

PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL LEAVE POLICIES IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

By

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Abstract

The discussion of parental leave has been occurring for several decades, and it is important to be aware of the constantly changing views people have. For this study, students in the University of Indianapolis community were given information about parental leave policies and were asked for their opinions. This study educated participants through the use of a fact sheet and an anecdotal passage about parental leave and gathered feedback about the current opinion of students in the University of Indianapolis community regarding parental leave policies. As a future occupational therapist, my goal is to make sure my patients are healthy and have the resources to succeed. An exploration of the current literature suggests that the health of mothers, fathers, and their children can be improved with paid parental leave programs (Daugher et al. 2013). The goal of this study was to see if perceptions about parental leave changed based on the kind of information people receive.

Keywords: parental leave, family-friendly programs, perceptions of parental leave, maternal leave, paternal leave, stereotype threat, workplace stereotype threat

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Introduction, Intellectual Context, Framework and Theory

Perceptions of Gender in the Workplace

The concept of paid parental leave has been the topic of conversation in businesses, both big and small, for decades. Although it has the potential to be costly for business owners, it benefits the developing bond between the parents and newborn, and the wellbeing of the mother and the child (Daughter et al., 2013). The Family and Medical Leave Act requires companies in the United States with 50 or more employees to provide at least twelve weeks of unpaid leave for family or medical reasons. This program is available to employees who have been with a company for at least one year and have worked a minimum of 1,250 hours. It includes sick leave, parental leave, or leave to take care of a sick family member (FMLA, 2016). The amount of usage of these programs can vary depending on the work place environment and the amount of support mothers and fathers have if they choose to take leave.

An issue that frequently arises in the workplace and that may have an effect on leave policies is how men and women are sometimes viewed differently in professional settings. In one study, researchers presented participants vignettes of two managers, one male and one female, who were identical in how they managed. The results showed that the female manager was perceived to be less likable than her male counterpart in identical situations (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). Similar issues are seen in healthcare settings. Data on referrals for primary care physicians found that female doctors were punished more severely and for longer periods of time than male doctors for the same unfavorable surgical outcomes (Sarsons, 2017). This type of gender bias in the workplace impacts

female employees in many ways including putting a negative stigma on the utilization of family-friendly programs such as leave of absence, part-time work, and job-sharing. Evidence of this was revealed in a 2017 study by von Hippel, Kalokerinos, and Zacher, which focused on how stereotype threat can be a factor in the utilization of family-friendly programs. They found that gender-based stereotype threat, or the fear of being viewed with a negative stereotype about one's gender, was positively associated with perceived negative career consequences because of the utilization of family-friendly programs (von Hippel et al., 2017). Similarly, Manchester, Leslie, and Park found in 2008 that maternal leave usage, rather than the birth of the child, is what impacts potential wage-growth in white-collar professions. Working mothers who utilize maternity leave policies experience wage-growth of 2.4% less than working mothers who do not utilize these policies (Manchester et al., 2008).

Perceptions of Parental Leave

Many companies are beginning to adopt family-friendly policies that are offered to parents of both biological and adopted newborns. Some of these policies include leave of absence, part-time employment, working from home, on-site daycare, flexible scheduling, and job-sharing (where two employees share the workload of one employee). Many factors go into whether or not these benefits will actually be utilized by employees. One of the first papers to look into this matter was published in 1999. Thompson, Beauvais, and Lyness looked into work-family culture (the way a company responds to family matters among their employees) and how it impacts work-family benefit utilization. They sent out a questionnaire to alumni of various graduate programs of

northeastern universities and asked them about their perceptions of work-family culture, organizational support, and work-family benefit utilization at their current companies. They found that individuals were more likely to utilize family-friendly policies when they had more supportive work-family cultures. The results also revealed the idea that those who chose to take advantage of these policies had a greater commitment to their company, and were less likely to leave (Thompson et al., 1999). Although this study was done many years ago, its findings are still relevant and supported by current literature. In a more recent study, it was found that companies that are ranked higher on lists such as Forbes' America's Best Employers and Glassdoor's Best Places to Work are associated with offering at least some paid maternity leave (Solheid, 2016). For example, before Google increased maternity leave to five months, female employee retention rates were half that of men. After the new implementation, female and male retention rates were equal (West, 2015).

