustments for all parties involved: the employer, the employee, and the support system of the working mother (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008; Sandberg, 2013). Learning to juggle the needs and responsibilities associated with the roles of motherhood and the workplace creates obstacles for women yearning to develop job satisfaction and to personally achieve self-actualization (Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014). Because of the conflict which may arise from playing multiple roles, women often give up satisfaction in one role to achieve satisfaction in another, rather than utilizing available resources and seeking accommodations at home and at work to play multiple roles equally well (Biddle, 1986; Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

The theory of work adjustment. The theory of work adjustment, introduced by Dawis, England, and Lofquist (as cited in Bretz & Judge, 1994), provided one component of the theoretical framework for this study. Within this theory, the belief is held that "(a) the person looks for work organizations and environments that match his/her requirements in terms of needs, and (b) environment in turn looks for the individuals who have the capabilities to meet the requirements of the organization" (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008, p. 116). The theory of work adjustment depicts relationships between an employee and his/her organization in terms of job satisfaction and finding a match between the needs of an employer and the needs of employees (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008). The theory of work adjustment is best described as a continuous process of career adjustments and accommodations (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008).

By using the theory of work adjustment as a premise, a pregnant woman might face greater obstacles in adjusting to work conditions before and after maternity leave as opposed to an employee who never faces this event (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008; Sandberg, 2013). Working mothers faced with time constraints associated with their life outside of work could view the work environment in a new way, requiring added accommodations that may not be needed for non-parents or non-mothers (Bakst, 2012; Mäkelä, 2012; Williams et al., 2013). The process of meeting job satisfaction from the viewpoints of mothers and meeting employer needs involves effort from both sides (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Achieving self-actualization, or the highest form of personal satisfaction with oneself, first entails meeting essential needs to sustain life (Maslow, 1954). Maslow's hierarchy of needs consists of physiological needs at the

bottom of the needs pyramid, safety needs at the second level of the needs pyramid, social needs on the third level of the needs pyramid, esteem needs on the fourth level of the needs pyramid, and self-actualization at the peak of the needs pyramid (Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014). As an individual meets needs at one level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, motivation can drive needs to the next level on the pyramid (McLeod, 2014; Taormina & Gao, 2013). It is possible for an individual to never achieve self-actualization as a result of life experiences (McLeod, 2014). Only 1% of people reach the pinnacle of the pyramid (McLeod, 2014). Additionally, reaching a higher level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs does not guarantee one will not drop back down to a lower pyramid level (Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014).

Since Maslow first developed the hierarchy of needs model, the theory has been adapted and modified multiple times (McLeod, 2014; Sumerlin & Bundrick, 2000). Although the theory has been modified, it has stayed mostly intact and has continually been supported (McLeod, 2014; Sumerlin & Bundrick, 2000). Newer versions of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see Figure 2) include as many as three additional needs stages; transcendence, aesthetic, and cognitive; to make a total of eight layers from the bottom of the pyramid to the top (McLeod, 2014). Two of the added levels of needs, cognitive and aesthetic needs, fall between social needs and self-actualization (McLeod, 2014). The final addition, transcendence needs, was added to become the new peak of the pyramid (McLeod, 2014).

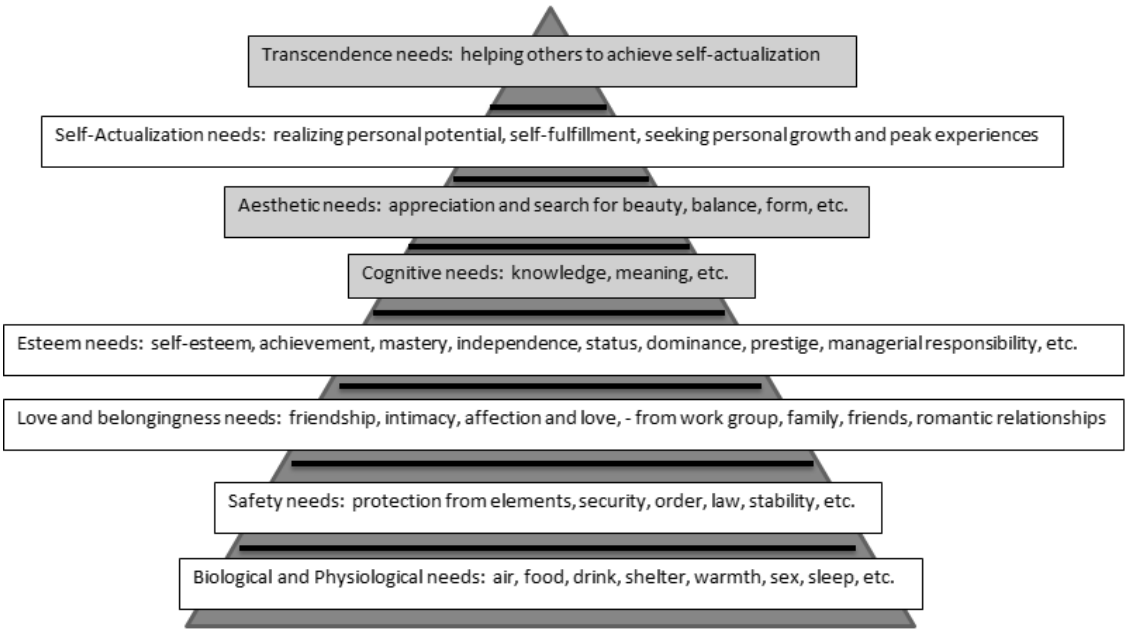

Figure 2. Expanded version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2014)

In order to achieve self-actualization, a mother may need to feel satisfied in every role she holds (Maslow; 1954; McLeod; 2014). As McLeod (2014) noted, life events have the ability to cause a person to move in either an upward or downward direction on the hierarchy. Becoming a mother is a life-changing event, and complications in and out of the workplace could create reason for fluctuation in life satisfaction and the path to self-actualization (McLeod, 2014). Motherhood also means added roles in which to seek self-actualization, and the workplace often operates from the perspective of the employer driving the employee to meet the needs of the job as opposed to the job fulfilling the employee's needs (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008). However, promotional opportunities at work are one way an employer can aid in meeting the needs of the employee (Sandberg, 2013).

Role theory. As women struggle to live up to the ideals of various social norms, role theory helps to explain the perceived expectations for roles both inside the home and

at the office (Biddle, 1986). Working mothers who seek a balanced lifestyle are subject to the roles of women, mothers, and employees; although, these roles often conflict with one another (Sandberg, 2013). In role theory, the behaviors and beliefs of individuals are given definitions based on the roles those individuals play in society (Biddle, 1986). However, as previously stated, one individual person often plays multiple roles, and lines become blurred as to how the person should act and how to transition from one role to the next or play multiple roles at once (Sandberg, 2013).

Role theory bridges the theory of work adjustment and Maslow's hierarchy of needs to show the connection between the perceptions and needs of the workplace to the perceptions and needs of working mothers in this study. According to role theory, personal preference, social norms, and beliefs all contribute to expectations of the individual (Biddle, 1986). Because mothers often find themselves as primary caregivers to their children and daily home maintenance, simultaneously meeting expectations of roles in the workplace and roles at home can be quite difficult (Sandberg, 2013). When employees play multiple roles at work, potential conflicts of the norms associated with roles at work are further explained by organizational role theory (Biddle, 1986).

Legal Foundations

As the workplace in the United States has changed to include an increasing number of women, federal legislation has also evolved to provide protections and increased equality (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990; Anthony, 2011; Franklin, 2012; U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). Higher education is no exception to this workplace evolution; however, policies to provide equality for women in higher education have been slower to change (Anthony, 2011). In many instances, higher

education institutions throughout the country have no formal leave policy for faculty members (Anthony, 2011), which may be in violation of federal laws. Women may look to several federal laws and policies to reverse the trends of workplace inequity (Anthony, 2011; Franklin, 2012; U.S. Department of Labor, 2016).

Historically, women in the workplace have been at a legal disadvantage based on perceptions of societal norms and perceptions of female capabilities (Anthony, 2011; Franklin, 2012; Williams et al., 2013). Over the past several decades, a number of mandates and legislating bodies have been put into place in an attempt to eliminate this discrepancy; although, the result has only been a reduction in inequality for women (Anthony, 2011; Franklin, 2012; Williams et al., 2013). According to Anthony (2011) and Williams et al. (2013), these major laws and legislating bodies include Title IX, Title VII Amendment to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Even with advancements noted in regard to the aforementioned legislation, according to Williams et al. (2013), there are countless examples of women facing negative ramifications and perceptions in the workplace upon disclosing a pregnancy to their employers. Williams et al. (2013) showcased four instances where female associates lost their jobs, presumably because their employers were unwilling to provide reasonable accommodations during the employees' pregnancies. Documentation included instances such as doctor's requests being denied (Williams et al., 2013). One extreme case made note of an employer offering his female employee a wastebasket to

vomit in rather than allowing additional restroom breaks (Williams et al., 2013). While these cases all occurred in the private business sector, situations are often mirrored, and even magnified, in the higher education setting (Anthony, 2011).

The fear of adverse action may cause a disconnect that reduces the likelihood for an employee to seek workplace accommodations (Anthony, 2011; Baker, 2014; Keenan, 2014; Kendzior, 2014; Leventhal-Weiner, 2014; Mäkelä, 2012). For example, Anthony (2011) reported a new faculty member spent winter break preparing for an upcoming job review rather than taking time off. While the examples mentioned previously are extreme, there are many cases where women may experience no negative impact at work during or after pregnancy, showing the breadth of the spectrum of how having children can impact work experiences (Mäkelä, 2012).

The existence of adverse action in regard to leave request is real (Williams et al., 2013). In HE, fear of adverse action is so prevalent that *The Chronicle of Higher Education* released a multi-part series on the topic in the summer of 2014 (Baker, 2014; Keenan, 2014; Kendzior, 2014; Leventhal-Weiner, 2014). The authors of the articles made note of their experiences and how becoming pregnant impacted their lives in academia (Baker, 2014; Keenan, 2014; Kendzior, 2014; Leventhal-Weiner, 2014). Part one of the series focused on one of the authors, a Ph.D. student, who was asked by a fellow classmate if she sought permission from her advisor to become pregnant (Kendzior, 2014). Since male employees cannot physically bear a child, this is one example of a situation men will never encounter, and this breach has become a legal obstacle (Williams et al., 2013). A woman receiving this type of treatment may feel

having a child is a threat to her career or her relationships at work (Baker, 2014; Keenan, 2014; Kendzior, 2014; Leventhal-Weiner, 2014).

Title IX. One of the largest pieces of federal legislation enacted to provide discrimination protection for women is Title IX (Anthony, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Title IX was written so, "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, Title IX and Sex Discrimination, para. 2). Established in 1972, Title IX was the first piece of federal legislation to specifically extend this protection in public education to include higher education institutions and is overseen by the United States Department of Education (Anthony, 2011). Federal legislation has not eradicated the concern (Anthony, 2011). Sex discrimination still exists on public college campuses across the United States (Anthony, 2011).

As Title IX has been tested in the legal system throughout the past four decades, several landmark cases have improved its significance (Essex, 2014; Williams et al., 2013). Title IX encompasses all public education, but the cases of *North Haven Board of Education et al. v. Bell, Secretary of Education et al.* and *Grove City College et al. v. Bell, Secretary of Education et al.* broke ground by specifically extending protections to college employees and federally funded college programs (Essex, 2014). In *North Haven Board of Education et al. v. Bell*, Title IX sex discrimination protection was extended to include employment (Essex, 2014). *Grove City College et al. v. Bell* was the initial case to challenge Title IX compliance in private institutions (Essex, 2014). Because students at Grove City College accepted federal grants, the U.S. Department of Education ruled

Grove City College must comply with Title IX regulations to maintain federal grant funding for students (Essex, 2014). Each of these court cases increased the understanding and scope of Title IX regulations (Essex, 2014). Title IX has now become a commonly recognized piece of legislation regarding gender equality (Anthony, 2011; Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, 2015).

Title VII takes the provisions from Title IX a step further (Anthony, 2011; The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2015). If discrimination is found to exist, this piece of legislation can allow the offended party to collect compensatory damages, back pay, punitive damages, and job reinstatement as remedy (The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2015). Unlawful employment practices under the amendment include discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (Title VII, 1964). As with Title IX, pregnancy is not listed as a protected class; however, "sex" is once again listed as a class requiring special consideration (Title VII, 1964).

Americans with Disabilities Act. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is one of the largest and most controversial pieces of legislation which did not initially protect expectant mothers since pregnant women are not explicitly listed as a protected class under the Americans with Disabilities Act (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990; Williams et al., 2013). This law was originally designed to prohibit discrimination toward persons with disabilities, and pregnancy does not meet the criteria set forth for qualification as a disability (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990; Williams et al., 2013). However, in 2008, amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act protected

many conditions pregnant women experienced because the changes to the act made the cause of an impairment irrelevant (Williams et al., 2013).

To comply with the amended Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) requirements, an organization must provide reasonable accommodations to those with disabilities as long as these accommodations do not create an undue hardship for the organization (Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, 2016). For a pregnant woman, workplace accommodations may include reducing physical lifting requirements, allowing for a flexible schedule to accommodate illness and doctor appointments, allowing additional restroom breaks, etc. (Williams et al., 2013). Under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, reasonable accommodations were extended to cover conditions of pregnant women; although, the pregnancy does not meet the requirements of a disability because pregnancy does constitute a major life change (Williams et al., 2013).

Pregnancy Discrimination Act. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, a portion of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, is the first piece of legislation to give pregnancy discrimination the classification and legal status of sex discrimination (Anthony, 2011). With the passing of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, employer responsibilities became explicitly detailed (Greenhouse, 2014). Employers who brought adverse action upon employees for medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth became subject to discrimination charges (Anthony, 2011; Greenhouse, 2014). The Pregnancy Discrimination Act entitled women the right to have a life outside of work (Anthony, 2011).

In higher education, support of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act has continued to see opposition (Anthony, 2011; Greenhouse, 2014). Anthony (2011) reported almost 35% of United States universities hold unlawful policies regarding parental leave. Additionally, policies may come from different sources throughout an institution (Anthony, 2011). An official leave policy may be centralized, providing an equal benefit for all university or college employees, or policies may be decentralized, allowing variation from one department to another (Anthony, 2011).

Family Medical Leave Act. The Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) was written to allow eligible employees to take family health-related absences from work, paid or unpaid, without fear of losing their jobs or facing adverse action by employers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). However, as noted in the FMLA overview, employees must be eligible for FMLA in order to take advantage of this entitlement (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). An employer must have a minimum of 50 employees to be subject to FMLA requirements, and employees requesting FMLA must meet minimum employment length requirements (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016).

With the enforcement by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, typical disability classification standards have been redefined to include limitations which are characteristic of pregnant women but can still be seen in other areas of the population (Anthony, 2011; Franklin, 2012; Greenhouse; Williams et al., 2013). The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission has become the main government entity responsible for helping disadvantaged employees in overcoming obstacles in the workplace (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964). As previously stated, historically, the work environment has posed many obstacles for women (Anthony,

2011). Perceptions of women and motherhood created a stigma that still exists after decades of legislation (Williams et al., 2013). Legislation does not guarantee the changing of mindset (Anthony, 2011; Williams et al., 2013).

Other types of family additions such as adoption, fostering, and surrogacy may create further issues in terms of parental leave (Davis, 2014; Dobbs, 2013; Enquist, 2012). The FMLA does cover children who are under direct care of the employee even if not biologically related (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). Intermittent leave may be necessary for child placement, bonding, or supporting children with medical issues, but employer consent may be needed in cases of non-biological children (Davis, 2013; U.S. Department of Labor, 2016).

Women in the Workplace

Women have been affronted with a number of chronicled obstacles to gender equity in the workplace (Williams et al., 2013). Among these are perceptions of pregnancy and motherhood, interpretation of laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, and maternal wall bias (Williams et al., 2013). According to Anthony (2011), in the 1900s, an "ideal worker" (p. 2) was a man without obligations outside of work, a stigma that has followed women into the 21st century since many workplace policies still favor men. While man has been labeled the ideal worker, women are often expected to be a caregiver if she makes the choice to become a mother, while the role motherhood is often ignored in the workplace (Anthony, 2011; Williams, 2012).

A recently growing threat to gender equity is the increased attention given to various other social rights (Cotter, Hermsen, & Vanneman, 2011). The increased attention being given to a plethora of societal inequities such as racial and sexual

orientation discrimination has reduced advancement efforts for gender equity (Cotter et al., 2011). In higher education, it is more likely to find a working man with a spouse who remains at home, whereas a woman working in higher education will more likely be part of a two-income household (Anthony, 2011). Barriers such as societal views on gender roles and decreased consideration for women's issues can lead to women feeling pressure to choose between motherhood and careers outside of the home (Anthony, 2011).

