Identity and the Transition to Motherhood: Navigating Existing, Temporary, and Anticipatory Identities

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Abstract Over the past two decades, there has been extensive research across diverse disciplines exploring the treatment of pregnant women in the work context (Gatrell in Human Relations 1–24, 2013). One of the most significant challenges women experience during pregnancy relates to their ability to manage their evolving sense of self as work and motherhood intersect—often for the first time. Pregnant working women are undergoing an identity transition that relates to three distinct, and often conflicting, identities: their *existing* professional identity, their *emerging* mothering identity, and their *temporary* pregnancy identity. In this book chapter, we engage an identity based perspective to explore this transitional period of pregnancy for working women and how women engage in identity work as they manage the tension between who they are, who they want to be, and who their organizations want them to be. When women are able to successfully navigate this identity transition and establish a strong vision of their future self as a working mother, they are more likely to stay engaged and committed to their professions and be more satisfied at work and at home.

The term "working mother" is a juxtaposition of oppositional language in which the social status, norms and expected commitment of being a "good mother" are in direct conflict with the expectations of effort, competence, and authority that are required to be an "ideal worker". These competing pressures are often mentioned with regards to the impact they have on issues such as pay and promotion of working mothers (e.g. Correll et al. 2007; Crittenden 2001). For example, the pay

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gap between working mothers and non-mothers under the age of 35 is higher than the pay gap between men and women of the same age (Crittenden 2001). Even when human capital factors and workplace factors are held constant, mothers earn less than childless women with an average lower wage of 5–7 % per child (Budig and England 2001).

Beyond their impact on external measures such as pay and promotion, these competing biases also have a significant influence on how working mothers define their self-concept. As women return to work after the birth of a child they often struggle with feelings of inadequacy, and wonder how they will manage the tensions and aforementioned societal contradictions between being a good mother and a good professional (Correll 2013; Cuddy et al. 2004; Johnson and Swanson 2006; Millward 2006). New mothers must reconcile these conflicting feelings and expectations if they are to achieve resolution between their work and mothering identities and form a positive vision of their future self as a working mother (Ladge et al. 2012). While the return to work is an important transition process for new working mothers, we believe questions of identity and reconciliation of competing societal pressures of work and motherhood begin for working mothers long before the birth of their child. For many expectant women, the challenge of managing these competing demands and pressures does not begin the moment a woman puts her child in daycare or the moment she wrestles with a promotion or a need to travel; rather, these challenges begin the moment a woman becomes pregnant and often even before she becomes pregnant (Gross and Pattison 2007).

As many as 80–90 % of women will become pregnant while employed (Johnson 2008) with the majority of these women returning to work following the birth of their child (Chessman Day and Downs 2009; Laughlin 2011). As such it is not surprising that there has been extensive research on the treatment of pregnancy in the workplace across a range of disciplines including psychology, sociology, and management (i.e. Gatrell 2011, 2013; Jones et al. in press; Gross and Pattison 2007). Current research has centered on the negative impact organizations and organizational members have on a women during pregnancy. During pregnancy, working women may find themselves facing termination or denial of promotions, rejection as job applicants, and negative stereotyping due to the conflicting expectations between motherhood and the ideal worker (e.g. Cuddy et al. 2004; Hebl et al. 2007; Jones et al. in press). An expectant woman's colleagues', managers', and customers' responses have been shown to have a significant influence on how women manage their pregnancy while at work (King and Botsford 2009; Jones et al. in press; Ladge et al. 2012).

While it is important to explore the treatment of pregnant women by colleagues, managers, and organizations and the implications these actions have for how a pregnant woman manages her identity, there has been limited research that explores this topic from the perspective of the pregnant working woman herself. The period of pregnancy is a challenging time as she begins the process of balancing the psychological and physiological needs of pregnancy, being an expectant mother, and the demands of work (Gross and Pattison 2007). How a pregnant woman experiences this process and enacts her evolving identity sets the stage for how she

will eventually construct her identity as a working mother and manage the work-life interface. When pregnant women are able to successfully navigate this identity transition process and establish a strong vision of their future self as a working mother, they may be more likely to stay engaged and committed to their professions and be more satisfied at work and at home (Ladge et al. 2012). Despite the importance of the individual to this process, there has been limited research on how expectant working women conceptualize their evolving identities during pregnancy.