Gender Differences in Perceptions of Parental Leave

In 2004, Butler, Gasser, and Smart conducted research on work outcome expectancies for men and women who utilized family friendly policies. They distributed a questionnaire to 188 parents asking about perceived career and family outcomes. Findings revealed that women were influenced by their expected negative career outcomes more than men when deciding whether or not to utilize family-friendly programs. These findings suggest that women perceive their societal punishment to be greater in the workplace when they take advantage of family-friendly programs offered than men do (Butler et al., 2004). Von Hippel et al. supported these findings by

highlighting the differences between working mothers and non-working mothers. Their data revealed that working mothers are seen as being less committed to their job when compared to their male counterparts (von Hippel et al., 2017). Additionally, research has shown that non-mothers are more likely to be hired and considered for executive positions than mothers (Bygren et al., 2017). For paternal leave, there is evidence that stay-at-home fathers face societal judgement while working fathers are seen as more competent and warmer than childless fathers. However, this support is decreased when fathers choose to actually take advantage of parental leave. Once they decided to take a 12-week leave, fathers were then viewed as “more feminine,” “less altruistic at work,” and “warmer but less successful,” (Fleischmann & Sieverding, 2015).

Policies Implemented in Other Countries

Many European countries offer lucrative parental leave policies for mothers, but not for fathers. For example, Ireland offers 25 weeks of high paid (75-100%) maternal leave, but zero weeks of paid paternal leave. Italy has a policy that allows mothers 20 weeks of high paid leave, and an additional 26 weeks of low paid (less than 50%) leave, with fathers getting 26 weeks of low paid leave. Many countries also offer transferrable weeks of paid or partially paid leave. France offers almost 140 weeks of low paid leave. Estonia offers over 60 weeks of fully paid, and another 80 weeks of low paid leave. These transferrable weeks of leave can be used by either the mother or the father at the discretion of the organization they work for (Castro-García & Pazos-Moran, 2015).

Policies Implemented within Companies without Support of Other Employees

With the arguments for parental leave policies gaining support from families across the world, another viewpoint has entered the discussion. A group known as the Childless Network advocates for employees without children. They argue that childless employees work longer hours, take on more projects, and are unable to take advantage of flexible work scheduling that their coworkers with children are sometimes offered (Parker & Allen, 2001). Negative perceptions of parental leave like these are instilled partly by the idea that parenthood is not a requirement. Parenthood “is a morally permissible but not morally mandatory choice that persons make to enrich their own lives” (Mills, 2001). With this idea that parenthood is not a requirement of adults, childless employees question their obligation to provide for a seemingly optional leave of absence. However, others argue, and the literature seems to support the idea that parental leave policies are a part of providing adequate care for the child during their first crucial months of life, making it a basic human need for the child (Mills, 2001).

Benefits of Family-Friendly Programs

Family-friendly programs have been found to benefit companies, the health of the parents, and the health of the child. In addition to previously outlined company benefits, women who took leave were 93% more likely to be at work 9-12 months after the child’s birth than women who did not take leave (Houser & Vartanian, 2012). Further, allowing mothers to stay home with their newborn for longer allows them to continue breastfeeding, and literature on the subject estimates that non-breastfed infants require \$331 to \$475 in additional medical costs when compared to breastfed infants. This suggests that companies providing their employees with family-friendly programs can

potentially save companies money in the long-run by ensuring the health of the child during the first few months of life (West, 2015).

Additional literature has supported the benefits of family-friendly programs for children. Evidence shows that parental leave policies can lower mortality rates in children and can shorten hospital stays early in the child's life by 31% (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2015). Mothers who utilize family-friendly programs also experience benefits. Literature shows that women who utilize paid maternity leave are 40% less likely to use public assistance in the child's first year of life compared to women who are unable to take leave (Houser & Vartanian, 2012). Fathers also benefit from family-friendly programs, as literature suggests that fathers who take leave are more involved in their child's care than fathers who do not (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2015).

Current Proposal

The current study aimed to identify how individuals view the integration of paid parental leave policies in healthcare facilities such as hospitals, and how this perception differed based on the kind of information they received. Additionally, the study investigated how perceptions differ between maternal leave policies and paternal leave policies. The perceptions of stereotype threat and the perceptions of negative career outcomes were also assessed based on random placement in one of three groups. One group received no information, one group received an anecdotal passage regarding parental leave policies, and one group received a fact sheet regarding parental leave policies.