When compared to other countries, the United States is often less progressive in terms of standard maternity leave offerings (Ray, Gornick, & Schmitt, 2009; Seiger & Wiese, 2011). The United States was rated next to last in terms of job-protected maternity leave out of 21 wealthy countries studied by the Center for Economic and Policy Research and was listed as only one of two countries studied where paid parental leave is not provided (Ray et al., 2009). While the FMLA guarantees up to 12 weeks of maternity leave in the United States, it is not unheard of for other countries to offer up to a year (Ray et al., 2009; Seiger & Wiese, 2011). However, as with the FMLA, mothers on maternity leave in other countries may not receive compensation, while away from the workplace (Ray et al., 2009; Seiger & Wiese, 2011). Additionally, social convention often dictates women, who are viewed as primary caregivers and less ambitious in the workplace (McFeatters, 2014; Sandberg, 2013), be forced to maintain established gender roles at work in the presence dysfunctional parental leave policies or the absence of parental leave policies entirely (Ray et al., 2009).

Although some type of maternity leave is often a benefit for working women through the FMLA or other employer support, fear of negative perceptions from peers may limit a woman's desire to utilize maternity leave (Baker, 2014; Keenan, 2014;

Kendzior, 2014; Leventhal-Weiner, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). Sources of stereotypical perceptions of pregnancy and motherhood can come from both inside and outside the workplace (Anthony, 2011; Coulson et al., 2012; Sandberg, 2013; Seiger & Wiese, 2011; Weber, 2013). Women may also face negative feedback or discrimination based on their "image" while pregnant (Mäkelä, 2012, p. 679). This may include unsolicited comments about a woman's weight, clothing, or overall appearance (Mäkelä, 2012).

According to Seiger and Wiese (2011), American working mothers typically spend fewer days on maternity leave than working mothers in other countries. At the same time, new mothers often feel pressure to spend more time on work related projects during maternity leave, which can lead to the need to choose between being fully committed to being a mother versus working (Simon, 2011). Although continuing to work while on maternity leave is not uncommon, fewer hours away from work may not equate to equality among peers in the workplace (Sandberg, 2013; Simon, 2011).

Not only must working mothers compete against men in the workplace, they must compete with non-mothers, a phenomenon known as the maternal wall bias (Simon, 2011). When compared to non-mothers, working moms earn an average of $11,000 less per year (Simon, 2011). The U.S. Department of Labor (2016) reported average women in the workforce brought home earnings comparable to approximately 82% of the amount of salary male workers brought home, race not included. Cotter et al. (2011) reported higher earnings by men could mean fewer women, particularly married women, are working because the second income is not necessary. Single mothers have been the exception to this theory (Cotter et al., 2011). Along with lower salaries, working mothers, held to higher punctuality standards, are 79% less likely to be hired, and are

50% less likely to be promoted than non-mothers (Simon, 2011). These numbers show working mothers are burdened with keeping up with men as well as non-mothers in the workplace (Simon, 2011).

As previously noted, women often create obstacles for themselves; however, female supervisors also have a negative impact on the careers of subordinates (Maume, 2011). Of employees supervised by females, men have reported receiving more support in their careers and higher compensation than women (Maume, 2011; Murphy, 2015). More women than men prefer male supervisors over female supervisors, and female supervisors are more likely to hire men than women (Murphy, 2015). Female supervisor biases toward men are often attributed to same-sex tension existing more commonly among women in the workplace rather than promotion and encouragement, which is less consistent with feminism (Murphy, 2015).

Feminism is a term new to the American culture in the 1800s and aided in the transformation of the role of women in society (Cotter et al., 2011). Women's suffrage was a key issue to spark the first wave of feminist activism, but the feminist impact on motherhood is unclear due to differing parenting styles and levels of emersion in the feminist movement (Cotter et al., 2011; Forcey, 1999). However, the turn of the 19th proved protection for mothers was a topic of conversation on at least one continent (Parsons, 1917). In Europe, maternity insurance was introduced as a way of providing financial protection for women (Parsons, 1917). Linda Forcey's (1999) review of three different books supported the argument there was more than one way to describe the relationship between feminism and motherhood. Although feminist ideals were a

growing trend in the 1960s through the 1980s, motherhood may be one of the major obstacles to the feminist movement in more recent years (Cotter et al., 2011).

Attitudes toward gender roles were more liberal during the peak of the feminist era in part because of women receiving degrees beyond secondary education (Cotter et al., 2011). While the feminist movement grew and evolved and attitudes toward societal roles of women changed, the women's rights effort faced increased negative publicity in its relationship to women as mothers (Forcey, 1999). However, in her review of *Mothering Conceived,* by Lauri Umansky, Forcey (1999) countered the idea feminism is a threat to motherhood, while defending the positive relationship between feminism and motherhood. Women who are high achievers are often viewed as unlikable (Sandberg, 2013). While women fought to expand their roles outside of the home, they also fought the negative stigma of being seen as less interested in becoming mothers and were labeled baby-haters (Forcey, 1999).

Although *Mothering Conceived,* reflected a positive correlation between feminism and motherhood, in her reviews of *The Politics of Motherhood; Activist Voices from Left to Right* and *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood,* Forcey (1999) painted the relationship between feminism and motherhood in a less encouraging light. The perspective in the former was that of placing feminism and motherhood on opposing sides, where the higher emphasis went to the role of activism (Forcey, 1999). According to Forcey (1999), Hays reinforced the premise the role of the nurturer, unfairly, was placed on the mother, while the father was responsible for the financial support of the family. While feminist mothers were still dubbed the nurturer in the early years of the second feminist wave, mothers during that era struggled between acting as a selfless

enabler and taking a hands-off approach in child rearing (Forcey, 1999). In recent decades, it has become more acceptable for mothers to take a backseat to the pursuit of female advancement in favor of being the type of mother who shows immense support for her children rather than herself (Cotter et al., 2011).

In the 1940s, the American labor force saw a large increase of females to accommodate the diminished number of male workers who had joined the armed forces due to World War II (WWII) (Cameron, 2013; Rosie the LGBT Riveter, 2014). Many of these women who had joined the workforce participated in traditionally male-dominate roles (Cameron, 2013). The United States government creation of "Rosie the Riveter," an illustrated image of a woman with her arm flexed and the headline, "We can do it!" became a symbol for the newfound representation of American women in the labor force (Cameron, 2013, Rosie the LGBT Riveter, 2014).

Rosie was created to help ease the transition of women in the workforce by creating a societal shift in norms related to the role of females; however, the artwork also created controversy because the concept of working women was so difficult to grasp (Cameron, 2013; Rosie the LGBT Riveter, 2014). The use of Rosie as a symbol for working women also created question regarding femininity versus masculinity and helped Rosie become a symbol for the LGBT community, lesbians in particular (Rosie the LGBT Riveter, 2014). Although, the symbolism of Rosie the Riveter was most prevalent during WWII, she has remained a symbol of gender equality (Rosie the LGBT Riveter, 2014).

The second wave of the feminist movement began in the early 1960s with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, a book questioning the traditional

societal expectations and limitations of women (Modern Feminism, 2014). Shortly following Friedan's publication, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was introduced, and the National Organization for Women (NOW) was formed (Modern Feminism, 2014). Within the following decade, campaigns for female advancement had become more generally accepted in American popular culture (Franklin, 2012). Flight stewardesses joined in the advocacy for mothers in the airline industry in 1970 by going on strike, generating slogans such as "Storks can fly. Why can't mothers?" and "We want our babies and our wings!" (Franklin, 2012, p. 1361). These women on strike increased awareness and activism for the feminist movement and pushed for additional social change (Franklin, 2012).

Feminism in the 1970s saw a transition from calculated activism such as the female strikes in the airline industry to mainstream culture that continued on through the 20th Century (Gerhard, 2011). Although the rise of feminism in the United States had begun to lose steam, acceptance of feminism steadily increased between the 1970s and mid-1990s (Cotter et al., 2011). The feminist movement spread to mean more than just employment rights (Cotter et al., 2011; Gerhard, 2011; Salper, 2011).

The feminism platform of the 1970s led to new means of personal expression for women (Gerhard, 2011; Salper, 2011). The nation's first Women's Studies program was founded at San Diego State University during this time of transition, creating a greater awareness of feminism and bridging the gap between the nation's political environment and the academic understanding of gender equality (Salper, 2011). The program, comprised of seven components, provided support for women, mothers, and future mothers as well as advancing the research on the topic of women's studies (Salper, 2011).

One objective in implementing the Women's Studies program was to accelerate the spread of the feminist movement onto a national scale (Salper, 2011). As feministic ideals became less taboo and women began practicing additional freedom of expression, the female body became a symbol of the feminism era (Gerhard, 2011). Many women rejected and turned away from common social conventions such as wearing makeup and removing body hair (Gerhard, 2011). The social norm of physically manipulative one's appearance to promote attractiveness was no longer viewed as necessary in the 1970s era of feminism (Gerhard, 2011).

More recently, feminism has evolved to develop a greater opposition to previously held religious and social beliefs regarding women, and the internet has aided in the spread of this opposition (Kasana, 2014; Messina-Dysert, 2015). The internet and social media platforms have broken barriers to women wishing to share their experiences, while supporting and empowering one another (Kasana, 2014; Messina-Dysert, 2015). With the internet comes the ability to communicate on a global stage, making personal connections possible and giving a voice to women who have traditionally been silenced as dictated by previous cultural norms (Messina-Dysert, 2015). Social media has also created opportunities for women to become activists for equality among gender, race, and religion (Kasana, 2014; Messina-Dysert, 2015).

As opinions or plans become publicly announced, awareness of those thoughts can easily be spread by any person, whose followers may then also share those ideas on social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter (Kasana, 2014; Messina-Dysert, 2015). Because of technology, more women are able to research and follow trending ideas that can be shared online in an effort to reach a larger audience to fight for social

and political advancement for women (Kasana, 2014). While internet access is not available to everyone, technology has been a major catalyst in the current trends in feminism (Messina-Dysert, 2015).

In the education industry, the academic calendar is an obstacle of working mothers because school officials, wishing to deliver a high-quality, consistent product to students, attempt to avoid classroom disruptions, such as teachers taking maternity leave in the middle of the semester (Anthony, 2011; Leventhal-Weiner, 2014). Some consider it a career killer to have children while employed in higher education because motherhood is perceived as a lack of commitment to the job (Baker, 2014). However, there are higher education institutions where family-friendly approaches to maternity leave are practiced. These practices are discussed in later in this chapter.

Aside from external obstacles, women are often times creating their own obstacles in the workplace (Sandberg, 2013; Wattis et al., 2013). Sandberg (2013) shared a variety of reasons why women often hold themselves back in the workplace, and being a mother as well as the anticipation of motherhood are intrinsic hurdles many women face. It is possible for a woman to begin making plans for a future family before she has even experienced her first pregnancy (Sandberg, 2013). Many women allow the fear of not being able to balance work and family life prevent them from seeking promotions or additional opportunities in the workplace (Sandberg, 2013). Women, as opposed to men, are more likely to underestimate their capabilities, keep their suggestions and opinions to themselves, and worry about how they are perceived at work (Sandberg, 2013).

Job Satisfaction

Mothers often find their level of job satisfaction changes after bearing a child (Coulson et al., 2012). Absenteeism, job performance, turnover, and psychological distress are all indicators of the level of fulfilment and employee experiences at work, which explains the importance of job satisfaction related to job performance (Holtzman, & Glass, 1999). Factors influencing job satisfaction for a mother include the temperament of the child(ren), her social support network, her ability to achieve new accomplishments or return to her former self at work, and the family-friendliness of her employer (Coulson et al., 2012). A high level of support from both a woman's partner and her co-workers is positively correlated to higher levels of satisfaction at work (Roxburgh, 1999). The increased number of mothers in the workforce in the latter part of the 20th spurred the movement for employment benefits to assist parents such as flex-time, company sponsored child care, and permanent part-time positions (Biddle, 1986; Mauno, Kinnunen, & Feldt, 2012; Sandberg, 2013).

New mothers also have potential for loss of skills and lower commitment levels or perceived commitment levels in the workplace (Baker, 2011). Behaviors associated with loss of job satisfaction and perceptions of mothers in the workforce can impact the likelihood of future promotions and achievements at work (Sandberg, 2013; Williams et al., 2013). Sandberg (2013) suggested the workplace needs to evolve to help mothers achieve work-life balance without questioning commitment levels.

The choice to work. It is true some women prefer to stay at home rather than return to work for reasons unrelated to the work environment (Sandberg, 2013). Other women desire to return to work because they thrive on the challenge and aspire to

achieve job-related accolades (Holzman & Glass, 1999; Sandberg, 2013). However, some women desire a career or must work to maintain financial stability, but the transition back into the workplace does not always come easily (Coulson et al., 2012; Dodson, 2013; Mäkelä**,** 2012; Sandberg, 2013). In addition, a mother's postpartum return to work is more seamless if she is returning to a job she enjoys and finds fulfilling (Sandberg, 2013).

Salary has an impact on maternity leave duration and returning to work postpartum (Baker, 2011). Financial stability is a possible explanation for the increased number of single mothers forced to work (Cotter et al., 2011). Through the 1980s, women were often working in previously male dominated roles to find work and financially contribute to the family (Cotter et al., 2011). Since mothers typically earn lower salaries than non-mothers, finances create added work pressure for single moms (Pregnancy and Return to Work Discrimination, 2014; Williams et al., 2013).

Successful return to work post maternity leave. A successful transition from maternity leave back into the workforce is often influenced by a mother's support network outside the workplace in addition to her support at work (Costa et al., 2012; Coulson et al., 2012; Holzman & Glass, 1999; Mäkelä, 2012; Sandberg, 2013; Seiger & Wiese, 2011). Family, friends, and colleagues play a role in the length of a woman's maternity leave as well as in her decision to return to work (Coulson et al., 2012). Social support can come in the forms of emotional, instrumental, informational, and companionship; and each form can influence postpartum satisfaction and overall well-being (Seiger & Wiese, 2011). Finding a way to share responsibilities with a spouse or

significant other is a simple way to help a woman feel fulfilled both inside the home and inside the workplace (Roxburgh, 1999; Sandberg, 2013).

In addition to creating a more supportive environment for working mothers, shared childcare by both parents has a positive impact on marital satisfaction (Roxburgh, 1999; Sandberg, 2013). Social support is vital for working mothers, and it has been suggested support outside of the workplace has a greater influence in overall job satisfaction than the individual aspects of the job itself, including salary and intrinsic motivators (Roxburgh, 1999). Mothers who receive a high level of support at work, but do not receive a high level of partner support are less likely to see increased levels of job satisfaction, while the facilitation of job satisfaction is significantly more prevalent when perceived external support from a mother's partner is just as high or higher than coworker support (Roxburgh, 1999). In contrast, for working fathers, partner support has little to no impact on overall perceived job satisfaction (Roxburgh, 1999).

Research has indicated a relationship exists between the perceived supportive culture of the workplace and employee output and job satisfaction (Mauno et al., 2012; Park, 2012). Perceived organization supportiveness theory explained the positive correlation between perceptions of workplace sensitivity to employee needs and values and employee outcomes at work (Mauno et al., 2012). Working mothers have revealed job satisfaction increases when working for an employer who is sensitive to child care needs (Holzman & Glass, 1999; Park, 2012). Mauno et al. (2012) noted a three-dimensional inquiry, which included supervisorial support, organizational support, and co-worker support, to determine where the most influential factors into job satisfaction exist. Coulson et al. (2012) went on to add return-to-work programs that share

participation with supervisors, access to pregnancy and parenting magazines and websites, and monitoring mental health of new mothers to detect symptoms of postpartum depression as practices that provide positive support as new mothers assimilate back into the workplace.

While employer support is important, the employee-supervisor relationship is vital (Costa et al., 2012; Coulson et al., 2012; Holzman & Glass, 1999; Mäkelä, 2012). The largest impact on job satisfaction for working mothers comes from positive support from her direct supervisor (Holzman & Glass, 1999; Mäkelä, 2012). Employees who initially have better relationships with supervisors report having even more favorable relationships postpartum (Mäkelä, 2012).