We address this gap in the literature as we look at pregnancy from the perspective and experience of the pregnant working woman. Specifically, we engage an identity-based perspective to explore the transitional period of pregnancy for working women. We explore this issue by drawing on extensive qualitative research we have conducted on professional and managerial women's experiences of pregnancy in the workplace. Our research shows that pregnant women experience an identity transition that intersects three distinct, and often conflicting, identities. The transition process begins with the emergence of the *temporary pregnancy* identity. This temporary pregnancy identity is entangled with simultaneous revisions of one's *existing professional* identity and of an *anticipatory mothering* identity. As we explore the intersection of these identities, we also consider how women's different personal and career experiences influence this conceptualization process. Our research highlights the intersection of these three fluctuating identities and the implications this has for pregnant women's evolving conceptualization of the work-home interface.

Literature Review

As this study is focused on how pregnant women conceptualize their evolving, intersecting work and mothering selves, we draw on identity theory and work-life research to form the conceptual basis for our study. As we are interested in women's psychological experience of work-life during pregnancy, we engage identity theory to frame this study rather than role theory. Most work-family research has relied on a role theory perspective and as such has often focused on the competing role and temporal pressures of work-family life while overlooking the cognitive experience of working parents (Ford et al. 2007). As we are interested in pregnant women's understanding of self, we felt it was more appropriate to draw on identity theory to frame our research. Both identity theory and work-life theory are discussed in more detail below.

Identity and Identity Transitions

Scholars conceptualize identity in diverse ways in part because identity draws upon diverse theoretical streams (Petriglieri 2011). Authors need to be careful to define

how they are using identity and the theoretical underpinnings behind the definition they are engaging (Pratt and Foreman 2000). Here we adopt a widely accepted definition that refers to identity as a "self-referential description that provides contextually appropriate answers to the question of 'Who am I?'" (Ashforth et al. 2008: 327). With this definition of identity we also follow the tradition that identity references an evolving, context-sensitive set of self-constructions (Markus and Wurf 1987; Gibson 2003; Alvesson et al. 2008). Inherent to this definition is the expectation that one's self-construction involves multiple, intersecting identities and that identities evolve over time. Both of these points are discussed briefly below.

Research on multiple identities is critical to developing a fuller understanding of an individual's self-conceptualization and how an individual constructs a self-image out of multiple, sometimes conflicting, identities. Psychological research has suggested that most individuals hold between four to seven identities as central to their self-concept at any time and that these identities draw upon diverse group memberships (Roccas and Brewer 2002). Individuals obviously differ in their self-representation of their multiple identities and they differ in the extent to which they may see these identities as conflicting or enhancing (Ramarajan 2009, 2014). At the same time, there is limited research in the organizational context that considers how individuals experience and navigate multiple identities (Pratt and Foreman 2000), in particular concerning the intersection between work and non-work identities.

The evolving nature of identity means that identity transitions are normal to one's identity construction over time. Ibarra (1992: 3) defines identity transition as "…the process of disengaging from a central, behaviorally anchored identity while exploring new possible selves, and eventually, integrating an alternative identity." During the identity transition, individuals often experience ambiguity, angst and anxiety as they find themselves "in-between identities" in a period where their identity feels ill-defined and provisional (Ibarra 2003; Van Gennep 1960). Most organizational scholars who have studied identity transition have primarily focused on work-based transitions that involve the shedding of one work-based identity to adopt a new work-based identity. For example, Ibarra (2003) discusses the example of the identity transition of a psychiatrist who becomes a monk. This conceptualization focuses on identity transition as the movement from Identity A to Identity B.

In our research, we have expanded on this conceptualization as we recognize that identity transitions are not always this simple and that these transitions can involve multiple evolving identities simultaneously. If we assume that an individual's identity is comprised of multiple intersecting identities then it is possible that the adoption of a new identity might not always mean the shedding of a previously established identity. In our earlier work, we refer to this idea as cross-domain identity transitions in which an established work identity A may be altered, not abandoned, in light of a new non-work identity C (Ladge et al. 2012). This definition of cross-domain identity transitions recognizes a more complex process in which one does not necessarily disengage fully from an old work identity, but

rather, applies a new meaning to the work identity in response to a changed non-work identity. As we expand on this idea in light of multiple intersecting identities, it is apparent that organizational scholars need to consider identity transition in a more complex, nuanced manner. In this paper, we explore this complexity in greater depth as we look at three intersecting identities that are in different stages of transition during the professional woman's pregnancy.

Pregnancy and Identity

When individuals experience significant life changes, their sense of self is often called into question (Levinson 1978). Becoming pregnant represents one such life event in which women begin to think about and question who they want to be as a professional, as a wife, as a mother and they begin to conceptualize how they will integrate their new identity as a mother with their previously established identities (Ladge and Greenberg 2015). In particular for professional women, first time motherhood has been identified as a time in which women are questioning who they are, who they should be, and how good they can be as professionals and mothers (Millward 2006; Johnson and Swanson 2006; Buzzanell et al. 2005; Bailey 1999).