Method

Study Approach/Design

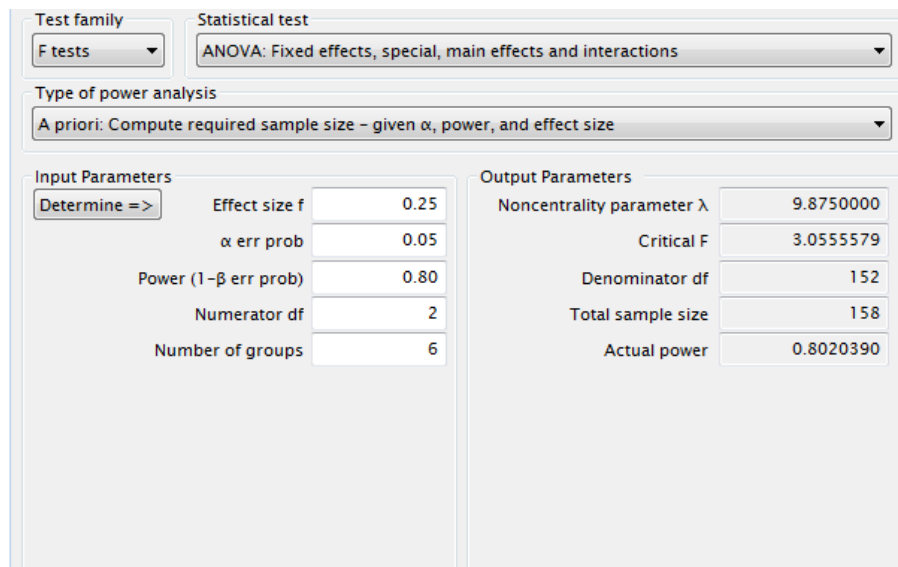
This study used a survey design, with two experimental conditions and a control condition. The control condition provided no information about parental leave to the participant, the first experimental condition used a fact sheet on parental leave policies, and the second experimental condition provided an anecdotal passage regarding parental leave policies.

Participants

In order to be eligible to participate in this study, participants had to be students from the University of Indianapolis (UIndy) who were at least 18 years old. They were recruited through SONA Systems and through flyers distributed on campus at UIndy. Data was collected from 101 participants for this study. *Figure 1* provides a power analysis for the main effects of gender, and *Figure 2* provides a power analysis for the main effects of information type. Assuming a medium effect size with 80% power, 158 participants were needed for this study.

Test family		Statistical test	
F tests		ANOVA: Fixed effects, special, main effects and interactions	
Type of power analysis			
A priori: Compute required sample size – given α , power, and effect size			
Input Parameters		Output Parameters	
Determine =>	Effect size f	0.25	Noncentrality parameter λ
	α err prob	0.05	Critical F
	Power ($1 - \beta$ err prob)	0.80	Denominator df
	Numerator df	1	Total sample size
	Number of groups	6	Actual power
			8.0000000
			3.9188157
			122
			128
			0.8012613

Figure 1: Power Analysis for Main Effect of Gender



Test family: F tests

Statistical test: ANOVA: Fixed effects, special, main effects and interactions

Type of power analysis: A priori: Compute required sample size - given α , power, and effect size

Input Parameters:

- Determine =>
- Effect size f: 0.25
- α err prob: 0.05
- Power ($1 - \beta$ err prob): 0.80
- Numerator df: 2
- Number of groups: 6

Output Parameters:

- Noncentrality parameter λ : 9.8750000
- Critical F: 3.0555579
- Denominator df: 152
- Total sample size: 158
- Actual power: 0.8020390

Figure 2: Power Analysis for Main Effect of Information Type

The participants in this study were 91.1% female ($n=92$) and 8.9% male ($n=9$). Ninety-five percent of participants were 18-24 years old ($n=96$), 4% were 25-34 ($n=4$), and 1% was 35-44 ($n=1$). Most of the participants in this study were White (88.2%, $n=83$), followed by Black or African American (7.9%, $n=8$), then Hispanic or Latino (4%, $n=4$), Asian or Pacific Islander (3%, $n=3$), Other (2%, $n=2$), and Native American or American Indian (1%, $n=1$). Of those who responded to this question, 5% of participants reported that they had at least one child ($n=5$), and 95% reported that they did not have any children ($n=95$). One participant did not respond to this question. See *Tables 1-4* for this information.

Table 1: Gender Demographics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	9	8.9	8.9	8.9
	Female	92	91.1	91.1	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Age Demographics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	96	95.0	95.0	95.0
	25-34	4	4.0	4.0	99.0
	35-44	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Race/Ethnicity Demographics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White	83	82.2	82.2	82.2
	Hispanic or Latino	4	4.0	4.0	86.1
	Black or African American	8	7.9	7.9	94.1
	Native American or American Indian	1	1.0	1.0	95.0
	Asian or Pacific Islander	3	3.0	3.0	98.0
	Other	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Parental Status Demographics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	5	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Yes	95	94.1	95.0	100.0
	Total	100	99.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.0		
Total		101	100.0		

*Materials/Measures**1. Demographic*

The first set of questions was asked before any manipulation was presented and consisted of demographic questions such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, education level, and if the participant has children or not, because the latter could have been a factor in how participants responded.