In higher education, the academic calendar provides an added challenge for an institutions ability to provide benefits to assist working mothers, and mothers are often forced to leave academia (Anthony, 2011). The American Council on Education, a leadership and advocacy group with numerous focuses in higher education topics, has developed a network to facilitate and encourage the advancement of women in higher education (The American Council on Education, 2016). Anthony (2011) chronicled a list of approaches and best practices at multiple institutions to help working mothers in higher education. For example, faculty members at Duke University are given the option to modify work responsibilities with full pay for up to three years or receive full paid leave for 6-8 weeks (Anthony, 2011). Loyola College in Maryland grants leave on a semester basis (Anthony, 2011). Graduate students frequently carry part of the instructional load at many universities and experience situations similar to faculty members when considering having children but are ineligible for employee benefits that

may exist (Kenzior, 2014). Anthony (2011) noted many colleges do not have official leave policies, but of those that do, research institutions typically have the most employee-friendly policies.

In general, women returning to work for the same employer admit to higher job satisfaction and find employee benefits to be greater (Holzman & Glass, 1999; Seiger & Wiese, 2011). Additional potential practices include part-time job assignments or prorated pay, a specific budget set aside for parental leave, and shared or donated leave hours (Anthony, 2011). True gender equity requires that policies should be available to fathers as well as mothers (Anthony, 2011; Kendzior, 2014).

The child or children also play a role in readiness to return to work and job satisfaction for mothers (Coulson et al., 2012). Previous studies found the return-to-work transition is easier for mothers of good-tempered children, while Coulson et al. (2012) found mothers of children with a poor temperament reported an easier return to work after maternity leave. The size of the family along with the ages of children are also factors influencing a mother's decision to return to work and her successful assimilation back into the workforce (Sieger & Wiese, 2011). Roxburgh (1999) found mothers are increasingly satisfied with their jobs as their families grow, while fathers see the reverse effect of job satisfaction on family size. Possible explanations for higher job satisfaction among mothers balancing multiple children and work include a higher sense of overall well-being as well as differential selection, which could mean fewer women with multiple children are employed outside the home (Roxburgh, 1999).

Advanced planning and thorough knowledge of the FMLA rights, on the part of both the employer and the employee, have been shown to aid a woman's transition

through pregnancy and the early stages of motherhood (Davis, 2014; Kurtovich et al., 2015; Williams, 2012). Employers can help by providing clear, understandable policies in regard to the FMLA (Davis, 2014). Kurtovich et al. (2015) found women who received the FMLA educational tool prior to maternity leave were more likely to utilize maternity leave and understand rights afforded by the FMLA. Proper maternity leave education assists women in planning maternity leave, leading to appropriate leave times and healthier mothers and infants (Kurtovich et al., 2015).

Mental health on job satisfaction. Job satisfaction for new parents is also dependent on the mental health status of the individual, which is a poorly researched topic (Dagher, McGovern, Dowd, & Lundberg, 2011; Perry-Jenkins, Smith, Goldberg, & Logan, 2011; Satyanarayana et al., 2011). The transitionary period for parenthood is defined as "the period from late pregnancy through the infant's first year of life" (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 1117). During this time, new parents must learn how to make adjustments in their lives to balance previously held roles with the role of parenthood, which is often mentally challenging and frustrating (Dagher et al., 2011; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2011). As previously noted, a mother's support network plays a large role in her transition into parenthood (Coulson et al., 2012; Dagher et al., 2011; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2011; Roxburgh, 1999). Although the support network of a new mother can provide relief, it may also be a source of additional stress in an already mentally demanding situation (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2011).

In addition to perceived support levels of support in the workplace, other work conditions such as work hours, autonomy, and job urgency are also indicators of mental health and job satisfaction for new mothers (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2011). As the employed

work hours of mothers typically increases by more than half an hour a day during the first six months of work postpartum, the mothers' symptoms of depression also rise (Dagher et al., 2011). Increased work hours lend to fewer hours devoted to rest outside of the workplace, contributing to work-life imbalance and mental fatigue (Dagher et al., 2011). However, hours worked becomes less significant in comparison to other job factors (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2011). Along with colleague support, high job autonomy and flexibility are key factors providing the greatest positive effect on mental health of new mothers and job satisfaction (Dagher et al., 2011; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2011).

Work-life balance influence on job satisfaction. Women also achieve higher job satisfaction by maintaining a work-life balance (Anthony, 2011). A direct relationship exists between job satisfaction and satisfaction outside the workplace (Roxburgh, 1999). Park (2012) reported the results of a survey of working mothers showed a majority believed job skills and parenting skills are reciprocally beneficial. About two-thirds of the working mothers surveyed felt an increase in motivation and productivity at work after having children (Park, 2012). Wattis et al. (2013) believed work-life balance is a continual process rather than an endpoint. One does not simply achieve work-life balance at one point and expect to carry through an entire career (Wattis et al., 2013).

While employees must make effort to achieve a desired level of balance in life, the workplace can also be a constantly evolving place without questioning commitment to the job (Sandberg, 2013). Wattis et al. (2013) suggested personal time/space be added as a third sphere to work-life balance. A strong support network outside the workplace has been shown to help mothers achieve rest and recovery time, contributing the overall

health and life satisfaction, which is also a benefit to family health and stability (Sandberg, 2013; Wattis et al., 2013).

A desirable culture at work is seen as a job perk, which can be included as a workplace benefit (Anthony, 2011). Leaders who are in tune with employees' emotional needs during pregnancy, maternity leave, and postpartum create a more satisfying environment for mothers (Mäkelä, 2012). Employee-friendly policies do not only lead to satisfaction on the part of the employee, having fulfilled employees also benefits the employer (Anthony, 2011). Faculty members working at institutions with effective leave policies tend to be more resilient, loyal, confident, and better able to adapt to change (Anthony, 2011; Bakst, 2012). In addition, faculty members who work in institutions with effective leave policies are typically in better health, saving the institutions money associated with healthcare benefits (Anthony, 2011). Also, female employees in higher education are more likely to return to work postpartum (Anthony, 2011).

In general, higher education is behind private business in terms of family-friendliness (Anthony, 2011). For an institution of higher learning, absenteeism and turnover come at a cost (Anthony, 2011; Bakst, 2012). Institutions with poor parental leave policies can expect to see higher costs associated with hiring, training, and developing faculty and staff (Anthony, 2011; Bakst, 2012). In addition to increased turnover, employees at institutions with poor parental leave policies may avoid family commitments to achieve greater career success, leading to decreased job satisfaction due to the imbalance in work and family life (Anthony, 2011). A lack of work-life balance leads to lower employee morale and productivity (Anthony, 2011).

In contrast to mothers, fathers typically spend more time at work and less time bonding with children (Melamed, 2014; Roxburgh, 1999). However, job satisfaction is reported to be similar between both men and women (Roxburgh, 1999). Contrary to much of the previous research, Roxburgh (1999) found mothers have higher job satisfaction than both non-parents and fathers. One explanation for lower job satisfaction levels of fathers is the feeling of financial responsibility to the family which may necessitate staying in an unsatisfying job (Roxburgh, 1999). Perhaps the difference in work hours provides an explanation for at least some of the perceived difference in caregiver responsibility for women (Roxburgh, 1999).

As Sandberg (2013) noted, while many women make time to keep up with work while on maternity leave, she also admitted women with larger salaries, such as she, are abler to financially support shorter maternity leaves and working from home because of the help they can afford. Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo is reported to have made a similar statement (Williams, 2012). However, new mothers who choose to utilize the FMLA to take time off work and care for their newborn children, a formal maternity leave plan, or instructions for co-workers who will assume the mother's role while she is absent, may be created to ease the transitionary period (Anthony, 2011; Davis, 2014; Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, 2016).

Summary

This research study was approached with discretion on the part of the investigator to ensure confidentiality and provide a comfortable environment for the study subjects. The sensitivity of the topic explored in this study required the review of a wide array of literature to encompass legal issues, historical obstacles, and needs to be fulfilled to

achieve job satisfaction. In Chapter Two, legal subjects studied included Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Pregnancy Discrimination Act, and the FLMA. Each of these legal federal laws was reviewed in relation to policies created in the workplace to protect expectant and new mothers. The evolution of the role of women in the workplace was studied by examining how the laws and societal views surrounding this topic changed throughout the 20th Century and first part of the 21st Century. Finally, mothers' perceptions of the workplace were studied to determine a connection between the needs of the workplace and needs of mothers seeking job satisfaction.

Chapter Three includes a methodology to perform this study. The step-by-step process used to execute this study is detailed and explained. Research questions posed in this study are repeated as a guide for the methodology. The research design, population and sample size, instrumentation, validity and reliability, procedures for data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations for this study are further explored.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Much of the research explored throughout this study regarding pregnancy and mothers at work relates to biological experiences and workplace discrimination as opposed to mental health of working mothers (Satyanarayana et al., 2011). The process utilized to determine workplace perceptions of mothers during the course of pregnancy through the postpartum return to work is represented in Chapter Three. In order to garner the information necessary for this study, participants were asked to respond to interview questions to examine the perceptions of early motherhood situations and capabilities in relation to the workplace and social support.

Details in this chapter describe the steps taken to collect and analyze data to complete this research. In the first section presented, the problem and purpose overview, including research questions, are reiterated. The research methodology is then discussed in detail. The population and sample for this study are identified along with the instrument used to collect data. The step-by-step details of the procedures used for this study are described in the data collection section of this chapter. Finally, the procedures used to analyze the data are discussed along with the ethical considerations taken complete this study.

Problem and Purpose Overview

Mothers often find the roles of motherhood and employee conflict, which can lead to both a lack of job satisfaction and/or leaving the workplace altogether to avoid conflict (Sandberg, 2013). The intent of this research study was to help bridge the gap in knowledge between a woman's perceptions of work and job-related experiences during the transition from being a woman in the workplace to becoming a mother in the

workplace and the factors which support her job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Understanding a woman's perspective of the workplace situation after returning from maternity leave may help improve an employer's responsiveness to her needs. This study could potentially lead to programs and training, which assist in post maternity leave assimilation back into the workforce.

Research questions. The following questions served as a guide to this study:

1. How do women in higher education perceive their job performance after they return to work from maternity leave as compared to their perception of job performance prior to maternity leave?

2. How do women in higher education perceive treatment toward them from coworkers and superiors after maternity leave as compared to before maternity leave?

3. To what extent does the gender of a woman's supervisor change her perceptions of her job performance prior to maternity leave as well as upon returning to work post-maternity leave, if at all?

Research Design

A qualitative approach was taken to garner information in this study. Qualitative research is based on perceptions and analyzed in terms of non-numeric data (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research is more often conducted through direct contact with subjects with the employment of observations and interviews to determine common themes among study participants (Creswell, 2013). Conversely, quantitative research consists of numerical measurements and statistical analysis (Creswell, 2013). Although different aspects of pregnancy and motherhood have been topics for past research, perceptions of the workplace and employee capabilities have not been extensively studied

(Satyanarayana et al., 2011). This study was conducted to obtain perceptions of working mothers. Both case study (Creswell, 2013) and phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994) were utilized to guide this study.

The research involved the study of a single institution of higher learning. Because the case was limited to one particular institution, the research conducted was considered case study research (Creswell, 2013). Case studies are used by qualitative researchers to look at a specific occurrence or occurrences to determine overall patterns (Creswell, 2013). According to Stake (2005), a case study may be used as a choice of what to study rather than as a method of study. The institution of higher learning in this case is located in the Midwest with over 500 employees and around 14,000 students. By limiting the variable studied to a single phenomenon, a phenomenological approach was utilized (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative researchers use phenomenological research to describe "the common meaning for several individuals for their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). Moustakas (1994) described phenomenological research as a technique to identify a connection that "must exist between ourselves as knowers and the things or objects that we come to know and depend on" (p. 44). Because participation in this study consisted of answering interview questions to determine a woman's perceptions of the process of adjusting to the workplace throughout pregnancy and the early stages of motherhood, the life experience of pregnancy was the phenomenon that was studied.

Population and Sample

Female employees at a Midwestern institution of higher learning who had given birth while employed at said college were invited via e-mail to participate in this study. Recipients of this e-mail were asked screening questions through an online Google survey upon agreement to participate in the study. The Google survey (see Appendix A) was designed to find participants who met the appropriate criteria for the sample. Responses were received online in the form of a detailed spreadsheet. In an effort to maintain anonymity, subjects were asked to create a pseudonym to submit along with a non-work e-mail address.

According to Creswell (2013), sample sizes in phenomenological studies have ranged between 1 and 325, but an ideal sample size is approximately 10 subjects. In alignment with Creswell's (2013) recommendations, the number of subjects recruited for this study was 10. The initial sample pool consisted of subjects no more than four years removed from maternity leave—paid or unpaid. The decision to create participant selection criteria based on years removed from maternity leave was made to identify participants with a recent memory of events that occurred before, during, and immediately after maternity leave. The final selection criteria consisted of mothers with children middle school aged and under.

Women with children who had not yet entered school were the primary desired group of participants. If a sample of 10-20 participants was not reached, the next wave of participants included mothers with children who were elementary school aged. If the sample size could not be reached by extending the age limit to include children in elementary school, mothers with middle school aged children were included.

Instrumentation

Interviews are an appropriate data collection measure to garner the participants' perceptions and to report their first-hand experiences (Creswell, 2013).

The interview protocol (see Appendix B) was composed of 12 open-ended questions to determine the nature of the work environment as well as the support network for mothers participating in this study. Questions were created to address the following areas: pre-maternity leave, maternity leave, and post-maternity leave. Open-ended questions are the most accurate interview method allowing participants to give complete and accurate responses (Yin, 2011).

Reliability. Developing the instrument into a concise set of interview questions was required for this study, and the use of a field or pilot test was needed (Yin, 2011). After the interview questions were established, a field test was performed to examine the effectiveness of and refine the instrument (Yin, 2011). Women employed in the education field were asked to participate in the review of the interview questions for commentary based on clarity, conciseness, and any presence of bias as part of the pilot interviews (Yin, 2011). In addition to the initial field test, questions were screened and reviewed by human resources professionals in higher education to determine and limit the presence of bias or leading questions on the part of the interviewer (Yin, 2011). Interview questions were amended as needed to reflect the consensus opinion of the group (Yin, 2011).

Validity. In qualitative research, validity can be achieved through the use of a technique known as triangulation (Moustakas, 1994). Performing open-ended interviews to acquire first-hand perceptions was one step in achieving validity in this study (Yin,

2011). Interviewees were given the opportunity to review transcriptions of the interview, known as member checking or respondent validation, to provide the second piece of validity by triangulation (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2011). Finally, by working closely with the dissertation committee chairperson, interview transcripts were examined for completeness, conciseness, clarity, and biasness, which provided the third piece of triangulation to achieve validity in the study (Creswell, 2013).

Once reliability and validity had been established and the instrument had been revised, in-person and telephone interviews were conducted and voice recorded so a word-for-word transcription could be completed upon the conclusion of the interview (Yin, 2011). Transcriptions of interviews were used to evaluate responses in relation to the research questions posed in this study. Interviews were the sole instrument in this study; therefore, study participants were asked to review interview transcriptions as a step in data triangulation and validity assurance (Yin, 2011).

Data Collection

Before beginning data collection, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from Lindenwood University (see Appendix C) and the institution of higher learning in which the study took place (see Appendices D, E). Cooperation from the Human Resources department at the institution was also necessary for the recruitment of voluntary study participants. A campus-wide email was sent to ensure the entire population had the opportunity to participate in the study (see Appendix F). The email included a link to a Google survey the primary researcher set up to categorize volunteers into groups based on the ages of their children. The desired sample size of 10 subjects was not reached in the initial sample pool. The sample pool was increased to include

subjects with children in elementary and middle school, and a sufficient sample size was reached. After the sample size was reached, efforts began to set up individual participant interviews.

To ensure anonymity, study participants were each asked to choose a pseudonym (Yin, 2011). Once participants agreed to volunteer for the study, they were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix G) as suggested by Moustakas (1994) and Yin (2011) when conducting phenomenological research. The third party interviewer, properly trained on data collection specific to this study (see Appendix H), set up interviews with study participants. Through employing an interviewer who was unrelated to the study, another layer of confidentiality was established while limiting biases held by the primary researcher (Yin, 2011). By conducting data collection training, created by the primary researcher, both the primary researcher and the third party interviewer were in alignment in matters of content and ethics (Moustakas, 1994). Interviews, consisting of open-ended questions, were conducted by phone or at a location agreed upon by the interviewer and interviewee to establish convenience and comfort for participants (Yin, 2011).