Although pregnancy in the workplace is common, pregnant working women still face covert and overt biases (Liu and Buzzanell 2004). In the United States, the occurrences of pregnancy-bias complaints have risen by 40 % in the past decade (Shellenberger 2008). In Great Britain, half of working pregnant women can expect to experience some disadvantages at work (Gross and Pattison 2007). Pregnant women also find their professional identity and legitimacy is attacked in covert ways (Gross and Pattison 2007; Liu and Buzzanell 2004). These injustices arise in part because of the biases organization members may hold against pregnant women. Coworkers often assume motherhood will weaken a woman's commitment to her work performance and her profession (Correll et al. 2007; Gross and Pattison 2007). These covert and overt biases create a complex landscape that pregnant women must navigate.

We explore the changing self-concept of pregnant women in the workplace as we draw upon a multiple identities perspective. In particular, we elaborate on the experience of a cross-domain identity transition occurring as women navigate pregnancy in the work context as described in our prior research (Ladge et al. 2012). In this chapter, we expand on the individual level experience by looking at the stages of transition and the distinct identities that are formed during this process. While other researchers have highlighted how the organizational context may influence a pregnant woman's experiences at work, we expand on this work as we explore how individual differences in a woman's career and pregnancy history also may affect the identity transition process.

Methodology

The data we present here draws from a qualitative study we conducted on first-time mothers' experiences being pregnant at work. Following Miles and Huberman (1994), we chose to use an inductive research approach, as we wanted to build an in-depth understanding of women's experiences of pregnancy from their own perspective. As such, our data gathering and data analysis were guided by an interest in identifying the commonalities and patterns that underlie the pregnant women's experiences as they navigated their organizational context.

We began our research with a pilot study in which we interviewed ten women about their experiences being pregnant at work. Based upon the pilot data and additional literature review, we designed a qualitative, inductive study in which we interviewed thirty women about their experiences being pregnant at work. Women were recruited for this study through a number of venues, including college alumni network groups, human resource professional networks, and local medical and health professionals who work with new mothers.

In total, we interviewed 30 pregnant professional women. All research participants were pregnant with their first child at the time of their interview. We chose to study new mothers because the issues women face with the birth of their first child are more complex and ambiguous than those encountered by experienced mothers (Miller et al. 1996). All research participants were in professional work roles, had at least three years of full-time work experience, and intended to return to work after their maternity leave. All of the participants had completed a college education and over half of the participants had completed a graduate degree. A summary of the demographic data for the research participants can be found in Table 1. It is important to note that for all the women in our study these pregnancies were planned. All of the women were in committed relationships with partners and all wanted a child. While a few of the women got pregnant faster than they anticipated

Table 1 Participant demographics

Age	Mean = 37, range 29–40
Race	82 % Caucasian
	15 % Asian/Asian American
	3 % Multiracial
Organizational level	50 % individual contributor
	50 % manager or above
Organizational tenure	Approximate mean = 5, range = 1.5–15 years
Professional tenure	Approximate mean = 12; range = 7–18 years
Work role examples	Law clerk, project/product manager, IT specialist, consultant, firm partner, financial planning
Industry examples	Accounting, consulting, law, biotechnology, high technology, education, social work, nonprofit, small business owner

and were somewhat surprised, other women had been trying for some time to conceive and had been receiving medical support in order to become pregnant.

Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 min and followed a semi-structured format. Our interview protocol covered three general themes. A first set of questions asked participants to share their thoughts and ideals related to work and pregnancy based on their personal and professional background. We asked women to reflect on their past, present and future as professionals, pregnant women, and working mothers, and the thoughts, feelings and images that arose for them related to these identities. A second set of questions probed women's experiences with their pregnancy and being pregnant at work. A final set of questions explored specific experiences women had had in the workplace related to their pregnancy as well as their strategies for managing their pregnancy in the workplace. All interviews were transcribed, yielding approximately 1200 pages of double-spaced text to analyze.