2. Manipulations

After the demographic questions, participants were provided with one of three conditions: no information, a fact sheet, or an anecdotal passage. Following the completion of the randomized condition, all participants were given the same series of measures to gather their perceptions of stereotype threat in the workplace based on gender and parenthood, perceived career outcomes due to their utilization of family-friendly programs, and the likelihood of their utilization of family-friendly programs in the future. Following the manipulations, the same series of measures was presented to every participant, regardless of the group in which they were randomly placed. The components of the questionnaire are discussed in the sections below. Thirty-three point seven percent of the participants were assigned to the control condition (n=34), 31.7% were assigned to receive the anecdotal passage (n=32), and 34.7% were assigned to receive the fact sheet (n=35).

3. Stereotype Threat

A measure was used to determine stereotype threat against mothers and fathers in the workplace. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with statements such as

“Women who are mothers have less managerial ability than women who aren’t mothers,” on a Likert scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). The same questions were also asked regarding fathers. There were 32 items for this measure, with 18 items adapted from von Hippel et al. (2017) and 10 adapted from Thompson et al. (1999). An example question was, “I would be frustrated if I had to pick up extra shifts or take on new patients at the hospital because a coworker was taking a leave of absence due to family-related reasons,” and four items that were created for this study (e.g. “Companies should be obligated to offer family-friendly policies to their employees who are fathers”). The questions obtained for this measure were from previous studies and were provided to me via personal communication by an author of one of the studies, Dr. Courtney von Hippel or were made available in the 1999 study by Thompson et al. These questions were designed to determine if the participants felt stereotype threat towards parents who utilize family friendly programs. Permission was received to reproduce these questions in this study (see Appendix A for the complete inventory). The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure is .946 (see *Table 5*).

Table 5: Reliability of Stereotype Threat Measure

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.943	.946	32

4. Perceived career outcomes

A measure with 10 items to test for perceived career outcomes was also utilized. Eight items were adapted from Butler et al. (2004) including, “Using family-friendly

policies in the workplace should result in negative career outcomes,” and two items were created for this study (e.g. “People who utilize family-friendly policies should be able to feel like their job is waiting for them when they return”). The questions obtained for this measure were from a previous study and were provided to me via personal communication by one of the authors of that study, Dr. Adam Butler. They were designed to determine whether participants predict a negative career outcome as a result of the utilization of family-friendly programs. Permission was received to reproduce these questions in this study (see *Appendix A* for the complete inventory). The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure is .856 (see *Table 6*).

Table 6: Reliability of Perceived Career Outcomes Measure

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.851	.856	10

5. Utilization of family-friendly programs

A measure consisting of six items was used to test for perceived utilization of family-friendly programs. Five items were replicated from Butler et al. (2004) including, “Leave of absence”), and one was replicated from von Hippel et al. (2017) including, “Unpaid leave”. The questions obtained for this measure were from a previous study and were provided to me via personal communication by one of the authors of that study, Dr. Adam Butler. They were designed to determine if stereotype threat and negative perceived career outcomes impact people’s utilization of family-friendly programs.

Permission was received to reproduce these questions in this study (see *Appendix A* for the complete inventory). The Cronbach's alpha for this measure is .708 (see *Table 7*).

Table 7: Reliability of Utilization Measure

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.697	.708	6

Procedures

This study was presented to participants through an online survey. Prior to allowing participants to complete the study, they were required to provide their informed consent to ensure that they understood the risks and benefits of their participation. No identifying information was gathered from the participants. Qualtrics randomly assigned participants to one of three conditions: one group received an anecdotal passage from a parent who would benefit from family-friendly programs; one group received a fact sheet on the benefits and successes of family-friendly programs in another country; and one group received no information at all. The group serving as the control condition received no information and was asked about their perceptions through filling out the questionnaire explained in the *Materials/Measures* section. The first experimental group was presented with statistical information about the benefits of maternal and paternal leave and was then given the same questionnaire as the control group. The final experimental group was presented with anecdotal information about maternal and paternal leave and was given the same questionnaire as the other two groups (see *Appendix A* for the complete inventory).

Participants with inconsistent data were excluded from analyses. Attention checks were utilized throughout to ensure participants were paying attention. For example, one question was scored on a scale of one to five, with one being a low level of support for family-friendly programs, and another question was scored with one being a high level of support for family-friendly programs, depending on the wording of the questions. Some of the questions were specific to maternity or paternity leave, so to counterbalance any bias by answering a certain set of questions first, I randomly assigned participants to receive the maternity leave questions first, and some to receive the paternity leave questions first.