Data Analysis

As part of the study, interview responses were recorded and transcribed, word-for-word, to ensure reliability of the data collected (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013) and Yin (2011), coding participants, or using pseudonyms in this case, provided an additional means of reliability assurance. Once interviews were transcribed, they were uploaded to an online blog platform. The primary investigator, who did not have direct contact with study participants throughout the study, allowed the third party researcher to contact each participant to inform them the transcribed interview was

available for review and verification (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2011). The contact from the third party interviewer included information regarding the editing time window and individual passwords.

Passwords were used to protect these documents, to ensure study participants were not able to see interviews other than their own, and to ensure interview transcripts were not publicly available. Interview transcriptions were available to participants for three business days. After that time, interview responses were erased and deleted from the blog. This member checking process is one piece of the triangulation necessary to prove validity of the study while also guaranteeing accuracy of the responses provided during interviews (Yin, 2011). After the editing time window elapsed, interview responses were considered to be complete and accurate, and the primary researcher began analyzing the data.

The next step in data analysis was to organize the raw data obtained from the interviews (Yin, 2011). Responses were summarized and reported before analysis began. The data were reviewed using a horizontalization method or searching for statements relevant to the topic (Moustakas, 1994). These statements were then "clustered into common categories or themes" to bring out the main ideas (Moustakas, 1994 p. 118). The themes emerging from this process were utilized to answer the research questions related to the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2011). Any commonalities that emerged upon comparison were recorded to interpret data collected in regard to the research questions posed in this study (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2011). As with any qualitative study, the research was not used to evaluate a pre-determined hypothesis (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

Steps were taken during the data collection and analysis to maintain ethical standards. The human resources Department agreed to allow the primary researcher to recruit participants for this study, and an e-mail was sent to all employees at the institution studied. Subject participation was considered strictly on a volunteer basis. As an additional step, participants were made aware of the small sample size in this study and that the possibility existed readers of the research may be able to identify participants even when identifying information has been omitted.

Consenting to the study included completing the online Google survey, and choosing a pseudonym to maintain anonymity and a written consent form; clear participant consent ensures the presence of ethical standards (Moustakas, 1994). To place an additional layer of anonymity for study participants, a second pseudonym was assigned to each study participant after final data collection.

By intentionally placing distance between the researcher and the study participants, bias and partiality were minimized. A third party is not required to collect data from study participants but strengthens the reliability of the study and anonymity of the subjects (Yin, 2011). While Creswell (2013) cautioned against conducting a study at one's own institution, the primary researcher did not hold a position at this institution that would have created a power imbalance.

Summary

In Chapter Three, the methodology used in this study was detailed. To examine the role perceptions of new mothers in the workplace, a qualitative research method was utilized. A case study in phenomenological research was deemed the appropriate

research design to examine the situational experiences of working mothers and soon-to-be mothers (Creswell, 2013). The sample was working mothers at a Midwest institution who had given birth and utilized the institution's maternity leave policy.

Anonymity and validity were vital to this study. Participant privacy was guaranteed through a self-chosen pseudonym. Each participant was given an opportunity to review her transcribed interview for completeness and accuracy before data analysis. Final transcribed interviews were then analyzed to discern common themes. Throughout the process of the study, steps were taken to ensure the researcher maintained ethical boundaries.

Chapter Four includes the findings of the research mentioned in this chapter. Responses to interview questions are summarized and reported. In Chapter Four, emerging themes are introduced and analyzed. After reviewing the data and forming clusters of commonality, discussion and outlined suggestions for future research in this topic are presented in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

This study was conducted to determine if commonalities in perceptions existed in women in regard to the workplace before, during, and after maternity leave. Participants were asked to voluntarily consent to join this study. Women who chose to contribute their opinions did so by responding to a series of interview questions, conducted by a third party interviewer. Interviewees remained anonymous by choosing a pseudonym. A second pseudonym was added to create double anonymity for study participants. Interview results were collected and analyzed to produce common themes. In the following section, results are presented by each interview question.

Interview Questions

Because the purpose of this study was to garner perceptions and opinions from study participants, it was determined interviews would be the instrument for this study to collect data (Creswell, 2013). Twelve interview questions were developed to elicit perceptions of women who had experienced pregnancy and childbirth while being employed in a higher education setting. Interviewees were asked to answer each question completely and were given an opportunity to review their interview responses once transcriptions were completed.

Interview question one: *Describe the dynamics of your work environment and your relationship with your supervisors and co-workers before, during, and after your maternity leave.* The workplace relationship dynamics perceived by the interviewees at the Midwest college in this study ranged from viewing supervisors and co-workers as supportive and family-oriented, to awkward and uncomfortable. Several concerns were more directly related to the relationships shared with supervisors as opposed to the

relationships shared with co-workers. However, disjointed interactions with supervisors were known to create tension between co-workers as well. Participants who felt supported were appreciative and believed the support created a positive environment for the return to work after taking maternity leave. Study participants who were in leadership roles were able to share perceptions of both supervisors and subordinates.

Several of the mothers interviewed worked under supervisors who were patient and utilized a hands-off approach to the maternity leave. Interviewee #1 stated her supervisor and co-workers "were really super patient with me." Interviewee #4 enthusiastically described her colleagues as "wonderful." The women who perceived their managers as less apt to micromanage typically portrayed feelings of trust and being trusted at work. Favorable supervisor descriptions included flexibility with time and scheduling for doctor visits, permitting work breaks for nursing and pumping, providing equipment for employees to work from home while on leave if desired, and allowing for breaks to go visit the child if the daycare was nearby. At the time when the participants in the study were nursing their babies, there was no formal room for mothers to pump at the Midwestern college, so several mothers found accommodations were made for them to use private offices on the college campus.

Perceptions of supervisor sensitivity to emotions felt by the new mothers, such as sadness due to leaving children in childcare each day, emerged with most interviewees. According to Interviewee #8, "I was extremely emotional when I came back to work, and I think that any of the other mothers in the office understood that [feeling]." More than one mother interviewed noted feelings of missing their babies and noted supervisors being sensitive to their emotions. Interviewee #4 acknowledged, "I needed that support,

because that was hard coming back after having a baby and, you know, missing him and wanting to be with him."

Interviewees often made statements regarding sensitivity portrayed by supervisors as a reflection of their own experience with parenting. However, the general perception of supervisors, who interviewees stated did not have children, were less sensitive and understanding possibly because they were not as familiar or comfortable with the emotions displayed by new mothers. Interviewee #8 explained, "My supervisors weren't mothers, so I don't think they understood why I was so emotional." Co-workers with children were also seen as more understanding of the emotions of being a new mother, and this commonality became a new topic of conversation in the workplace and building block for camaraderie

Interviewees also noted there were feelings of nervousness and uncertainty of how supervisors and co-workers would react to the pregnancy announcement, because it was new territory for some departments. Additionally, some interviewees experienced health-related issues such as sleep deprivation, personal illness, and depression. Poor health was a distraction often causing work productivity to decrease. Several mothers worried about negative perceptions from colleagues after struggling with postpartum absenteeism and lower levels of productivity that accompanied poor health.

Several interviewees shared new perceptions of themselves and their relationship with the workplace. Multiple interviewees spoke of their personal pride in being dedicated to their work and noted being viewed as hard-working before becoming mothers. After childbirth, some mothers perceived an implied feeling of disappointment, because they were accustomed to being the first one to work in the morning and the last

one to leave at night. Now having a child, this work schedule was no longer an option for the mothers. This difference in schedule availability was a tough adjustment for a couple of the interviewees who were afraid of no longer being seen as committed to the job. Interviewee #10 revealed, "Everybody was really great to me, but my work [role] changed when I came back. I wasn't the person who could be there all the time. I wasn't the person who could fill in."

While some participants were able to share the experience of parenthood at work, other participants voiced feelings of exclusion and isolation among peers, because of the lack of colleagues with children in their departments. Some participants in the study noted they felt neglected and misunderstood by supervisors. Inclusion in special projects, as well as promotion opportunities appeared to disappear, and the perception of one interviewee was opportunities she had previously been awarded were no longer being offered because of her pregnancy. In these cases, negative feelings from supervisors seemed to trickle down to co-workers to add to a tense work environment.

More than one participant mentioned the annual performance evaluations as a tool to corroborate perceptions of poor relationships with supervisors and believed they received unfavorable appraisals related to their pregnancies. One interviewee cited she was heavily graded on her attitude. She acknowledged she was less cheerful than usual after returning to work, but attributed her exhaustion and irritability to postpartum depression and caring for her child. Another interviewee was penalized for a lack of flexibility even though she was willing to stay late or do what was needed to make up lost time due to pumping. Employees who were unhappy with performance evaluations believed their pregnancies were the cause for the negative evaluations.

Multiple interviewees explained how major changes happened while they were on maternity leave, such as office relocations and even job titles and job duties. In some instances, these changes were discussed while the employees were on leave, but the communication was not always deemed by the interviewees as truthful or complete. Interviewee #3 described feelings of being blindsided about changes that occurred in her absence and wondered what she had done wrong at work. She stated, "You start to feel kind of lonely." These women felt somewhat caught unaware and misled, and they were not satisfied with the explanations for the changes. Questions of favoritism arose with participants who returned to major changes after taking maternity leave. The interviewees in these cases had male, non-parent supervisors.

There was dialog describing how some employees may have taken advantage of their supervisor while on maternity leave and not pulling their weight, yet other employees went above and beyond. This perception was associated with thinking some employees were good team members and others were not. Part of this perception was also attributed to the fact some of the employees were less seasoned than others. The disjointedness among these employees made for a difficult transition for the team and friction among its members. Employees who were perceived being less committed while the boss was out and did not complete assigned tasks also created additional work for their supervisors.

Interview question two: *Was your employer sensitive to your need for flexibility before, during, and after maternity leave?* There were several reports of supervisors showing schedule flexibility to mothers after maternity leave. As noted throughout the interviews, flexibility shown by supervisors came in multiple forms, such

as freedom to attend doctor appointments, leave time for therapy sessions for the children, occasionally staying home or working from home with sick children, being allowed to find a private place to pump or nurse, and opportunities to take short breaks to visit the children who were at nearby daycares. None of the mothers made reports of being prohibited to care for their children in whatever way necessary.

Interviewee #10 stated, "I think I put more pressure on myself than my supervisor did." Other women confirmed they, too, felt more pressure from themselves to be at work when there was a child-related complication as opposed to pressure from supervisors or co-workers. The self-imposed pressure made several mothers feel like everyone was watching and passing judgement when there was a need to call in sick or miss a meeting. Interviewee #10 noted this impression by revealing, "You feel a little like [your co-workers] are looking at you kind of negatively."

Spouses, as well as other family members and friends, often helped these new mothers when children needed to stay home from school or daycare due to illness. Mothers in teaching positions had an added advantage of working around their time in the classroom. For example, several interviewees who were course instructors noted how they created a class schedule that allowed them to attend doctor appointments and other commitments for their infants when they were not obligated to be in the classroom. According to Interviewee #5, "As long as I don't miss a class that I'm required to teach, then I could pretty much make up [my time]." One faculty mother noted the difference in how she chose her classes before becoming a mother as compared to after having children. Once she became a mother, she was no longer willing to teach class sections at

any time of the day; she amended her schedule to assure she had at least two days a week without classes, and she chose class times during regular business hours.

As with the first interview question, supervisors and co-workers who were parents were generally viewed as more understanding than those without children. One participant reflected on a story her supervisor had shared about a negative experience with her own supervisor during the early stages of her maternity. The experience caused the supervisor to be more understanding. However, not only supervisors with children were seen as flexible. Some male supervisors, who were previously viewed as uncomfortable with the changes in the office, were almost overly enthusiastic about being supportive when asked for schedule flexibility. This enthusiasm appeared to come from a state of not knowing how to act. Interviewee #7 described this overenthusiasm during the period right after her pregnancy as the time when, “He was probably nicest to me," during her tenure with the college. Many supervisors did not ask questions when mothers needed to take time for doctor appointments, illness, etc. Some women suggested their supervisors were not concerned with every detail of work as long as the tasks were being completed on time and to the standards set for those tasks.

While most supervisors were flexible in allowing time and space to pump or nurse, more than one mother had a supervisor suggest pumping in the restroom. One interviewee stated she nearly quit her job after the suggestion, and another mother cited her refusal to her supervisor for sanitary reasons. These were separate situations, but according to one of the interviewees, one of the supervisors reacted in a negative way and avoided her for several days because of the employee’s decision to pump in her office rather than the restroom.

Interview question three: *What changes in your work environment and relationships, if any, did you notice upon returning to work? Please provide examples.* Many mothers were happy returning to work and noted they did not notice significant changes with workplace relationships, but not all relationships were positive for all the interviewees upon their return. Some relationships deteriorated, and it was possible the lack of cohesiveness in the workplace was due to the added stress and the emotional aspects of being a new mother.

Some of the women interviewed experienced major changes to their jobs and work environments while on maternity leave, and this aspect appeared to create a vein of distrust with management and some friction with co-workers. This distrust formed a tense atmosphere after returning to work. Additionally, more than one interviewee stated the method of communicating some of these workplace changes was less than desirable, because conversations did not transpire in-person, and supervisory explanations for the changes were viewed as questionable. A sense of hostility was present at times, and in one instance, an interviewee got the impression her supervisor was scolding her for sharing stories about her child during a "happy news" time at a meeting.

Overwhelming support was received by other mothers, both from superiors and co-workers. Several interviewees perceived the work environment as more family-friendly upon returning from maternity leave. Most women found their co-workers did not treat them badly for needing a little more schedule flexibility to make sure the baby's needs were met. After returning from maternity leave, Interviewee #4 recounted her colleagues as, "Just being more supportive of me being a new mom and being understanding of what my needs were." In addition, most mothers felt their supervisors

and co-workers tried to be sensitive to their emotional needs as well. A higher level of camaraderie between other mothers at work emerged for many women. As Interviewee #10 explained, "You get to talk about different things. I know I think I tend to be maybe a little closer now with other people who have children, because that's your common thing that you're talking about during the day." The study participants had more in common with the other mothers and were able to share stories, concerns, and successes in the motherhood role.

In some cases, stereotypes of traditional roles of motherhood emerged. One academic instructor, when questioned about the possibility of not returning to work, felt offended and insulted. The role of a traditional mother was seen as an admirable quality by some of the supervisors and co-workers. In some instances, it was perceived certain characteristics of diplomatic communication shown of mothers within the college were seen as "motherly" when they could have been explained as professional communication skills even non-mothers could possess. One interviewee appeared to be offended when motherhood, as opposed to professional job skills, was credited for behaviors taken by a colleague in communication with students.

Open dialog about making the child the first priority was important to several mothers in regard to speaking with supervisors or co-workers. While the mothers were not averse to announce prioritization of motherhood, making their children the top priority did not mean their job was not as important to the interviewees as it had been prior to entering motherhood. However, interviewees purported caring for their children added a new feature to their lives, and they developed a confidence in making sure it was known they would not sacrifice family to work in the same way as before maternity

leave. Several mothers expressed feelings of wanting to remain consistent at work, while still being able to do all things necessary to care for their children.

More than a couple women interviewed were able to be more efficient at work and improve their work ethic to achieve the same output in less time. Interviewee #9 shared, “I am the type of person that works very hard with being consistent [at work].” Much of the new focus at work came from the desire to complete the work day and get home to their children. Having children brought about a change of pace at work, but the mothers did not want to be seen as less of an employee or less dedicated because of the changes happening in their personal lives.

Interview question four: *To what extent were you in contact with work associates while on maternity leave?* For the most part, the interviewees were divided into two groups in response to this question with a few exceptions. Most women were either involved only on a friendly basis to introduce the baby to co-workers, or they were minimally involved with work by checking the occasional e-mail and briefly communicating with supervisors or co-workers. Other responses showed higher levels of involvement with work, but that response was atypical.

In a few cases, and mostly with women in supervisory or teaching roles, the interview participants were more heavily involved with work while on maternity leave, but it did not appear anyone felt *obligated* to contribute to work while absent. According to Interviewee #2, “[My supervisor] didn't ask me to do anything. It was just me being paranoid about checking my emails.” Work involvement was made out of courtesy and to avoid larger issues that could arise should a problem not be addressed for several weeks or more. Interviewee #10 explained her staff periodically needed help with certain

tasks. There was also an occasional meeting an interviewee attended while on maternity leave, including meetings regarding health benefit coverage and insurance that are only held once a year at the college. Not all cases of work while on leave were out of courtesy; the desire to stay-up-to-date with things happening at work was noted as a way to stay relevant and not be forgotten by colleagues for some of the interviewees.