We coded the data as they were collected and used grounded theory techniques to analyze them (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990). We began data analysis by reviewing the transcripts to identify the general themes that women were discussing regarding being pregnant at work. We then focused specifically on the data related to identity transition to identify the general themes that women discussed as they referenced the topic of identity transition (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The authors met to discuss these themes and to review existing research that connected to the themes. The following section highlights the patterns and intersections we found in how women conceptualized the various stages of transition of their pregnancy, professional, and mothering identities.[1]

Findings

The findings from our study support the perspective that women's self-concept as working mothers develops before the birth of a child during pregnancy and likely even before. As the data below shows the process of transitioning to becoming a working mother occurs during pregnancy and involves complex and continual evolution in one's self-concept as one's identity as a pregnant woman, as a professional, and as a mother all evolve. Unlike other identity transition processes in which the focus is on the evolution from one identity state to another, our research shows that the identity transition of becoming a working mother for professionals is more complex as it involves multiple work and non-work identities that are in varying degrees of fluctuation.

Beyond the challenges of integrating a mothering and professional identity, pregnant women were also adjusting to the emergence of the pregnancy identity. What is particularly interesting about the pregnancy identity is that this is a temporary identity that is embedded in a woman's self-concept for a limited time.

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[1]For more details on the methodology please see Ladge et al. (2012).

While pregnancy only lasts nine months, accompanying this experience is an identity that is distinct from motherhood. The expectant women in our study all discussed their adaptation to the emergence of this identity and the physical changes associated with it. We found that the emergence of the pregnancy identity sparks reflection and, often, revision of a woman's professional identity and the emerging mothering identity. Pregnant women did not wait to reassess their professional identity until after their maternity leave; rather, this process began while the temporary pregnancy identity was in transition. Finally, the temporary pregnancy identity also sparks anticipation of one's mothering identity. As expectant women begin to envision their lives as mothers and reassess their lives as professionals in light of their temporary pregnancy identity, these women begin to construct new visions of their future selves.

Below we explain in more detail the simultaneous and intersecting transitioning of these three identities in more depth. While we discuss each identity transition as a separate section, it is important to note that the transition of all three identities is tightly interconnected. In reality, the emergence of the temporary pregnancy identity, the revising of the professional identity and the anticipation of the mothering identity are influencing one another throughout the transition process. How women eventually establish their identity as a working mother is based on how they work through this cross-domain identity transition process (Ladge et al. 2012).

Temporary Pregnancy Identity

While most of the women expressed their excitement about being pregnant, they also voiced their feelings that their temporary pregnancy identity felt like a departure from normal. As Sarah stated, "The challenge is coming to terms for myself with the stress of just being pregnant in general and trying still to be the same person. Whatever that is." Many women used the word "normal" to articulate how they wanted to be seen and how they wanted to see themselves. While temporary, pregnancy represented a departure from these women's normal construction of their identities.

As women began to construct their pregnancy identity, there were three predominant themes that women focused on as influencing their conceptualization of this identity. First, women's experiences of the physical changes of pregnancy often began the process of identifying with one's pregnancy. Women's understanding of their temporary pregnancy identity further unfolded as they considered how to navigate their maternal body in the work context. Thirdly, women's temporary pregnancy identity emerged in how they navigated the public-private boundaries of work. We discuss these three themes in more detail below.

As women developed their temporary pregnancy identity, they also had to learn to navigate their changing physical appearance. While identity transition research often focuses on the emotional and cognitive experience of identity transition, there

is a physical component of the temporary pregnancy identity that is at the forefront. These physical changes can range from increased feelings of tiredness to nausea to food cravings. While there is some disagreement on whether these changes are biological or psychological, they are a part of the physical experience of many pregnant women (Leifer 1980). Even without these physical symptoms of pregnancy, all women will experience a changing body and eventual baby kick. The physical aspect of pregnancy was central to women's emerging construction of their pregnancy identity. As Betina stated, "Well, to be honest it's weird for me to see my body change like this. I feel dumpy all the time. But at the same time I love touching my belly and feeling it move around and kick and watching it grow, even. So it's again, contradictory…" Women were aware that there fascination with their changing body was not as fascinating to their colleagues. As Rosa explained:

> I obsess about being pregnant, obviously, and can't stop thinking about the fact that I'm pregnant, especially when you start getting kicks every ten minutes, but I remind myself that other people are probably a little less interested in the minute by minute play of what's going on in my body…

As we see here, the body can be central to one's self-identity (Giddens 1991). For many women, the physical experiences of pregnancy were the initial triggers that began there emerging self-concept as a pregnant person.