To conclude my study, participants were given the option to request research credit for their time, and they were also given the option to enter their names in a drawing for one of four \$25 Amazon gift cards. The four recipients of the gift cards were notified via email, and this is also how they received their gift cards. Participants also received a debriefing document explaining that the purpose of the study was to investigate the different responses depending on what type of information was presented to them. I then thanked them for their participation. The entire study was designed to take approximately 15 minutes for each individual to complete. Qualtrics was used to handle the storing of my data and ensure confidentiality, and all questionnaires were completed using this program.

Data Analysis Plan

To analyze the data, One-Way ANOVA was used to determine whether there was a main effect of the type of information participants were given, as well as a main effect

of gender. A One-Way ANOVA allowed for the analysis of significance between groups. I predicted that female participants would have more positive perceptions of family-friendly programs across all three groups and would be more likely to utilize available resources, and that the male participants in the fact sheet group would have more positive perceptions compared to the other male participants. I also predicted that females would report higher levels of stereotype threat and negative perceived career outcomes, similar to the findings of Butler et al. (2004). The confirmation of these hypotheses would provide insight into what methods are more effective for informing individuals about the benefits of family-friendly policies in the workplace, specifically healthcare settings, and how stereotype threat can be limited to encourage mothers and fathers to utilize available programs.

Results

After running a One-Way ANOVA, results showed no significant difference between the experimental conditions for utilization of family-friendly programs ($F(2,98)=.734, p=.483$), perceived career outcomes ($F(2,98)=.585, p=.559$), or stereotype threat ($F(2,98)=.812, p=.447$) (see *Table 11*). A One-Way ANOVA was also run to test for gender differences, and the assumption of homogeneity was met (see *Table 8*). *Table 9* outlines the results from the test of normality, in which the only significant results were for females in the career measure, and female in the stereotype threat measure. There was a significant difference between male and female participants for utilization of family-friendly programs ($F(2,98)=5.837, p=.018$) and stereotype threat ($F(2,98)=4.639, p=.034$) (see *Table 11*). There was not a significant difference between male and female participants for perceived career outcomes ($F(2,98)=.390, p=.534$) (see *Table 11*).

Table 8: Test of Homogeneity for ANOVA for Gender Differences

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
UTILIZATION	.162	1	99	.688
CAREER	1.455	1	99	.231
STEREOTYPE	.754	1	99	.387

Table 9: Test of Normality for ANOVA for Gender Differences

	Gender	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
UTILIZATION	Male	.245	9	.126	.868	9	.117
	Female	.084	92	.123	.978	92	.113
CAREER	Male	.162	9	.200 [*]	.957	9	.766
	Female	.127	92	.001	.921	92	.000
STEREOTYPE	Male	.219	9	.200 [*]	.907	9	.294
	Female	.149	92	.000	.901	92	.000

^{*}. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 10: ANOVA for Differences in Condition

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
UTILIZATION	Between Groups	24.071	2	12.035	.734	.483
	Within Groups	1607.296	98	16.401		
	Total	1631.366	100			
CAREER	Between Groups	34.545	2	17.273	.585	.559
	Within Groups	2895.345	98	29.544		
	Total	2929.890	100			
STEREOTYPE	Between Groups	549.940	2	274.970	.812	.447
	Within Groups	33202.068	98	338.797		
	Total	33752.007	100			

Table 11: ANOVA for Differences in Gender

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
UTILIZATION	Between Groups	90.825	1	90.825	5.837	.018
	Within Groups	1540.541	99	15.561		
	Total	1631.366	100			
CAREER	Between Groups	11.484	1	11.484	.390	.534
	Within Groups	2918.406	99	29.479		
	Total	2929.890	100			
STEREOTYPE	Between Groups	1510.631	1	1510.631	4.639	.034
	Within Groups	32241.376	99	325.670		
	Total	33752.007	100			

Discussion

For this study, I predicted that female participants would have more positive perceptions of family-friendly programs across all three groups—the control group, the group that received an anecdotal passage, and the group that received the fact sheet—and would be more likely to utilize available resources. Additionally, I predicted that the male participants in the fact sheet group would have more positive perceptions compared to other male participants. I also predicted that female participants would report higher levels of stereotype threat and negative perceived career outcomes. Results showed no significant differences between the experimental conditions. Although there were not enough male participants in this study to make a formal analysis, there was still a significant difference between male and female participants in regards to their likelihood of utilization and stereotype threat.