Women who felt comfortable enough to completely avoid work correspondence felt compelled to do so and were not ashamed. Interviewee #3 stated about her experience; “I didn't really communicate with anybody very much, I just kinda checked out.” As mentioned by a few women interviewed, the human resources department at the college did not encourage or condone mothers choosing to work from home while on maternity leave, which encouraged mothers to minimize correspondence with co-workers. Since accrued sick and vacation time were used to take the time off for maternity leave, several interviewees remarked it would be considered a violation for supervisors or the organization to force mothers to work during the time they were out of the office. The human resources department did have a policy employees could not be paid for winter break unless working before going on break, so one mother did commit to work for one day prior to winter break to ensure she would be paid for time off, but she did not make a complaint about this situation.

Interview question five: *Did you work from home while on maternity leave? If so, why?* It should be noted while many women initially answered “no” to question five, responses from interviewees still included some work involvement while on maternity leave. This contradiction seems to bring about an inconsistency in what constitutes work. In response to interview question five, several women commented they only completed a

couple of small tasks, such as responding to a few e-mails, but some of the interview responses began to snowball into more than just checking e-mails. Interviewee #8 noted she was minimally involved with work while on maternity leave, "other than the occasional call, or question, or email that took probably took ten minutes or less." A few of additional work-related tasks completed while on maternity leave included handling student situations, reading e-mails to stay up-to-date, regular communication with subordinates, working on class lessons, and conducting annual employee evaluations. As with interview question #4, it was noted the human resources department does not condone working while on maternity leave.

Interviewee #2 said she offered to work but her supervisors, "were very adamant about [them] leaving [her] alone." Most women who did work perceived the work they did was minimal and was necessary to keep the office running smoothly, but they did not allow work to be a large part of their maternity leave. For instructors, much of the work included responding to emails and communicating with students. Interviewee #7 conveyed, "When students are involved, it's very hard to do [not do anything]." For those in supervisory roles, work may have included completing employee evaluations, which fall at a specific time of year, and checking in with those who were fulfilling necessary duties.

There was not a consensus about the ability to let work go while on maternity leave. Several interviewees mentioned it was easy to "check out," while others found it to be more difficult to eliminate involvement with work. There was a stronger desire to stay involved in the workplace by some women than others.

Interview question six: *In what manner have your abilities to perform your essential job functions changed since returning to work, if at all?* Actual work abilities did not seem to be lost or diminished for any of the study participants. However, the work-life balance and the added stress of motherhood did have an effect on work for many women. Exhaustion, personal and child illness, being available for children while also being productive at work, and a smaller capacity for dedication to the job were some of the complications faced after returning to work.

In order to counteract the workplace complications posed by becoming a mother, several women emphasized how they had become more efficient and less wasteful with time while at work. Interviewee #7 said, "When you're a working mom, I think you just kind of have to be really on top of it." To these new mothers, efficiency at work equated to getting off work on time and getting back to their children. When a project in the past may have taken longer, after having children, projects were completed more quickly with a new emphasis on time management and increased productivity. Techniques noted to ensure better time management at work included working "smarter," making less time for chatting with co-workers, putting more effort into staying focused and on task, and learning how to better prioritize tasks. Some women also made up work time by working through lunch breaks or reducing time spent on lunch breaks. As Interviewee #10 explained her lunch breaks post maternity leave, "I associate that hour that I could be taking a lunch as time that I used to have spent like after [normal work hours]." One interviewee stated becoming a mother made her more confident, and she felt that confidence in her efforts at work as well as outside of the workplace.

Refusing to show any weaknesses was another method mentioned to cope with difficulties experienced in the workplace post maternity leave. One mother noted her internal struggle with managing her exhaustion and health issues after having her child:

> I didn't want to take the risk of having people know that there might be a weakness in me. I felt like I needed to stay strong and appear strong and continue outputting the same amount of work and the level of performance; therefore, I could hide a lot of the things that were happening. (Interviewee #9)

Interviewee #9 made extra efforts to push through the complications without allowing an opportunity for peers to notice and question her dedication to her job. Although she ultimately knew her job was safe, she still possessed a perception of fear of potentially losing her job or getting pushed out of her job if she was perceived to be weak by supervisors or co-workers.

Course instructors seemed to all have a similar response to this question in regard to making adjustment for the new stresses of motherhood. Faculty schedule flexibility made it possible to plan important doctor visits around class time, as previously noted. One instructor managed to schedule her classes in a way that allowed her to have two to three days a week with no classes:

> I would schedule my classes to teach on all Monday/Wednesday/Friday or all Tuesday/Thursday, so I always had at least two days where I didn't have class obligations. When I don't have class obligations, I can make up that time much easier by working on the weekends or staying late. (Interviewee #7)

Interviewee #7 was able to arrange execution of family responsibilities around her time in the classroom but considered time in scheduled classes to be an obligation that could not

be canceled. Because it is easier to be off campus on non-class days, those days were set aside for doctor visits or other affairs that needed to take place outside of work, and those were also days the instructor would be more likely to stay home with her children if they were sick. Interviewee #7 also noted the support of her spouse was essential in her return to work because she was able to rely on him to carry a portion of the childcare load as well; she stated he was a non-traditional father. However, this was also a change for her as she was willing to teach classes at any time before having children, similarly stated by other faculty members. Every instructor interviewed noted some type of appreciation for the job flexibility associated with the teaching role.

Although a snow day could be a problem for any parent with young children, school cancelations due to inclement weather cancelations was a problem mentioned by one interviewee. The college, as well and public school systems, has occasional weather cancelations, but there are times when they do not *both* have a snow day, and it can create havoc on childcare planning. Interviewee # 7 was interviewed on a snow day and explained how that situation had created havoc for her and her husband in regard to childcare. However, this can also be a benefit at times since cancelations in the education system due often align, and there is no need for outside childcare.

Interview question seven: *In what areas, if any, did you need to be debriefed or provided extra support upon returning to work? Was this activity self-initiated or department-initiated?* The debriefing generally consisted of being made aware of small changes in work processes and certain situations that happened while the mothers were out. Most women responded there was not an official debriefing session for them after returning to work. A couple of women returned to major changes, but neither of these

interviewees experienced formal debriefing. The participants stated they had been informed of some changes while on maternity leave and received additional information upon returning to work. One of these interviewees commented she felt she was expected to jump right in with her new role, but she knew very little about how to perform in that role and was disappointed in the lack of training. This interviewee also noted the perception of her from her colleagues was negative because she needed help catching up. She referred to it as a "sink or swim" situation.

Most of the women who worked while on maternity leave did not feel the need to be debriefed after returning to work. The women who stayed connected to work believed they were aware of most of the events that occurred while they were out and were able to pick up where they left off. Interviewee #5 stated:

> Maybe [there was] a little bit of debriefing, but a lot of that [was] by me just reading emails that I was copied on while I was gone and stuff. I had a pretty good idea of what was going on.

Additionally, the women who were course instructors were fortunate with the timing of their pregnancies, and they missed less work than the non-faculty members interviewed. The pregnancy timing for the instructors did not appear to be planned, but the maternity leave planning for these pregnancies was beneficial in regard to where the absences fell in academic calendar. As Interviewee #5 reported, "I didn't miss a tremendous amount of work because of the timing of my children being born late spring/early summer." The instructors were all able to make it through the majority of the semesters in which they

A couple of participants described the effort needed to get back into the work routine. For some, the transition was gradual and accepted by supervisors. Interviewee

#10 brought forward the issue of becoming involved with colleagues throughout the college and the time it takes to make colleagues aware they are back at work postpartum. She stated, “People figure out that you're back, and so they start inviting you to things, and you start getting back on the projects that you're supposed to be on.”

The mothers who supervised others were more likely to initiate a debriefing with their subordinates than note a debriefing with superiors. One interviewee met with each of her staff members individually after she returned to work. She did this to catch up with all of them as well as give them an opportunity to voice any concerns or have an open dialogue regarding anything that ensued while she was out. The situation was the most formal instance of return-to-work debriefing that occurred for any of the study participants.

Interview question eight: *How were your job duties divided among other co-workers while you were out?* In general, the soon-to-be mothers who supervised other employees divided the majority of their duties among their subordinates, with certain tasks being left for people of higher rank. Interviewee #10 had a positive experience while on one maternity leave but did not have the right employees in place for part of her other maternity leave to keep the office running smoothly. Because of this, she was more involved with work while on maternity leave than the other study participants. Everything that needed to be completed was accomplished. However, some employees proved to be less capable of the assignments she left for them while she was gone. According to several interviewees, large projects typically did not move forward while these women were on maternity leave.

It appeared one of the most seamless transitions back to work after maternity leave was for faculty. Most faculty members interviewed were able to have some control over their courses by leaving lesson plans for substitutes. Some faculty members were allowed to choose substitutes for their courses, but in other cases, this responsibility was chosen by their direct supervisors. The level of interviewee satisfaction upon returning to work postpartum was evident in how much control she was given in the decision-making process for her courses before taking maternity leave.

In other areas, a variety of methods were used to fulfill the responsibilities of the mother on maternity leave. For study participants falling under the categories of non-supervisors and instructors, responses to this question varied greatly. Interviewee #2 stated everything was left for her to do when she returned from maternity leave. However, any critical responsibilities were taken care of while she was away on leave. Because of the nature of her role at the college, Interviewee #3 stated, "I had pretty much wrapped everything up before I left, and I didn't take on any special projects [before my maternity leave began]."

Interviewee #4 was temporarily replaced with someone from a different campus within the college system while she was on maternity leave, which made a positive impact on her return to work. Interviewee #9 was temporarily replaced with a trained part-time employee who fulfilled some of her duties, but many projects were placed on hold until she returned from maternity leave. The supervisors of Interviewee #8 absorbed her major duties while she was out. Because of the different methods utilized to fill the roles of these women while they were on maternity leave, there were no major complaints in response to this question.

Interview question nine: *Did your co-workers do as they were asked with your duties, and were they returned to you in good standing?* With few exceptions, the responses to this question were a variation of "yes". As noted in response to previous interview questions, all necessary tasks were completed. According to Interviewee #2, "Everything was done perfectly fine and handled well." Again, certain tasks were left to be completed post maternity leave, large projects in particular. The substitutes selected by the instructors taking maternity leave did not create any issues, but there was one situation noted of a substitute who did not follow the lesson plan left by the class instructor. Employees whose positions were temporarily filled were pleased with the work completed while they were away from the office. Interviewee #9 commented, "I was very grateful for having a temporary person in my job that could fulfill the skillset needed for my job."

One woman who supervised a larger group of employees found some employees were capable of handling the duties assigned to them while she was out, but other employees lacked the knowledge and skills to handle some of the tasks assigned to them. However, this interviewee took some responsibility for her the shortcomings of some of her staff. She believed her employees may not have been well-prepared for her leave due to different learning styles and the possibility of poor notes left behind for the staff. Still, the necessary functions of her job were completed to her satisfaction while she was gone.

Interview question ten: *Are there any work-related aspects of your experience from announcing your pregnancy at work to your return to work transition that you wish could have been different?* With a few exceptions, the overall feeling from the interviewees was satisfaction with workplace support of the pregnancy experience.

However, several mothers had thoughts and suggestions on how to make the experience more positive. Suggestions included changes in treatment from supervisors as well as modifications to system-wide policies of the college.

Human Resources played a large role in the discussion in response to this question. Several of the women interviewed noted different ways human resources could have made the transition from pregnancy to work more seamless. Interviewee #6 admitted, "I think working with [human resources] would definitely be most of what I would change. I just didn't understand my rights." Several interviewees believed more human resources interaction could have led to a more positive experience when transitioning from pregnancy through postpartum work. Creating knowledge and awareness as well as acting as a connecting piece between supervisors and subordinates were included in the mothers' suggestions.

A couple of study participants felt their supervisors were ill-equipped to respond to supervising pregnant employees or new mothers. One interviewee felt like her supervisor was uncomfortable around her after she made her pregnancy announcement, while the rest of her co-workers were happy and excited for her. She indicated she wished there were some way to have kept all relationships the same instead of feeling awkward around her supervisor. One interviewee indicated she felt powerless and lived in fear at work. Her perception was she had been discriminated against because of her pregnancy and motherhood. The interviewee indicated she wished she had notified the human resources department and utilized its resources and allowed it to act as a liaison between her and her supervisor. She noted because she allowed some of those actions to occur, she was afraid others may have also suffered. She believes her supervisor "got

smart" after her pregnancy with some of his actions and words to other pregnant employees. In these highlighted situations, supervisors appeared to be untrained on how to approach sensitive issues in the workplace.

One staff interviewee stated she did not have anything she would change, but if she had taken maternity leave at a different time of year, she believes there could have been more tension. She also believed working with all women was helpful because they were familiar with everything she was experiencing. In her words, "They've all had children and all taken maternity leave and have all been there. And so, I think that made a really big difference." This is very similar to the response from one of the faculty members interviewed. She believed she received a lot of support, but she owes some of that backing to the timing of her maternity leave.

Not all women interviewed became pregnant after being hired. Reluctance to disclose pregnancy was an issue that emerged during the course of the interviews. One interviewee reflected in hindsight that including human resources likely would have eliminated some of the negative effects she perceived after waiting until she was hired to notify superiors of an existing pregnancy. She believed human resources could have helped maintain proper protocol for supervisors as well as notifying mothers of their rights.

The human resources department at the college had a policy requiring accrued sick and vacation time must to be used if available, and one interviewee stated she wished she could have gone unpaid for a portion of her maternity leave in order to save some of her accrued leave time to tend to her child after returning to work. She also noted her supervisors were not mothers, and it was a tough situation since they were not familiar

with her struggles. For this employee, human resources was a resource that could have been utilized in a different way.

Although several mothers felt they could have included human resources more throughout this process, Interviewee #7, who made sure of human resources involvement, shared she was very pleased with her interactions with human resources and the ease of enacting the FMLA. She explained, "My interactions with [human resources] were exactly as I expected them to be and were easy. Getting my FMLA going... everything was very easy." In this situation, the employee showed comfortability with human resources and her rights as an employee at the college. In part, the difference in human resources interactions observed with this employee appeared to be a variance in knowledge on the part of the other interviewees versus this employee in regard to general awareness of human resources capabilities.

Interviewee #9 wished she could have been more open about her pregnancy, but she was afraid of allowing anyone at work to see any weakness in her. She said, "I wanted to keep it a secret, because I didn't want people to think that I was incapable of fulfilling my job duties. I didn't want anybody to sense any weakness in me." She had difficulty asking for help when she needed it, and she believed her transition could have been more seamless had she been more open with her communication of how she felt. She talked about "keeping up expectations and appearances" and realized she would be more fearless at this point in her career. She also noted she was grateful to have an office in which to pump, but she knew many mothers throughout the college did not have that luxury.

Interviewee #10 mentioned being away from the office for such an extended period of time made it easy to feel "out of the loop" while also becoming aware of the fact you are not irreplaceable. Her example demonstrated another aspect of maternity leave where intrinsic feelings about one's worth and security at work are in question. These revelations were eye-opening for her, but she did not feel like she would have changed anything with her maternity leave experience.

Several interviewees had nothing but positive comments regarding the full experience of pregnancy and maternity at work. Interviewee #4 commented she would not have been able to remain at work and make it through the transition without the support or her supervisor and co-workers.: "Everybody was just so wonderful through the whole thing."

Interview question eleven: *Describe your network of support as a new mother both in and outside of the workplace. How do they help you?* There was a lot of variation in response to this question. Some interviewees placed greater focus on the support within the workplace, while others noted more support outside the workplace. Inside the workplace, support, or lack thereof, included thoughts on schedule flexibility to meet their needs, emotional backing, and the importance of making connections with colleagues. Outside the workplace, mothers described the level of support shown from spouses, family, and friends. With a few exceptions, most of the interviewees described having a positive support network in both their professional and personal lives.

In regard to work schedule rigidity or flexibility, as stated in pervious sections, several women noted this was a way for supervisors to show support. Multiple interviewees cited supervisors and co-workers who were willing to be accommodating

and sympathetic with scheduling needs with allowing time for motherly duties as well as options to work from home when necessary. According to Interviewee #1, "When I came back [from maternity leave], [my supervisors were] very open to being flexible to taking sick time, and they still are." However, finding support for breastfeeding and pump brought about mixed responses. As previously noted, more than one interviewee expressed disappointed in their supervisors' suggestions to pump in the restroom. One of these interviewees commented she gave up breastfeeding quicker than she intended because of the absence of a truly private place to pump.