While the aforementioned quotes illustrate that a positive focus on one's baby and changing body enabled women to adjust to their temporary pregnancy identity, for other women it was the negative aspects of their physical body that enabled them to begin to adjust to their pregnancy identity. For some women, as they came to terms with their physical limitations they would let go of their old views of normal and begin to construct their pregnancy identity. As Claire stated,

> And a lot of things obviously have been difficult throughout the pregnancy, being sick and knowing I wasn't working at my full potential. And not being able to always do the things that I could do in terms of - you know, those times I had to bow out of a meeting because I just was so sick I could not be in the meeting. That was very difficult for me. But I really had to take a step back and say, you know what's important? My health is more important than that.

Health concerns often led women to begin a process of adjusting the importance they had been placing on their professional identity to their self-concept as they considered why they had chosen to become pregnant. Through this process they became more accepting of their temporary pregnancy identity.

A second theme that emerged was that pregnant women's understanding of their temporary pregnancy identity arose as they learned to make sense of their pregnant body relative to the professional workplaces. As prior research on the maternal body highlights, it is difficult to mold the pregnant body to fit the idealized images of the controlled, slender professional body (Gatrell 2011, 2013; Haynes 2008). Women often engage in maternal body work as they navigate this disconnect (Gatrell 2013) and it is through this body work that women begin to enact their emerging pregnancy identity. As Paula explains,

I've just tried to remain as professional as possible. So something as little as buying professional maternity clothes. That's the thing I've kind of thought. I need to look professional, regardless if I don't feel like dressing up. I still need to do that. People often ask me how are you feeling, things like that. I'm always quick to say, I'm feeling fine. And not necessarily switch the subject, but let them know that I'm still here and I'm still focused and not - even though inside I wish I was lying in bed at home.

Women accepted, and even in some cases, embraced the physical elements of their pregnant identity while also recognizing that these physical components, be they morning sickness, exhaustion, or changing body, needed to be carefully managed in the workplace so that they were not perceived as a disruption to work and sign of weakness. Women were cognizant of how their emerging pregnancy identity violated the traditional masculine norms of the workplace (Haynes 2008) and therefore many actively managed the contradiction that their maternal bodily image posed to these norms. In the process of managing these disconnects, women's pregnancy identity continued to emerge.

Lastly, women's understanding of their temporary pregnancy identity emerged out of the changing boundary between their private and public lives. Pregnant women often find themselves negotiating the changing borders between their private and professional worlds (Gatrell 2013; Greenberg et al. 2009). While individuals differ in their desire for segmentation or integration of their personal and professional identities (Rothbard et al. 2005), the majority of the pregnant women in this study desired some separation between their professional identity and their pregnancy identity. As Olivia explained, "…just for the sake of being polite I have endured very awkward conversations that really made me uncomfortable. And I don't know why. Why did I let that happen? Why didn't I just walk away." Pregnant women's need for boundary separation is to be expected since segmentation often enables individuals to avoid the conflict and anxiety that arises when personal and professional identities are not compatible (Rothbard and Ramarajan 2009). For pregnant women, the incompatibility between their temporary pregnancy identity and established professional identity arises because the private world of pregnancy and its signaling of sexuality and motherhood directly violate the norms of professionalism (Ashcraft 1999). Part of the challenge of navigating segmented identities was that often a pregnant woman's desire for segmentation did not match the organizational norms. When her coworkers discussed aspects of her personal life that she preferred to keep segmented from work it caused her further discomfort. As Darcy stated, "That's been really funny, you know, just all of a sudden—when you're pregnant, all of a sudden you're just fair game to talk to you about everything." Darcy, like many of the women in our study, had constructed her identity such that there was a fairly distinct boundary between her personal identity and her professional identity. Yet as these women became pregnant, their coworkers would often ask a question that dissolved this boundary. The process of actively managing one's desire for segmentation between one's temporary pregnancy identity and one's established professional identity often acted as a trigger that influenced pregnant women to reevaluate their professional identity in light of their temporary pregnancy identity.

Evolving Professional Identity

As women learned to navigate their temporary pregnancy identity and accept their pregnancy identity as their new "normal," many women began to reflect on if and how their professional identity might need to evolve in light of both their pregnancy identity and their emerging mother identity. While some women were focused on maintaining their professional identity as it had been before their temporary pregnancy identity emerged, many women were already experiencing a shift in their conceptualization and prioritization of their professional identity.

Prior to becoming pregnant, most of the professional women in our study had been highly focused on their careers working long hours, going above what was expected in order to establish their professional identity and to fit into the real, or imagined, norms of the ideal worker (Williams 2000). For some women, scaling back to manage pregnancy needs presented a stark contrast to that of their typical "ideal worker" approach. As Lisa explained,

> But, you know you get to a certain point, where the fatigue, where normally I would push through whatever and I'm less likely to push through anything right now. So I think my desire here at work is definitely going - going down. And where normally I wouldn't put my physical symptoms ahead of anything at work. I'd work through whatever. Now, if the heartburn is just so bad or something then I cut out early. I just don't have - it's just not as important and I'm just not going to do some of that stuff here anymore.