Limitations

One limitation of this study lies within the data themselves. The design of this study was to compare female and male participants, and this comparison would have been more appropriate with an equal number of male and female participants. This limitation may have been due to the fact that the University of Indianapolis has more females in their student population than males. Additionally, more participants who completed the survey were recruited through SONA—a system used by students enrolled in Psychology courses—rather than the posted flyers, and the gender distribution is even more heavily female in the Psychology major. This limitation could be reduced by

widening the scope to other universities in order to get a more equal distribution of male and female participants.

Another limitation was the short time frame that was available to complete data collection. More time for data collection would have allowed for the recruitment of the number of participants recommended by the power analysis. The power analysis required 158 participants with 80% power, and 101 participants were recruited. If this study were to be replicated with the recommended 158 participants, the results could reveal different relationships than what was found in this one. However, that cannot be said with certainty.

Broader Impacts

These findings have implications for future research on attitudes toward parental leave policies. Results from this study could indicate the effectiveness of certain types of education regarding parental leave and its importance.

One goal of this study was to educate the participants on the benefits of family-friendly policies in the workplace. Studies like this are necessary because the targeted participants—college students—will be entering the workforce very soon and will be impacted by these policies, or lack thereof, should they choose to start a family. Research with college students as participants is important for obtaining information about future generations. College students will soon be choosing whether or not they will utilize programs offered by their future workplace, so it is very important that they are informed on the costs and benefits that come with them, which is what studies like this hope to achieve.

In addition to college students, the populations that these studies should cover could also include members of management teams in companies. Research in that area would be beneficial in further confirming both the effectiveness of family-friendly policies if a company has them. It would also be beneficial to evaluate the reasons why companies choose not to offer paid leave policies, so that education can be adjusted to those attitudes. Evidence has shown that family-friendly policies increase employee retention rates and job satisfaction (West, 2015; Solheid, 2016; Thompson et al., 1999).

As highlighted in the literature, many European countries such as France, Estonia, Italy, and Ireland have started to embrace these policies in order to better the lives of workers and their children (Castro-García & Pazos-Moran, 2015). Unfortunately, the United States has very limited legislation on this matter. The only actual legislation requiring companies to provide leave for their employees is the Family Medical Leave Act, which provides twelve weeks of unpaid leave to employees who have worked at a company with 50 or more employees for at least one year and a minimum of 1,250 hours. These twelve weeks include all types of leave: sick leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, and leave to take care of family for any reason (FMLA, 2016). In order to bring attention to this, education is necessary, and studies like this need to continue for that to happen.

The stereotype measure alone can lead to more research as well. It is well documented that females have been shown to experience stereotype threat in management positions, as well as in general in a range of fields (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Sarsons, 2017). Studies on stereotype threat regarding a multitude of topics such as

maternal leave and paternal leave can indicate ways in which our country can improve in terms of negative perceptions of positive legislation. Many individuals, such as the members of The Childless Network—which advocates for the rights of employees without children—have valid concerns about family-friendly policies. Some of these concerns include the possibility of other employees taking on more work as a result, or that individuals should not be paid for time that they are not there. While these concerns are understandable and important to explore, there is evidence that family-friendly policies are beneficial. There is evidence that these policies benefit not only the parents, but the children, as parental leave has been shown to decrease the length of hospital visits in the infant's first year by 31%, and has also shown to lower mortality rates in children (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2015). This evidence creates a situation where parental leave is not only a workplace issue, but also an issue of basic human rights, as it can aid in the child's development early in life.

Overall, research like this is important to the progression of society because it allows us to take a look at how we view issues like parental leave, and how we can use this information to educate and make effective change in corporate policies. In this way, we can work to better the lives of workers and their families by assisting in the balance of work and family.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact that information has on student perceptions of family-friendly policies. Participants were randomly assigned to a group and received either an anecdotal passage, a fact sheet, or no information. This study found gender differences in perceptions of their potential to utilize family-friendly programs as well as stereotype threat. Specifically, female participants were more likely to utilize family-friendly programs such as paid leave, and they also felt stereotype threat more than male participants. However, this study should be replicated with a similar population on a wider scale due to the low number of male participants ($n=9$), and the low number of participants overall ($N=101$).

Reflection/Future Directions

Although some of the studies mentioned in this paper are several years old, they still hold a significant amount of weight in terms of what has been done, what continues to be done, and what needs to be done. Later research supported the study done by Thompson et al. (1999), which is why it is mentioned in this paper as an important piece of the framework. Future studies could widen the scope to many universities instead of focusing on just one. This would allow for a more diverse sample that would be more conducive to evaluating gender differences as well. The findings of this study can be helpful in determining the current perceptions of students who will soon be entering the workforce and potentially taking advantage of family-friendly programs offered by their future places of business.