The emotional support provided by workplace relationships was evident in nearly all of the interviewees' responses. Several women noted how their co-workers gave them "space" while they were on maternity leave. Additionally, several interviewees felt the communications with co-workers and supervisors, particularly after returning to work, provided the support needed to transition into their new roles. When speaking about one of her co-workers, Interviewee #6 said, without his support, "I don't think I would've stayed at the position [at work]." One interviewee leaned on her workmates because her husband was working at a location several hours away, and she almost felt like a single mom during the early stages of motherhood. Other employees felt support from supervisors and co-workers who also had young children.

As noted in previous interview questions, children became a talking piece and a way to develop even stronger relationships at work. Co-workers with children helped ease new mothers into the new role by discussing child development concerns and expectations. Interviewee #9 noted her boss was very supportive and also had a young child, and she was grateful for him. One interviewee feared she would have had to leave

the job if she had not had the support she received from her supervisor. There was one case of feeling unsupported at work, and there was a belief that part stemmed from her supervisor being a non-parent.

Outside the workplace, interviewees most commonly referred to support as family and friends who were willing to help out when the children were unable to attend school. Interviewees listed husbands, parents, in-laws, siblings, and close friends as part of the support network in helping with childcare. One mother was a single parent who lost her social network to her ex-husband. Although she considered herself to be independent, her parents were very helpful and supportive when she needed to work unusual shifts. She commented, "When I mentioned that I was required to [work] one evening shift a week for a semester, my parents watched my daughter for me." Another interviewee noted her husband was supportive, and they tried to take turns in caring for sick children when possible.

However, enlisting help of others was not a positive experience for all of the interviewees. Interviewee #9 had a supportive husband and supportive parents and in-laws, but she believed it was her responsibility to take care of the children: "I was a little stubborn," she confessed. She felt alone and wishes she would have handled that differently. She put a lot of pressure on herself to "do it all." She noted it was difficult for her to look too far into the future; she spent most days considering the tasks that needed to be completed that day without having the mental capacity to plan ahead. While this mother did not feel she was not receiving enough assistance from her family support network, admittedly, the expectations she set for herself made her resistant to accepting the help.

There was one case of support in ways that were both welcomed and unwelcomed. Interviewee #3 did have a supportive mother-in-law, but she had feelings over being overwhelmed when her mother-in-law offered much more support than was expected. However, as with some of the work relationships, her pregnancy lined up with the pregnancy of a close friend, so they were supportive of each other. In this situation, her husband was not the best about understanding her emotions and being supportive, but this friend with shared experiences provided the greatest support.

Interview question twelve: *Do you feel like your work environment is still capable of meeting your needs? Please explain.* In general, most of the women interviewed felt their workplace still met their needs. Some noted the accommodating nature or lack of accommodations of the workplace, and others were grateful for the capacity to find flexibility within their particular roles at the college. However, the overall descriptions were positive.

Although this question was not intended to reflect impressions of workplace accommodations during pregnancy, maternity, and postpartum, several women mentioned breastfeeding and pumping. There were participants who were fortunate enough to have a private office to utilize for pumping, but this was not the case for everyone. Not all employees with private office felt a real sense of privacy. Although Interviewee #1 did not breastfeed, she voiced concern regarding accommodations for mothers who had chosen to breastfeed: "We really don't have a good place due to the privacy without it being in a bathroom, and I would love to see that be more open." One interviewee suggested human resources could have intervened to make the workplace

friendlier to mothers who chose to pump or breastfeed because of the challenges in finding a private place without help.

Flexibility with scheduling was another topic that arose in response to interview question twelve. One faculty interviewee was able to use her time out of the classroom as a way to make her job more flexible, so her position was part of what she appreciated about her work. However, more than one non-faculty mother mentioned seeing the workplace become more family-oriented and flexible, in general. Suggestions included the ability to use flex time, described as a way to alter schedules from typical 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. hours, or work from home when needed. One mother noted her own research had revealed studies proving the right employees can be more productive in a more flexible environment, and some departments on the college campus allow this. Another participant reported she had read about other companies that allow more flex time and would love to see this more on campus. A lack of flex time was not a complaint, but Interviewee #10 believed she could occasionally work from home and possibly be more productive without the distractions of other people in the office. She described her typical day at home with sick kids:

> I'll spend, maybe a few hours maybe, while they're napping or whatever, working, and probably getting more work done at home than I would sitting at my desk at work, but I'm still turning in sick time of 8 hours. (Interviewee #10)

Interviewee #10 questioned whether the reason for the typical rigid work schedule is that society and peers view mothers as less reliable and less hard-working after having children.

Several interviewees were full of praise for the ability of the work environment to meet their needs from the overall atmosphere at work to the support of their workmates. One interviewee gave recognition to her co-workers for stepping in and helping when needed. Interviewee #6, credited her boss because of his "family first" mentality. She acknowledged, "I've had to bring my daughter to work before, and he's just been incredibly understanding every step of the way." Feelings of empowerment and being treated as adults were also noted as ways the work environment provides fulfillment. As noted by Interviewee #9, "I get an opportunity to be treated like an adult, and that's really cool to have in the workplace."

Emerging Themes

Data analysis began with summarizing and reporting the data to best review the information gathered. With qualitative research, raw data are scrutinized and categorized into common ideas or themes (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Several themes emerged within this study and are presented in the next section. The themes provided the groundwork for interpretation of this study in relation to the research questions first detailed in Chapter One.

Emerging theme: Superwoman. Of the 10 women interviewed, more than half spoke of feelings of independence or wanting to be a good mother as well as a good employee; thus, they wanted to do it all (McFeatters, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). One interviewee shared how she had the opportunity to receive help at home from family members, but she refused the offers, making childrearing solely her responsibility. Being viewed as a hard-working employee was also prominent for many mothers. The interviewees made statements such as, "I didn't want [my co-workers] to know I was

having difficulties," and "I feel like I'm not viewed as the hard worker that I used to be." The choice to have an outward appearance of control was prevalent. The participant comments, which stemmed from both internal fear and respect, implied the need to be viewed as a person who is capable of handling multiple roles associated with work and motherhood. Some of the mothers wished to be respected at work and highly regarded for their work ethic; others were afraid of being seen as replaceable and irrelevant in the workplace after having children.

Although it was important to be seen as a hard worker, workplace time limitations made it difficult to separate the roles of mother and employee. One mother noted her need to slip out when her work day was finished while trying not to be noticed, even though she had put in a full day of work. It was important for all of the mothers interviewed to have time with their children. However, some mothers perceived or feared judgement from co-workers, based on hours spent in the workplace rather than work output. Although time limitations created a struggle for work-life balance, interviewees did not mention negative comments from co-workers; rather, the mothers expressed the negative perceptions materialized from pressures they placed on themselves.

Emerging theme: Two sides of the coin. Most mothers were eager to accept flexibility and minor changes in the workplace to accommodate the needs of motherhood, but they also wanted to be viewed the same in the workplace as they had before having children. Comments were made regarding adaptability and desire to be as productive at work as before pregnancy. Mothers were willing to take shorter lunch breaks, work through lunch breaks, come into the workplace early, stay late, work from home, and find

other ways to make up any time missed while fulfilling certain motherhood duties such as breastfeeding, pumping, picking up children for childcare or school, and staying home with sick children. However, it was clear family and the role of motherhood had become the top point of interest.

In addition to being seen as a hard-working employee, several women also noted they wanted their roles as mothers to be recognized as well. While most mothers were happy to show their abilities in the workplace, they were also grateful for new bonds forming with workmates who were also mothers. The relationships the interviewees formed out of the shared experiences as mothers became a new benefit of the workplace for the majority of the women interviewed. For the interviewees who were able to take advantage of opportunities to bond with other mothers at work, it was clear the relationships created were also beneficial in the transition from maternity leave back into the workplace.

Emerging theme: Inconsistency and decentralization. The human resources department proved to be a resource that was underutilized by many of the women who participated in this study. More than a few women interviewed commented they wish they had sought the cooperation of human resources for a variety of reasons including being a liaison between the employee and the supervisor, acquiring information about employee rights, and sharing information about the policies of the institution and the use of the FMLA benefits. Of the mothers interviewed in this study, only one mother specifically mentioned her positive experience with HR; although, that is not to say all other study participants had negative experiences with HR. It is possible the positive experiences were simply omitted in interview responses.

A variance appeared in accommodations and treatment of the women while pregnant and after becoming mothers in different departments and according to job type. The variance in handling accommodations seems to suggest the supervisors in this study could have also benefitted by creating a stronger relationship with human resources during the pregnancies and postpartum experiences of their subordinates. It seemed the most stable policies emerged in cases involving faculty members, presumable due to planning around the academic calendar and advanced preparation for semester lectures. However, even procedures for faculty interviewees were not always executed clearly and consistently as adherence to a formal college-wide maternity leave policy was not cited.

Emerging theme: Jobs placed on hold versus tasks completed. Several mothers revealed many of their duties were placed on hold while they were on maternity leave, while others noted their duties had been divided among colleagues and completed. Discerning the sources of the decisions to place duties on hold was difficult. The interviewees did not divulge information relating to the authority of these decisions, but course of action did appear to be self-initiated. A possible reason for the employee to have power in the decision-making process is that the employees in these instances appeared to be more knowledgeable than their supervisors about their roles.

In a couple of cases, the employee appeared to have control over her job and the decision to place tasks on hold. However, it was also noted those particular jobs required skills and abilities that could not have been picked up by other co-workers or supervisors. In other cases, it appeared the decision to leave duties unfinished until the employee returned from maternity leave came from the supervisor. In the cases of supervisors making that decision, the interviewees were surprised at the duties that had been left for

them to complete after returning to work; the duties left undone were nonessential for the short-term vision of the college.

In this study, there was not a clear pattern of how tasks were completed while mothers were on maternity leave. There was only one mother aside from faculty members who mentioned an official leave plan created to divide her responsibilities and guarantee task completion while she was utilizing the FMLA. Faculty members also benefitted from predeveloped lesson plans. Other staff members were not always aware which colleagues were completing tasks and which tasks were being completed while out on maternity leave. For the majority of the women interviewed, learning which jobs had not been completed was a part of the postpartum return to work.

Emerging theme: Level of satisfaction based on job type. Different job types and roles at the college afforded different levels of job control for the women interviewed. Women with more autonomy at the college were typically faculty members or supervisors. Because the women falling into these types of job categories generally had more control over the completion of job duties while on maternity leave, they typically showed higher levels of satisfaction with their careers. Staff members with lower levels of independence were generally less involved with work and showed higher tendencies toward isolation while out on maternity leave. This absence of involvement could be perceived as a lack of interest in staying relevant or seeking greater opportunities in the workplace.

Employees who showed more involvement with work while on maternity leave may have also suffered from a self-imposed creation of interdependence among co-workers or subordinates. In instances of duties divided among colleagues, the

observation was some level of cross-training had taken place within those particular departments. For employees at work who attempted to completed duties in which they had not been fully trained, there was a greater need for involvement on the part of the woman on maternity leave. Roles of lesser autonomy and control contained duties that could more easily be picked up and shared among co-workers.

Emerging theme: Strive for self-actualization. Although none of the women interviewed explicitly used the term self-actualization, it was apparent achieving self-actualization was a common denominator for the study participants. The interviewees in this study spoke of their personal needs including those on every level of Maslow's (1954) needs pyramid. The mothers shared how early stages of parenthood included lacking physiological needs such as sleep, causing the mothers to digress to the bottom step of the hierarchy of needs before being able to move upward (McLeod, 2014). Economic security was the largest factor slowing the advancement from the second level of Maslow's pyramid, safety, to the third level of love and belonging (Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014; Taormina & Gao, 2013). A couple of mothers expressed fear of losing their jobs, which motivated them to work harder. As the needs in the first two steps in the pyramid were attained, the mothers could continue to metaphorically climb toward self-actualization, but it was not uncommon for the women in this study to chase fulfillment of needs at multiple levels of the pyramid simultaneously.

The third and fourth levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs were both directly tied to relationships both inside and outside the workplace (Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014). Love, belongingness, and esteem are the third and fourth steps in the original hierarchy of needs developed by Maslow (1954). Several interview questions were designed for the

specific purpose of discerning information regarding relationship fulfillment. Study participants described support networks in the workplace and at home. Mothers who received positive support at home and at work displayed more balanced lives and would be more likely to achieve their full potential or self-actualization (Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014).

An additional dynamic arose as mothers worked to meet the needs of their children. Interview responses often relayed attempts to meet the needs of children while putting *self* needs on hold. It appeared mothers who were not as focused on caring for their own needs as caring for their children's needs were more troubled and were less likely to share feelings of satisfaction in the workplace.

Emerging theme: Prioritization. Many of the mothers who participated in this study repeatedly detailed the need for prioritizing and finding ways to be more efficient while at work and in life to develop a better work-life balance. Several mothers confessed to making conscious efforts to become more focused on job duties at work by streamlining duties and minimizing social interaction with co-workers. The reason most often cited for being more efficient and better prioritizing at work was leaving work on time to get home to family and children. Although several interviewees mentioned being hard-working and capable of working all hours before having children, making family the top priority and better controlling time at work seemed to be a natural decision.

Several mothers also became advocates at work for motherhood. Throughout the interview process, comments were made regarding the openness to declare children as the top priority over work. Whether it was making sure time spent on maternity leave was used to spend time with the new baby, making it clear meeting child needs were more

important than work, or refusing to give up the right to breastfeed, the mothers showed strength and confidence in their arguments for a mother-friendly workplace.

Summary

In Chapter Four, interview transcripts were summarized and recorded by interview question. Generalizations and commonalities of each interview question were noted, and specific situations and direct quotes from interviewees were used in support of the interview transcript summaries. In situations of dissention, interview responses were shared to describe the circumstances surrounding the perceptions of the interviewees and note areas of differences for the outlying perceptions of those participants.

Chapter Four also included seven emerging themes from the data collected. These themes were explored and supported with noted commonalities among study participant responses to the interview questions and are further discussed in Chapter Five. Qualitative studies rely on emerging themes from the data to determine research conclusions (Creswell, 2013). Along with further discussion of themes to reach study conclusions, Chapter Five includes research findings related to the research questions posed in this study, implications for future practice, and recommendations for future research on the topic in this study.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

This qualitative case study was designed to explore the phenomenon of pregnancy and motherhood in the higher education workplace as relayed through perceptions of working mothers at a Midwest institution of higher education. After conducting this study, mental struggles of working mothers were further explained. The overall emerging impression resulting from this study is women in higher education who choose to have a family often face obstacles in transitioning from employee to the dual role of working mother that may differ from other industries. These obstacles could often be eliminated or reduced with cooperation from colleagues.

In the following sections, the findings from this study are summarized. Research garnered in Chapter Two is used to support or dispute the outcomes of this study. Implications drawn from the study are presented along with suggestions for future research. Finally, a brief summarization of the study is presented to bring this topic to a close.

Findings

In this research study, mothers who work in higher education were interviewed about their transition through pregnancy and motherhood, and their perceptions, abilities, and relationships during that transition were recorded. In the following section, the results of those interviews are summarized and analyzed in relation to the three research questions posed in this study. Each research question is presented in conjunction with the relevant interview questions.

Research question number one. *How do women in higher education perceive their job performance after they return to work from maternity leave as compared to their*

perception of job performance prior to maternity leave? Research question number one is best answered by reviewing interview questions 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 12. Responses from interview questions 6 and 12 were most directly related to Research Question One. Although several of the interview questions used to answer Research Question One were not designed to directly elicit responses related to the interviewees' perceptions of performance, information relating to the interviewees' work skills and abilities were gathered. The participants in this study found different methods of transitioning through maternity leave, and some interviewees had less difficulty returning to work than others.

Interview responses to questions 6 and 12 reflected the perception of a change in the way work was viewed in a list of priorities as opposed to changes in work abilities. None of the women interviewed believed their skills or abilities associated with job performance diminished as a result of changes in the body due to pregnancy and childbirth or as a result of being away from on maternity leave for a prolonged period of time. Perceptions of performance were more likely to change as a result of time constraints and prioritization shifts. Exhaustion from lack of sleep after childbirth, coupled with increased family time spent away from work, made several interviewees perceive colleagues viewed them as less dedicated to work even though steps were taken to increase efficiency while working.

Interview questions 5, 7, and 8 related to involvement with work relations and job task completion while on maternity leave. These questions indirectly prompted interviewees to share thoughts on their mental capacity for work while on maternity leave and the reasons behind their perceived level of work involvement. In response to these questions, the interviewees who remained abreast of situations at work described the

continuous connection with the workplace as a method of easing the transition back to work. Periodically checking emails and communicating with colleagues helped reduce fears for Interviewee #9. For Interviewee #10, staying connected with colleagues aided in the containment and minimization of potential problems that could have arisen from her absence at work. The level of involvement with work while on maternity leave was found to be a matter of preference, which differed for each interviewee.