While Lisa is focusing on how the physical aspects of pregnancy are changing *how* she works, we also see her changing how she conceptualizes herself in relation to work. The importance of her work and her professional identity to her self-concept is shifting.

As pregnant women talked about their evolving professional identity they often used the language of shifting priorities to explain their evolving self-concept. Whenever an individual gains more experience and competency in their career, psychological success stemming from work increases which leads to increased centrality of career identity for that individual (Harrington and Hall 2007). As the average age of the women in this study was 36, most of the women were well-established in their careers and their professional identity was important to them. As they began to accept their pregnancy identity, some of the women began to consider the issue of mother-work identity prioritization. As women faced challenges of integrating the demands of their pregnancy at work, they begin to see that they would need to find a way to prioritize the mothering identity in light of their professional identity in the future. This re-prioritization of professional identity relative to pregnancy identity often began with scaling back hours or navigating disruptions to the work day due to doctor's appointments or physical limitations. Elaine stated,

> I was really busting my ass, I was working twelve hour days and only leaving when they kicked me out. And, I don't do it anymore. At like five o'clock, I'm like I have to go home. And, I have a laptop, so I keep thinking well I'll just do the rest of my work at home, but I don't do it. I get home and I have no interest in working, you know. So, I don't think there's

been anything that people can say you dropped the ball in this, you know. But, I really wanted to - I really wanted this (the pregnancy) to be my priority. And it's immediately shifted.

The term "priority" enabled women to clarify how they still felt they were productive and accomplished at work while recognizing that internally they were beginning to see themselves differently as professionals. In their finite sense of self, many women saw their professional identity shrinking as their pregnancy identity expanded.

A small subset of women sought to maintain the same professional identity they'd had prior to the pregnancy, even though they were going through the changes of pregnancy which signaled impending motherhood. However, even for these women, their temporary pregnancy identity led them to reflect on their professional identity. These women were aware that their professional identity could shift and they needed to manage their pregnancy and mothering identity to prevent this from happening. These women carefully managed their interactions with their colleagues and their work in order to keep the organization focused away from the pregnancy and on their work as professionals. Women would typically use clothing, conversations, and nonverbal behavior to carefully construct and preserve their professional identity. As Gloria explained:

> I try to stay extremely professional and I don't really talk a lot about my personal life. So when someone brings something up (about the pregnancy) I give them a very professional response and I don't go on and on about it. I don't want anyone in my work life having a negative impression of a woman because she's pregnant, you know, somehow she's disabled and somehow you have to treat me differently so my expectation and my attitude and my habits are such that people should treat me exactly the same...

In carefully managing how others see her as a professional, Gloria is also articulating how she sees herself. She is focused on maintaining her professional identity as she is aware that the emergence of her pregnancy identity has the potential to change this. So while she is not revising her professional identity, she is reflecting on it and more closely managing it. This reflection process shows that even for women who see their professional identity as unchanged in light of their pregnancy identity, they are actively thinking about the relationship between the two identities.

Anticipated Maternal Identity

The final identity that is in flux during this cross-domain identity transition is the maternal identity. As women adjust to their temporary pregnancy identity and their evolving professional identity, they also begin to consider who they want to be as mothers and how they want to think about themselves as mothers particularly in relationship to their professional identity. Previous research has stated that a woman's sense of self as a mother is established during pregnancy as an

anticipatory parental identity (Leifer 1980). We see this when Mary stated, "So, it's already a conflict without the child even being here. So when I was telling my mother that she was laughing at me. She's like it's starting already and you don't even have the baby yet." Even without a baby to hold or a childcare schedule to manage, pregnant women were anticipating how they might construct their maternal identity and how it would fit with their evolving professional identity.

As women anticipated their maternal identity, they were influenced by many of the societal norms that defined what it means to be a good mother (Fursman 2002; Gatrell 2013; Millward 2006). In response to this societal pressure, many pregnant women struggled with the construct of being a "good" mother and began to anticipate how they would build their maternal identity given these pressures. As Marisa explained,

> I do really want to be a good mother, but I don't think that I'm the type of mother that is going to be at work wishing she was home with her kid. I think that for me I need both spheres. So, I guess what my goal would be is to be able to really separate the two. And when I'm at home, be home. And when I'm at work, be at work…. But I don't know, I wonder how am I going to be a good mother, you know? And, I don't - I haven't figured it out yet,.