In addition, future studies can look into the reasons why companies decide not to implement policies beyond what is legally required of them, despite the evidence that family-friendly programs benefit the employer, employee, and the child. Gathering information such as this can be helpful in indicating how attitudes towards this issue can impact implementation by companies and utilization by employees.

Due to the time constraints and limitations regarding my recruitment methods, it was difficult to obtain an appropriate number of participants for this study. However, the process of conducting this study gave me the opportunity to apply research skills that will help me in the future, both in graduate school and in my career as an occupational therapist. These skills that I have acquired in data collection, data analysis, and every step of the formation of this paper have given me the knowledge to pursue research

opportunities in OT school and beyond in professional settings. This project was personally important to me because it gave me the opportunity to educate my peers about the current state of parental leave policies in the workplace, and it allowed me to learn about their perceptions as well.

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*Appendices**Appendix A: Inventories*

Italicized questions were written specifically for this study.

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree

1. Using family-friendly policies in the workplace should result in negative career outcomes.
2. Using family-friendly programs should hurt one's status at work.
3. Using family-friendly programs shows that one is capable of balancing work and family.
4. Using family-friendly programs improves the lives of the individual's child(ren).
5. People who utilize family-friendly policies should be paid less than those who don't.
6. People who utilize family-friendly programs will not be able to meet the demands of their job like someone who does not utilize such programs.
7. People who utilize family-friendly programs are not able to succeed in their jobs and at home.
8. People who utilize family-friendly programs find a way to balance their work and home life.
9. *People who utilize family-friendly policies should be able to feel like their job is waiting for them when they return.*
10. *Offering family-friendly policies should be the standard in the workplace.*

Below is a list of different family-friendly programs that are offered at some companies. Please indicate how likely you are to use these programs if they were offered at your job/future job.

11. Leave of absence

1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

12. Flexible scheduling

1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

13. On-site daycare

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

	very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely
14. Telecommuting/Working from home					
	1	2	3	4	5
	very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely
15. Unpaid leave					
	1	2	3	4	5
	very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely
16. Job-sharing (two part-time employees completing the work of one full-time employee)					
	1	2	3	4	5
	very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

Butler et al. (2004), von Hippel et al. (2017)

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements regarding maternal leave.

	1	2	3	4	5
	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
17. Women who are mothers have less managerial ability than women who aren't mothers.					
18. Women who are mothers are less committed to their careers as women who aren't mothers.					
19. Women who are mothers are limited in how high they can advance in their careers.					
20. Women who are mothers have the same abilities in the workplace as women who aren't mothers.					
21. Women who are mothers have less to contribute in the workplace than women who aren't mothers.					
22. Women who are mothers and women who aren't should be paid the same amount for the same work.					
23. Whether or not a woman is a mother should influence her career growth.					
24. Using family-friendly programs should have no impact on how a woman grows with a company.					
25. Using family-friendly programs suggests that a mother is not as serious about her career as employees who don't use these programs.					
26. <i>Companies should be obligated to offer family-friendly programs to their employees who are mothers.</i>					

27. *Companies should have the right to not consider women who are mothers for promotions because they are mothers.*

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements regarding paternal leave.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly
disagree				agree

- 28. Men who are fathers have less managerial ability than men who aren't fathers.
- 29. Men who are fathers are less committed to their careers as men who aren't fathers.
- 30. Men who are fathers are limited in how high they can advance in their careers.
- 31. Men who are fathers have the same abilities in the workplace as men who aren't fathers.
- 32. Men who are fathers have less to contribute in the workplace than men who aren't fathers.
- 33. Men who are fathers and men who aren't should be paid the same amount for the same work.
- 34. Whether or not a man is a father should influence his career growth.
- 35. Using family-friendly programs should have no impact on how a man grows with a company.
- 36. Using family-friendly programs suggests that a father is not as serious about his career as employees who don't use these programs.
- 37. *Companies should be obligated to offer family-friendly to their employees who are fathers.*
- 38. *Companies should have the right to not consider men who are fathers for promotions because they are fathers.*

von Hippel et al. (2011)

Imagine yourself as the head of a successful hospital. You are responsible for hiring, firing, and promoting doctors and other medical personnel. As the head, please rate how likely you are to have the following opinions or make the following decisions for the benefit of your company as a whole.

39. I would view medical personnel that put their patients before their family more favorably than those who put their family first.