Like interview questions, 5, 7, and 8, interview question 11 supported Research Question One indirectly. In response to this question, interviewees were prompted to share accounts of the support they received from the people in their lives. Several interviewees perceived a lack of support from within the institution, outside the institution, or both. The women who felt less supported described greater difficulty with the transition through pregnancy and motherhood. Tougher transitions back to work caused several women to feel less capable of performing at their best, because added stress from caring for an infant made these interviewees feel less mentally and physically healthy than some of the other women interviewed. In contrast, Interviewee #6 credited a co-worker who helped ease her transition to work after maternity leave: "I'm very grateful he was there."

Research question number two. *How do women in higher education perceive treatment toward them from coworkers and superiors after maternity leave as compared to before maternity leave?* This research question can be answered using every interview question. As with Research Question One, interviewee responses varied from one individual to another in relation to this question. Interviewees noted perceptions of colleague support ranging from overwhelmingly understanding to non-existent, and in

some cases, even adding obstacles in the workplace. Accounts of colleague support were prevalent as the interviewees talked about the perceived differences in workplace conduct before and after maternity leave.

Generally, the interviewees relayed the perception relationships with peers remained the same before and after maternity leave except for bonds forming with other mothers in the workplace. There were instances of changes in peer behavior that were interpreted as reactions to behavior changes from supervisors. However, several interviewees described peers at work to be overwhelmingly supportive by showing willingness to be flexible with schedules as well as understanding the physical and psychological needs of the new mothers. Finding ways to relate to co-workers through shared experiences as mothers was the biggest change noted from interviewees, and the peer relationships formed and strengthened were found to be a positive benefit of motherhood. Several interviewees used this new benefit as a tool to help eliminate nerves and fears related to the unknown experiences associated with motherhood, which made it easier to be away from children while at work.

The perceptions of relationships with supervisors showed more inconsistencies among interviewees than the relationships with colleagues on equal levels of the organizational chart at the college. More than half of the interviewees perceived added support from supervisors after returning from maternity leave, making those interviewees feel like more than just employees. However, several participants believed a lack of support existed from supervisors and felt relationships with supervisors deteriorated after maternity leave. Interviewees typically attributed poor relationships with supervisors to a lack of knowledge or training pertaining to maternity, parenthood, and postpartum

struggles such as exhaustion and depression. In these instances, interviewees often suggested added support from human resources would have been helpful, and the lack of human resources support was accredited to an overall unawareness of rights and responsibilities on the part of the employee, the supervisor, and Human Resources.

Interviewees were also asked to describe relationships and the level of support received outside the workplace. Relationships with family and friends also had an impact on relationships and perceptions at work. Not all interviewees were willing or able to utilize support outside of work, which often created additional feelings of isolation or perceived mistreatment at work due to mental fatigue and stress from performing multiple roles.

Research question number three. *To what extent does the gender of a woman's supervisor change her perceptions of her job performance prior to maternity leave as well as upon returning to work post-maternity leave, if at all?* Research Question Three can best be answered using interview questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, and 12. There were no interview questions deliberately created to determine the gender of the interviewee's supervisors. However, as the interviewees responded to interview questions, the gender of each interviewee's supervisor emerged.

Differences in interviewee perceptions of supervisors emerged when interview questions were solicited, but those differences did not appear to be based on gender. Comments made by interviewees indicated perceptions were more related to the supervisor's experience of parenthood. In general, supervisors who were non-parents were considered to be less supportive than supervisors with children, which led to perceptions of lower performance for interviewees working for non-parent supervisors.

In situations of non-parent supervisors, most employees voiced concerns related to perceived supervisor expectations and unwillingness to recognize and appreciate the emotional needs of motherhood.

Although several women perceived non-parent supervisors to be less capable of handling sensitive situations associated with motherhood, these women did not typically place full responsibility on their supervisors. The women supervised by non-parents also noted their work experiences may have differed from those typically experienced by new mothers due to higher than anticipated cognitive postpartum struggles. The postpartum difficulties experienced by these women may have placed more strain on relationships with supervisors. Additionally, as was the case throughout the interview process, it was believed by many of the interviewees that greater human resources involvement might have aided supervisors dealing with navigating maternity leave and parenthood for employees.

Conversely, interviewees whose supervisors had children repeatedly gave praise to their supervisors for being flexible and able to understand the needs that accompany motherhood. It was not uncommon for interviewees to view supervisor flexibility as a result of knowing the delicacies of being a parent. Interviewees typically showed more confidence in supervisors who were parents and were less fearful of how they would be treated and perceived by their supervisors.

Conclusions

In this section, the findings in this study are linked to research reviewed in Chapter Two. The theoretical framework described in Chapter Two is used to evaluate the emerging themes detailed in Chapter Four. The perceptions and expectations of the

interviewees compared to the expectations of the workplace are examined and assessed. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two is evaluated in positions of support or contradiction to the findings of this study. The evaluated themes are detailed in the following section.

Superwoman. The findings in this study, supported by the reviewed literature, suggest expecting and new mothers were often unaware of ways to set an appropriate level of expectations in and out of the workplace (Davis, 2014; Kurtovich et al., 2015; Williams, 2012). Most mothers interviewed believed they would have the capability of achieving the same level of productivity as before becoming mothers. However, this belief was found to be unrealistic when time constrictions, unknown accommodations, and emotional struggles were evaluated. Interviewee #9 most prominently made note of trying to keep the same level of productivity at work but realized there was a transition phase of lower productivity after maternity leave.

The participants in this study often appeared to be surprised by the conflicting expectations associated with motherhood and the overall impact on their work lives. Interviewees #9 and #10 both appeared to struggle more than others with shifting the top priority from work to family. In line with reports from Sandberg (2013), feelings of desperation and stubbornness were revealed by some mothers during the interview process because "doing it all" was not an easy goal to meet.

Unrealistic expectations. As with views on roles of women and mothers, societal norms also dictate standard workplace behavior, and the women in this study struggled to meet these standards. One of the common themes which emerged in this study was the interviewees' expectations of being able to fulfill every role equally, while still having

only 24 hours in a day. Several of the mothers seemed to place a lot of pressure on themselves to stay dedicated to their jobs as well as being a mother (Interviewees #7, #9, & #10). Unfortunately, as research indicated, multiple roles often lead to conflict (Biddle, 1986; Sandberg, 2013). Being a full time employee conflicted with some of the jobs of motherhood such as breastfeeding and caring for ill children. Each of the women in this study found being willing to ask for and open to accepting help aided in performance in each role they possessed.

Blending roles in a way that allowed the interviewees to have time to perform motherly duties while at work proved to be beneficial. Because flexibility in the workplace was given to many of the interviewees, it was possible for both the needs of the college as well as the needs of the employee to be met (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008). The partnership between supervisor and employee often helped the mothers in the study to set attainable expectations, because it was possible to be a mother and an employee simultaneously rather than eliminating all motherhood duties between 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., or typical work hours. For example, Interviewee #6 made note of her supervisor was cooperative and supportive when she needed to bring her child to work on occasion. Although much of the research related to maternity leave indicated the United States lags behind other countries because of the length of the FMLA usage (Ray et al., 2009; Seiger & Wiese, 2011), the mothers interviewed did not show concern with the length of maternity leave as much as the ability to have a flexible work environment.

Additionally, playing multiple roles left many mothers feeling like less dedication could be given to the role of work. Interviewees #3, #9, & #10 shared insights into the

internal struggles felt with making motherhood a priority. However, several mothers found ways to remain just as accomplished at work as before motherhood by improving work efficiency and focus. Different mothers shared various views of work as a priority, and mothers who appeared to be more career-driven were more willing to stay connected to work during maternity leave and work from home, which was also reflected in the literature (Sandberg, 2013).

Self-sought accommodations. The phenomenon of pregnancy was a new experience for the mothers in this study, and the level of support received from inside and outside the workplace played a large factor in perceived overall well-being (Coulson et al., 2012; Dagher et al., 2011; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2011; Roxburgh, 1999). As interviewees were asked to reflect on the experience of being a working mother, many commonalities of that experience were recorded. One of the most apparent issues was finding ways to ease the transition back to work by making minor workplace adjustments (Anthony, 2011; Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008). Seeking accommodations did not always come easily, although this study found slight accommodations helped to increase morale for the interviewees, while still assuring the needs of the department were met (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008).

Several interviewees described the absence of certain accommodations as an obstacle to reaching job satisfaction by hindering social relationships and feelings of self-worth, which are two of the top-tier levels of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs. One interviewee shared her feelings of postpartum depression, which she believed had an impact on both her relationships and her level of enthusiasm at work. This particular interviewee was not prepared for the feelings of postpartum depression, which created a

more difficult transition back to work after maternity leave on top of beginning a new work role. In addition, in her opinion, her supervisor was equally ill-equipped to assist her in handling emotions. Women often find unsupported increases in workload after entering motherhood that reduce output levels and cause symptoms of depression (Dagher et al., 2011).

Unexpected effects of motherhood made the lack of awareness to possible work modifications and support resources more obvious. The absence of knowledge regarding rights and accommodations was not uncommon among several interviewees who voiced concerns related to understanding the role of human resources through the transition process for new mothers and how human resources could provide support. Interviewees #6 and #7 most notably believed greater human resources involvement with the transition back to work after maternity leave would have been advantageous.

Two sides of the coin. The transition from employee to working mother was a continual process for each interviewee as opposed to a one-time adjustment, but the transition required effort on the part of the employer as well as the employee. As cited by Athanasou and Van Esbroeck (2008) in the theory of work adjustment, reaching job satisfaction typically requires frequent changes on both the part of the employer and the employee, as was evident in this study. For most interviewees, the accommodations made on the authority of the supervisor did not come without a willingness on the part of the employee to make work modifications. Although accommodations made by supervisors were not always ideal, the interviewees were generally able to reach mutual agreements with their superiors, such as a shorter lunch break to make time for nursing or pumping. There were few instances noted of supervisors being reluctant to cooperate

with accommodations, likely due to the uncertainty of employee rights within federal laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the FMLA, and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (Davis, 2014; Kurtovich et al., 2015; Williams, 2012).

The women interviewed in this study showed a desire for job satisfaction, but finding happiness at work would not by achieved by sacrificing family fulfilment. Working together with supervisors, most of the interviewees were able to develop acceptable arrangements so the roles of mother and employee could both be significant and gratifying. Interviewee #1 provided an example of these modified work arrangements by sharing her supervisor's schedule flexibility with regard to doctor appointments. The study participants were generally able to show multiple roles could be held simultaneously, and work-life balance could be more easily achieved, by occasionally blending time dedicated to work and motherhood rather than keeping each role exclusively separate (Anthony, 2011; Biddle, 1986; Maslow, 1954; Roxburgh, 1999; Sandberg, 2013; Wattis et al., 2013).

Inconsistency and decentralization. Every interviewee faced a different experience regarding how her accommodations were handled after returning to maternity leave. There were instances of both favorable and unfavorable experiences that all appeared to stem from shortfalls in awareness and an absence of a policy. However, most interviewees who felt unhappy with the transition from pregnancy through postpartum employment were openly willing to acknowledge their part in the role of advocacy for themselves. Although the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (2016) suggests an enforceable policy, accommodations appeared to be a matter of

supervisor discretion as opposed to a central policy throughout the college, and most interviewees accepted the supervisor decisions without requesting aid from HR.

The role of human resources. Since human resources involvement was not always well-established throughout the transition from pregnancy through early stages of parenthood, the general observation of most of the interviewees was that of naivety or fear of repercussions for seeking help. The role of human resources remained ambiguous throughout this study because very few interviewees took advantage of human resources as a resource in instances where supervisor expectations appeared to be unclear or insensitive. Only half of the interviewees; Interviewee #2, #6, #7, #8, and #9; mentioned human resources or the FMLA during the interviews. Even when the interviewees displayed recognition of improper procedures, human resources was still frequently excluded from the conversations with supervisors. Human resources exclusion was possibly due to the being unaware of the role of human resources or adverse results of human resources consultations (Anthony, 2011). Consistent with the FMLA literature, more than one interviewee shared, in hindsight, more human resources inclusion would have been beneficial (Davis, 2014; Kurtovich et al., 2015).

Parents versus non-parents supervisors. The primary researcher in this study questioned whether or not there would be a perceived difference in female supervisors versus male supervisors. Interestingly, the difference which emerged was focused more on the supervisors being parents or non-parents. As reflected in this study, colleague and employer support are key factors in job satisfaction for working mothers (Roxburgh, 1999). Multiple times throughout the data collection, interviewees made note of whether or not their supervisors had children, but the gender of the supervisor did not appear to be

an issue. There were instances of male supervisors who were viewed as unsupportive by the interviewees, but the lack of support was perceived to be an attribution of the fact supervisors were inexperienced in the parenthood role (Costa et al., 2012).

Although many interviewees believed human resources participation was lacking, it appears the greatest need for training and awareness in regard to topics of pregnancy and motherhood belonged to supervisors; particularly, those supervisors without children. As Sandberg (2013) noted when speaking of accommodations for pregnant employees, before becoming pregnant for the first time, she was not aware of some of the small measures that could be taken to alleviate some of the nuisances of pregnancy such as finding suitable parking. There was a large discrepancy between the perceptions of supervisors with children and supervisors without children due in large part to the impression non-parents appeared to be less knowledgeable about maternity (Interviewees #2, #3, #8, #9, #10).

Jobs placed on hold versus tasks completed. It was not atypical for an interviewee to confirm only tasks vital to the college's success were completed while she was on maternity leave. Several women noted the struggle they endured trying to catch up with work after returning from maternity leave. These women came back to work with tasks which had amassed while they were on maternity leave. Because of already higher stress levels, having to work through incomplete tasks was not an ideal way to return to the office after being away for an extended period of time. However, the study participants appeared to be uncomfortable complaining about work that had accrued rather than being completed by other colleagues.

Conversely, some tasks were assigned to specific employees to ensure these tasks were completed during the maternity leave, but this occasionally led to added work involvement for the mothers. A few interviewees were able to leave work with clear calendars because their roles at work had a project-based focus. In the circumstances surrounding these interviewees, the choice was made to complete projects before taking maternity leave to refrain from having outstanding projects while away from the office. However, there were no interview questions specifically crafted to delve deeper into the reason behind decisions to place tasks on hold. The source of the decision to forego extra projects before taking maternity leave was not always clear; that authority may have come from the interview participants or their supervisors.

It is possible leaving the workplace devoid of outstanding projects was a form of self-initiated job security since these projects could not easily be completed by others. With Interviewee #9 discussing fear of becoming superseded at work, placing her projects on hold may have lessened fear in some ways. However, delaying work opportunities before taking maternity leave could also be perceived as a decision to decline higher achievements at work. Sandberg (2013) noted an epidemic of women choosing to decline prospects at work because of family or the intent to have children. The interviewees in this study did not speak of desires to achieve higher goals at work, but interview questions did not probe for this information.

Level of satisfaction based on job type. During this study, a division appeared between staff level interviewees and more professional level interviewees as evidenced by the extent of dedication shown to the job while on maternity leave. It has been noted in the literature some women are more career-driven than others, which seemed to

emerge in this research when comparing the data to the interviewee job type (Baker, 2014; Keenan, 2014; Kendzior, 2014; Leventhal-Weiner, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). Employees in managerial and professional positions were more likely to remain involved with work while utilizing the FMLA benefits. This observation is consistent with the experience shared by Sandberg (2013) who was a high-ranking official with her company during her time on maternity leave.

Work-life balance and self-actualization. The continuous struggle to achieve work-life balance became an obvious factor influencing the interviewees' ascent through Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014). On occasion, several women were not adequately meeting the most basic physiological needs due to caring for children and balancing the schedules of work and personal life. For example, Interviewee #9 discussed her illnesses and mental fatigue resulting from neglecting her needs after the birth of her child. Progressing or digressing through the different levels of the pyramid proved to be an act of fluid travel in both directions rather than a course of upward movement alone (McLeod, 2014).

Needs of the children versus needs of the mothers. During the course of this study, an apparent obstacle to the achievement of self-actualization was too often neglecting personal needs in favor of caring for children (Biddle, 1986; McLeod, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). Undoubtedly, the interviewees had given top priority to their children, but by being a mother, the perceived perception was personal needs were unimportant. Several mothers surrendered needs such as sleep, social time with friends and colleagues, and ambition at work, thus creating more distance between their positions on Maslow's pyramid and the point of self-actualization (Maslow, 1954; McLeod, 2014). In some

instances, so much was sacrificed that emotions felt by different interviewees included depression, extreme exhaustion, fear, and loneliness. One interviewee admitted, "I felt very alone, and I felt like the duties as a mother fell on me." While neglecting children would not be a suitable solution to this problem, several mothers who neglected their own needs made remarks in hindsight indicating they would have liked to have acted differently during the time following childbirth to maintain their own health.