The anxiety Marisa is feeling as she anticipates becoming a mother is palpable. It is obvious that she is already considering how she will construct her maternal identity and how it will intersect with her professional identity. She articulates how she sees herself constructing her maternal identity and its relationship with her professional identity but she is concerned about the conflict between her definition of a working mother and what society defines as a "good mother." She is anxious as she anticipates her maternal identity may not be viewed positively in society.

Other women expressed less anxiety around this transition as they used their pregnancy as an opportunity to reflect on what they valued in their lives and to consider their emerging maternal identity in light of these values. As Rachel explained,

> I am thinking about at the end of your life who do you really want to be? What's important to you? What did my parents pass on to me? Who am I? And as a mom - - I think it's a totally different reflection of who I am and that's who I want to necessarily be remembered as at the end of the day, so how important is my career in that identity?

Many women used the pregnancy as a time to reflect on what was important to them and to begin to think about what this means for how they will construct their lives as a working mother.

This quote also illustrates that just as women used the concept of prioritization to construct the relationship between their pregnancy and professional identity, they also used this metaphor to anticipate the relationship between their maternal and professional identity. The recognition of where one's maternal identity would fit relative to professional identity led women to begin to consider how they would enact their lives as mothers.

To summarize, during pregnancy women experienced three overlapping identities that are in varying states of transition. First, women navigated the physical and

psychological challenges of their new temporary pregnancy identity. Although this identity is temporary, it paves the way for the anticipated mothering identity and the emerging identity of becoming a working mother. At the same time, this temporary pregnancy identity forces many women to begin to reconsider, and in some cases alter, their professional identity. We found that some women began altering aspects of their professional identity in anticipation of their mothering identity, while others sought to preserve their professional identity by working harder. Finally, women anticipated their mothering identity and began to conceptualize how they will enact this identity.

Individual Factors Affecting This Identity Transition Process

In our prior research, we have focused extensively on how formal organizational policies and norms or informal interactions with organizational members, influence how women experience the transition to motherhood (Ladge et al. 2012; Ladge and Greenberg forthcoming). In this chapter we want to highlight how women's individual backgrounds influence this process as we were not able to elaborate on this in our prior work. There were two individual factors, pregnancy difficulty and career stage, that strongly influenced how women experienced the intersection between their temporary pregnancy identity, their existing professional identity, and their anticipatory maternal identity. Each of these individual factors seemed to heavily influence how they experienced this cross-domain identity transition process. These factors are discussed in more detail below.

Age played an important role in our findings. Given that challenges of becoming pregnant significantly increase with age, it is not surprising that some of the women we interviewed had trouble getting pregnant. Some of the women discussed years of trying to conceive, the challenges of fertility hormones, and the depression of multiple miscarriages. Yet, the pregnant women who had struggled with issues of infertility often expressed less anxiety and greater clarity as they navigated the cross-domain identity transition process. As Lydia explained,

> it has been so hard for us to get pregnant and stay pregnant, I am really looking forward to being a mom, and working with my husband to try and figure out the best way for me to do that because it will be my most important priority. I want to make sure that I am set up in a way that I can be successful at that, first and foremost, and then figure out the work stuff secondarily.

Some of the uncertainty we saw in prior quotes around how pregnant women expressed the evolving intersection of their professional and personal identities did not exist for women who had experienced fertility issues. Perhaps the extra time, money, and effort that had transpired to become pregnant led these women to be less concerned about potential changes to their professional identity as they had already worked through some of the uncertainties of their evolving identities in their efforts to become pregnant.

The second individual difference that also lessened the uncertainty women felt was career stage. At the average age of 36, many of the expectant women were well-established in their careers. Many of these women, who had worked hard to achieve for years, were aware that they had earned a level of respect from their peers, bosses, and organizations. They had chosen to become established enough in their careers so that they felt more confident managing the intersection between work and non-work identities. Pam explains how she had consciously chosen to focus on her career before embarking on this transition, "I waited 15 years into my career to start a family because I have always been very focused on my career. While I certainly don't know yet what parenthood is going to bring in relation to my career, I am not concerned." While one might see Pam as somewhat naïve about the complexity of the ongoing and emerging identity transitions, she has a confidence that comes from the choices she has made and the respect she has earned around her career. Her calmness comes from the work she has done in her career prior to this transition process. Contrast Pam's experience to Elena who got pregnant while not yet as well-established in her career. "I took this promotion and decided yes I want to focus on my career. And then I got pregnant and then I was like you know can I do both basically? I mean I haven't yet reached the point in my career, where I would have planned on starting a family." Elana's lack of confidence in her current career reputation and accomplishments led her to have greater anxiety about this identity transition process.