1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

40. I would have the opinion that medical personnel who utilize family-friendly programs are less likely to advance in their careers than medical personnel who don't.

1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

41. I would expect medical personnel to put their jobs before their families and other obligations to maximize productivity.

1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

42. If an employee turns down a promotion for family-related reasons, I would not want to offer them promotions in the future.

1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

43. I would understand if employees had to leave work to take care of family matters.

1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

44. I would view employees who work part-time by choice as less committed than full-time employees.

1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

45. I would be sensitive to employees family matters, even if it might cost the company money.

1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

Respond to the next questions as if you were a coworker to an individual who utilizes family-friendly programs.

46. As a fellow health professional at a hospital, I would resent a father who takes extended leaves to care for a newborn or adopted child.

1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

47. As a fellow health professional at a company, I would resent a mother who takes extended leaves to care for a newborn or adopted child.

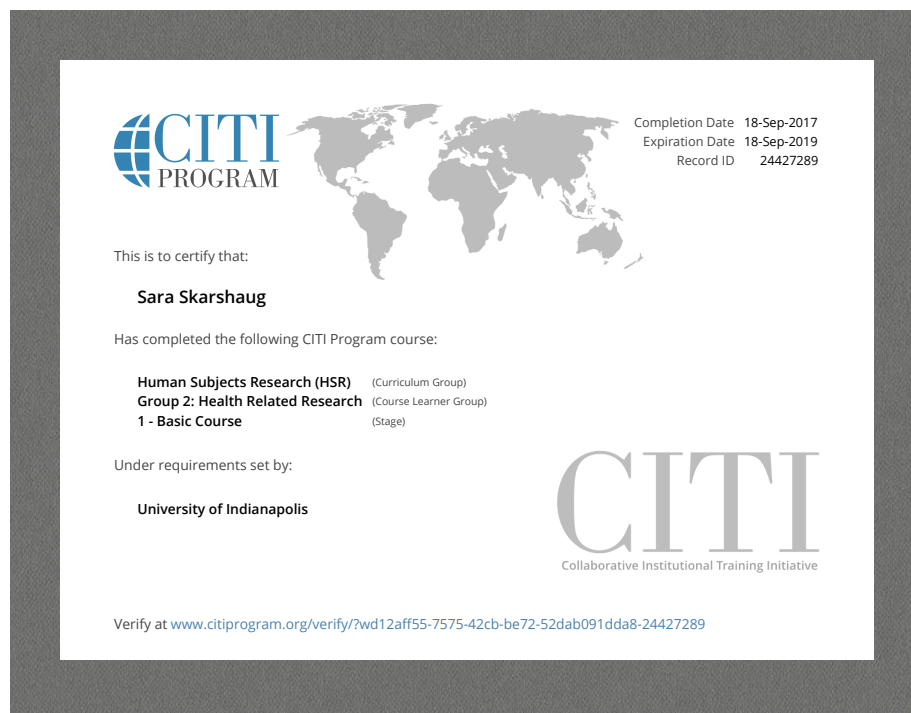
1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

48. I would be frustrated if I had to pick up extra shifts or take on new patients at the hospital because a coworker was taking a leave of absence due to family-related reasons.

1	2	3	4	5
very unlikely	unlikely	neutral	likely	very likely

Thompson et al. (1999)

Appendix B: CITI Training





Appendix C: IRB Approval

Dear Dr. Hess,

The UIndy HRPP has reviewed and approved exempt status for your new study titled, "Perceptions of Parental Leave Policies in Healthcare Settings" (UIndy Exempt Study #0957). I have attached to this email the official approval certification letter. For your convenience, I have also attached the following files: Word copy of the clean ICF and a pdf copy of the APPROVED ICF. Please be sure to update the entire ICF on your Qualtrics questionnaire with the finalized ICF, including the header. I have also attached copies of the approved recruitment materials. Please feel free to edit the formatting but please do not change the content. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Erin Fekete

Associate Professor of Psychology
Director of Psychological Sciences
Faculty Co-Chair, Human Research Protection Program
College of Applied Behavioral Sciences
University of Indianapolis

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer

Participate in a UIndy Research Study

The purpose of this study is to gather information about student perceptions of parental leave policies.

After completing the study, you will have the chance to enter a drawing for one of four \$25 Amazon gift cards.

Please go to
https://uindy.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6fdoTqMRyg2zjdX to
participate in the study!



This study has been approved by the UIndy Human Subjects Protections Program (Exempt UIndy Study #0957; Approval Date: December 17, 2018).

Go to
https://uindy.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6fdoTqMRyg2zjdX

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https://uindy.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6fdoTqMRyg2zjdX

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