Fear versus content. A few interviewees opened up about fear being a factor in decisions made at work. Fear is often one reason women decide not to speak up or take risks in the workplace (Sandberg, 2013). As supported by literature, fear developed in multiple aspects of the workplace including losing one's job, unfavorable perceptions from colleagues, and personal inadequacies (Baker, 2014; Keenan, 2014; Kendzior, 2014; Leventhal-Weiner, 2014; Sandberg, 2013). Several interviewees prohibited themselves from asking for help or accommodations because the unknown repercussions of these requests created fear of how the requests might be perceived. Interviewee #9 and #10 each shared a reluctance to seek certain accommodations. In several situations, accommodations likely could have been made to generate a more positive work environment had the interviewees felt comfortable seeking support in the workplace.

However, fear was not always a factor in the choices made by the interviewees. There was one interviewee who chose to accept the unknown. She was pregnant at the time she accepted the position at the college and chose not to disclose that information during the hiring process. This circumstance appears to suggest although many women will often put work on hold when planning for children, financial need often dictates the

decision-making process (Coulson et al., 2012; Dodson, 2013; Mäkelä**,** 2012; Sandberg, 2013).

Prioritization. Another unanticipated theme emerging from this study was the level of prioritization developed after the participants entered motherhood. The general sentiment expressed by the interviewees conveyed a new sense of prioritization for the optimal output in the roles of mother and employee. Interviewees #4, #5, #7, and #10 described ways they strategized to create more favorable work schedules in order to accommodate family needs, to set reasonable expectations at work and adhere to the process needed to reach goals, and make sure their priorities were known. Along with the change in priorities, several interviewees became advocates for motherhood by setting personal ground rules to command respect for their wishes to put their children's needs ahead of priorities at work. Interviewees #3 and #8 were both vocal with supervisors to ensure an understanding of family prioritization.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study suggest one of the best approaches to creating a better work environment for expecting and new mothers is to create a training program for employees in positions of authority (Davis, 2014). Organizations, such as the college in this study, could greatly benefit from a centralized, documented procedure to handle maternity leave and deal with sensitive issues associated with pregnancy and motherhood. A centralized process would generate consistency and create expectations for both employers and subordinates. As the academic calendar does provide an obstacle for HE, particularly in teaching roles, separate processes for staff and faculty might be warranted.

One step in the training process should include an awareness component (Davis, 2014; Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, 2016; Kurtovich et al., 2015). Several of the participants in this study perceived their supervisors to be unaware of different issues faced by new mothers. During the postpartum period for the women interviewed, the college did not have a proper place for mothers to pump or nurse, and several supervisors did not appear to understand how to make accommodations. Because of the lack of accommodations, several women felt pressure to pump in uncomfortable situations or stop breastfeeding their children. Supervisors would benefit from knowing the type of accommodations that can be supplied as well as knowing how to support and advocate for their subordinates. Ultimately, many accommodations should be made under the supervision of or with input from HR.

Awareness also includes informing expectant and new mothers of their rights in the workplace and giving guidance in ways to seek accommodations (Davis, 2014; Kurtovich et al., 2015). The data collected in this study showed many women do not know how to seek work accommodations or feel uncomfortable making accommodation requests. Perhaps some accommodations should come standard with new mothers, and a clear process should be created for requesting work adjustments outside of standard procedure. The women interviewed who were able to find satisfactory alterations to work demands were still able to perform their roles at work.

Many times throughout this study, the decentralized course of action when making work accommodations created friction between colleagues and occasionally did little to alleviate the stress the interviewees were feeling. A recorded leave plan, approved by HR, could help expecting mothers know how their roles are being performed

while they are on maternity leave. With a written leave plan, employees would be empowered to have input regarding how tasks will be completed, and by whom, until returning to work postpartum. A leave plan could also ensure tasks are being completed rather than accruing while new mothers are on maternity leave, reducing stress levels upon returning to work. Higher levels of cross-training would also add to the ability of colleagues to complete tasks of co-workers on maternity leave rather than creating a state of dependence at work.

Additionally, a transition plan, completed by mothers along with coordination among human resources and supervisors, would allow workplace flexibility to be discussed prior to maternity leave. This accommodation discussion might remove apprehension and nervousness associated with taking an extended period of time off work. Furthermore, knowing what to expect upon returning to work post maternity leave, should make the transition process more seamless.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several aspects of this study could be amended for future research. This study contains limits based on the scope of the sample, the perspectives gathered, and the questions asked. These limits provide facets that could be further explored and developed. Specific recommendations are described in this section.

This study was limited to a single higher education institution, and the sample size was 10 participants. Future research could benefit from including multiple higher education institutions as well as widening the breadth of institutions to include different sectors of HE. It is possible there is a difference between public and private institutions

as well as potential differences in community colleges, junior colleges and for-profit colleges.

Perspectives for this study were gathered only from mothers working in higher education and may have been biased. Future research could include perspectives from supervisors and human resources professionals to view the other side of the topic and determine opposing viewpoints and recommendations to remedy some of issues found during this study. Additionally, supervisors and human resources professionals may be able to better explain situations in cases of sensitive topics.

Although the FMLA allows parental leave for fathers as well as mothers, this study did not include perceptions of new fathers in the workplace (Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, 2016; Melamed, 2014; Roxburgh, 1999). Interviewing fathers would be beneficial in learning the struggles faced by men who are also working to balance work life and family life. Mothers are typically labelled as caregivers, which gives fathers a separate set of issues and biases in the workplace when choosing to be more involved in family life and taking paternity leave as a new parent (Melamed, 2014; Sallee, 2013).

Along with fathers, members of the non-traditional family unit likely face obstacles differing from those explored in this study. Members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) community, foster parents, adoptive parents, legal guardians, or any combination of parental units may have different perceptions of the work environment than the women interviewed in this study (Dixon & Dougherty, 2014). Additionally, legal issues related to parenting may provide added obstacles for families considered to be non-traditional (Davis, 2014; Dobbs, 2013; Enquist, 2012).

An effort was made to keep the interview questions concise and pointed. Additional interview questions could be created to probe for some of the information lacking in this study. In particular, questions developed to ascertain career goals of interviewees would help in evaluating the relationship between individual aspirations and job satisfaction.

Summary

In Chapter One, the study was introduced by explaining the background and purpose of the research. Key terms were noted and defined, research questions were listed, and study limitations and assumptions were recorded. The theoretical framework was also introduced to provide direction for the study.

Literature related to the study topic was reviewed in Chapter Two and served as a connecting piece between the research questions and findings of the study. The literature reviewed was divided into four major subcategories to support this study: theoretical framework, legal foundations, women in the workplace, and job satisfaction. Results of this study were compared and contrasted to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

In Chapter Three, the methodology of the study was explained in detail to provide guidance for future replication of the study. Information in Chapter Three was also instrumental in sharing the validity and reliability of the study. The entire process of this study and the ethical considerations were shared to provide transparency and display reassurances of confidentiality.

The interviews were conducted and the responses transcribed. These data were, summarized in Chapter Four. Emerging themes were identified and explained for further

review in Chapter Five. Each theme was given support with the inclusion of specific quotes and commentary from study participants.

The study findings and conclusions were explained in Chapter Five. Conclusions were tied to literature reviewed in Chapter Two to establish support or opposition to the data collected. Once the results of the study were shared, Chapter Five also included implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

Appendix A

Participant Screening

Please choose THE BEST answer to each question.

* Required

I have utilized maternity leave while employed at [redacted]. *

- Yes
- No

I have a child/children under 5 years old. *

- Yes, and I was employed at [redacted] when I took maternity leave with this child (or one of these children)
- Yes, but I was not employed at [redacted] when I took maternity leave with this child (or one of these children)
- No

I have a child/children elementary school aged or younger. *

- Yes, and I was employed at [redacted] when I took maternity leave with this child (or one of these children)
- Yes, but I was not employed at [redacted] when I took maternity leave with this child (or one of these children)
- No

I have a child/children who have not yet entered high school. *

- Yes, and I was employed at [redacted] when I took maternity leave with this child (or one of these children)
- Yes, but I was not employed at [redacted] when I took maternity leave with this child (or one of these children)
- No

Please enter your personal (non-[redacted]) email address if you are interested in participating in this study. *

Your email address should not end in [redacted]. If you are not interested in participating in this study, please enter N/A.

If you agree to participate in this study, please give yourself a pseudonym.

Please use any name that is not your own. If you are not interested in participating in this study, enter N/A.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Describe the dynamics of your work environment and your relationship with your supervisors and co-workers before, during, and after your maternity leave. (prompt if any time period is omitted)

2. Was your employer sensitive to your need for flexibility before, during, and after maternity leave?

3. What changes in your work environment and relationships, if any, did you notice upon returning to work? Please provide examples.

4. To what extent were you in contact with work associates while on maternity leave?

5. Did you work from home while on maternity leave? If so, why?

6. In what manner have your abilities to perform your essential job functions changed since returning to work, if at all?

7. In what areas, if any, did you need to be debriefed or provided extra support upon returning to work? Was this activity self-initiated or department-initiated?

8. How were your job duties divided among other co-workers while you were out?

9. Did your co-workers do as they were asked with your duties, and were they returned to you in good standing?

10. Are there any work-related aspects of your experience from announcing your pregnancy at work to your return to work transition that you wish could have been different?

11. Describe your network of support as a new mother both in and outside of the workplace. How do they help you?

12. Do you feel like your work environment is still capable of meeting your needs? Please explain.

Appendix C

LINDENWOOD

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

DATE:	November 20, 2015
TO:	Chelsey Taylor, Ed.D.
FROM:	Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board
STUDY TITLE:	[810438-1] A Qualitative Study of Workplace Perceptions by Postpartum Women
IRB REFERENCE #:	
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	November 20, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE:	November 20, 2016
REVIEW TYPE:	Full Committee Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research project. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Full Committee Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of November 20, 2016.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

If you have any questions, please contact Megan Woods at (636) 485-9005 or mwoods1@lindenwood.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

If you have any questions, please send them to mwoods1@lindenwood.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board's records.

Appendix D

From: [redacted]
Date: December 8, 2015 at 9:41:31 AM CST
To: "TAYLOR, CHELSEY K." [redacted]
Subject: IRB Approval

Your application for "A Qualitative Study of Workplace Perceptions by Postpartum Women" has been approved.

Please let me know of any questions,

[redacted]
College Director, Research & Strategic Planning
[redacted]

Appendix E

[redacted] COLLEGE

Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board
Office for Human Research Protections
209 South Kingshighway Street
St Charles, MO 63301

November 11, 2015

Dear Lindenwood University IRB:

On behalf of [redacted] College Human Resources Department, I am writing to grant permission for Chelsey Taylor, an Ed. D. candidate at Lindenwood University, to conduct her research titled, "A Qualitative Study of Workplace Perceptions by Postpartum Women".

This permission is contingent upon Institution Review Board approval from Lindenwood University and [redacted] College if deemed a procedural step by the administration. I understand that Chelsey will recruit up to 20 of our employees and conduct interviews at an agreed upon location over the next two months. It is expected that all documents and communication along with the communication method provided to employees would be reviewed and approved by me. It must be clear that all employees know it is a voluntary process and the process should not interfere with workflow.

Finally, it is expected that [redacted] and its participants be anonymous throughout any published report. I would also like a copy of the report upon its completion.

We are happy to participate in this study and contribute to this important research.

Sincerely,

[redacted]
Associate Vice Chancellor
Human Resources & Workforce Development
[redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix F

Recruitment E-mail

Subject: Invitation to Participate in Doctoral Research

Dear_____

I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri, majoring in Higher Education Administration. I am also a staff member at [redacted] in [redacted].

For my dissertation, I am conducting research to identify how women assimilate into role of working mother and any challenges faced from the time of announcing the pregnancy at work to returning to work postpartum. The purpose of this to determine how job satisfaction of working mothers can be influenced based on perceptions at work.

Your participation would be extremely valuable. If you are willing to participate, please indicate that by completing a short survey at [redacted]. I will contact you to determine a mutually acceptable time and location for your interview.

All information provided during the interview will be kept confidential, and your identity will in no way be revealed. If you have any questions about the process, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail ([redacted]) or phone [redacted] . You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Rhonda Bishop, at Lindenwood University at rbishop@lindenwood. edu.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chelsey K. Taylor
Doctoral Student
Lindenwood University

Appendix G

Informed Consent

LINDENWOOD

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

"A Quantitative Study of Workplace Perceptions by Postpartum Women"

Principal Investigator__Chelsey K. Taylor_____
Telephone: [redacted] E-mail: taylor[redacted]

Participant_____ Contact info _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Chelsey Taylor under the guidance of Dr. Rhonda Bishop. The purpose of this research is to identify how working women in higher education balance the roles of mother and employee and the types of information women identify as being beneficial as they transition into their role of working mother.

2. a) Your participation will involve participating in a brief in-person or telephone interview during which you will answer questions about your experiences as a mother working in higher education. Interviews will be conducted at a time and location acceptable to you by a third-party interviewer. After the interview has been transcribed, I will send you a link and password to log in and view the transcript and ask you to review it for accuracy.

   I give my permission for the interview session to be recorded.
   *Participant's initials:*_____

   b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 30-45 minutes.
   c) Approximately 10 participants will be invited for interviews for this research project. These participants will be from a Midwestern college.

3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about the experiences of working women in higher education as they transition into their roles as working mothers. The

findings from this study may provide a better understanding of how to assimilate women back into the workforce after becoming mothers.

5. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator (Chelsey Taylor, [redacted]) or the Supervising Faculty, (Dr. Rhonda Bishop, [redacted]). You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost, at mabbott@lindenwood.edu or 636-949-4912.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Please know that we will do everything possible to protect your privacy. This interview is voluntary, and you have the right to stop participating at any time or not answer any question(s) you are not comfortable answering. This study has a small sample size between 10 and 20 participants. The possibility exists that readers of the research may be able to identify participants even if identifying information is omitted.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date Participant's Printed Name

_____ _____

Signature of Principal Investigator Date Investigator Printed Name

Appendix H

Interviewer Training

Preparation for Interview:

1. Work with interviewee to choose a time and location for the interview. Choose a setting with little distraction. Avoid loud lights or noises, and ensure the interviewee is comfortable (you might ask them if they are).
2. Explain the purpose of the interview.
3. Address terms of confidentiality. Note any terms of confidentiality. (Be careful here. Rarely can you absolutely promise anything. Courts may get access to information, in certain circumstances.) Explain who will get access to their answers and how their answers will be analyzed. If their comments are to be used as quotes, get their written permission to do so. (see Appendix D)
4. Explain the format of the interview. Explain that the interview is for doctoral research purposes. Explain that the interview will be tape recorded and notes may be taken, and interviewees will have an opportunity to review a written transcript of the interview.
5. Indicate that the interview will last approximately 30 minutes.
6. Tell them how to get in touch with you later if they want to.
7. Ask them if they have any questions before you both get started with the interview.

Conducting Interview:

8. Occasionally verify the tape recorder is working.
9. Ask one question at a time.
10. Attempt to remain as neutral as possible. That is, do not show strong emotional reactions to their responses.
11. Encourage responses with occasional nods of the head, "uh huh"s, etc.
12. Be careful about the appearance when note taking. That is, if you jump to take a note, it may appear as if you're surprised or very pleased about an answer, which may influence answers to future questions.
13. Do not lose control of the interview. This can occur when respondents stray to another topic, take so long to answer a question that times begins to run out, or even begin asking questions to the interviewer.

Immediately After Interview:

14. Verify the tape recorder worked throughout the interview.
15. Make any notes on your written notes, e.g., to clarify any scratchings, ensure pages are numbered, fill out any notes that do not make senses, etc.

16. Write down any observations made during the interview. For example, where did the interview occur and when, was the respondent particularly nervous at any time? Were there any surprises during the interview? Did the tape recorder break?

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Vita

Chelsey Taylor has been a recruiter and Admissions Representative for four years at a Missouri community college. Prior to this position Chelsey worked in finance.

Chelsey is a 2004 Graduate of Lamar High School. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Management from Missouri State University. In 2009, she completed her Master of Business Administration, also from Missouri State University.

In her free time, Chelsey enjoys watching sports and is a huge supporter of the Kansas City Chiefs. She also values spending time with family and friends and her beloved dog, Layla.