For some women, they were actually quite strategic and proactive in how they used their career reputation to navigate the identity transition process. As Julia explained,

> I have taken the initiative to make sure that I clearly establish myself in my career. I've only been here a year and a half, but I've been a top performer. So, I knew I was well established before I go out on leave. But I'm making sure that I have done certain things before I go on leave and planning my path for partner – so if I still decide to continue on that path, I'm not putting myself behind.

While this woman has no more clarity than others regarding her evolving professional identity or how it will intersect with her future mothering identity, she has a confidence about the transition process. She relies on her confidence in her career and her professional reputation to take a proactive approach to manage, rather than be managed, by the identity transitions she was experiencing.

It appears that experiences becoming pregnant and career stage influence how women work through their professional and maternal identities. Both of these individual factors are influenced by age. Some of these women, because of their age, worked hard to get pregnant in the first place, and therefore they felt clearer about the role of their professional and maternal selves. Career stage similarly seemed to afford many women more confidence and status from which they can draw as they need to scale back to manage their pregnancy and future motherhood. As these ideas indicate, age and career stage influence the identity transition process as professional women navigate pregnancy and emerging first-time motherhood and how these new identities will intersect with their established professional identity.

Discussion

The findings from this research expand our current understanding of both work-family and identity theory in multiple ways. To summarize, we find that as women become pregnant for the first time they embark on a unique cross-domain identity transition process in which multiple identities are in different phases of transition at the same time. Multiple identities are changing at once and women are working through questions and concerns that are intertwined. For instance, what does my pregnancy identity imply about my ability to serve as an ideal worker? What will happen to my professional identity as I become more committed to my maternal self? How can I be an ideal mother but also still be a committed professional? This paper also sheds light on the role that individual factors, specifically age and career stage, in the identity transition process that pregnant professional women are experiencing. Our discussion highlights how women who are older and at later career stages have a particular perspective and experience that alters the identity transition process as they navigate a transition into working mother We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these findings in more detail below.

Identity Transitions: A More Nuanced Understanding

The identity transition process is conceptualized as a straight-forward three phased process. Most research on identity transition is still based in Van Gennep's seminal work (1960) in which he proposes three distinct phases of the identity transition process starting with separation, when an individual disengages from a previous identity; moving to liminality, the period when the individual experiments with their new identity; and ending with integration when the individual incorporates the new social role into their self-identity. Most organizational scholars have implicitly, or explicitly, relied on this stage model as they explore work-based identity transitions (e.g. Ibarra 1992, 2003) Yet, with growing interest among scholars to explore work identities from a perspective that acknowledges the multiple, intersecting identities that comprise an individual's self-concept and affect one's interactions at work (Cuddy and Baily Wolf 2013; Ramarajan 2014), there needs to be more research that considers how multiple identities evolve during the identity transition process.

   Our research provides initial insight into this question as we highlight the complexity that arises as multiple identities transition in different timing sequences. In cross-domain identity transitions, where one's work identity is evolving in response to changes in a non-work identity, our research suggests an individual may simultaneously be in periods of separation, liminality, and integration depending on

which identity is in focus. For example, as an expectant woman is *integrating* the temporary pregnancy identity into her self-concept she may create *separation* from her existing professional identity as she considers her emerging maternal identity such that she is in a period of *liminality* with regards to her professional identity. It is evident that the three stage model, while adequate for traditional single-identity transition processes, does not capture multidimensional identity changes that occur when one's work and non-work identities are intersected with one another.

As scholars better appreciate the complexity of multiple work and non-work identities and their implications for organizations, we also need to develop a more complex and nuanced understanding of the cross-domain identity transition process. While our research introduces identity scholars to a more complex transition process, we are not able to develop a more detailed understanding of this complexity with just a cross-sectional research approach. A cross-sectional approach cannot adequately depict how a cross-domain identity transition process evolves and how the fluctuations in the transition process of one identity flow into another identity. Future research must rely on a longitudinal approach in which interviews or diaries might be used to explore how these identities intersect through a transition process that involves multiple identities.

Multiple Identities and Work-Family Research

As the work-family research has evolved over the past two decades to become a more complete, multi-disciplinary research stream, scholars have developed a more nuanced understanding of diverse work-family constructs and their implications for work-family management. In spite of the expansion and clarification of work-family constructs, our research suggests that most work-family scholars still has not given sufficient attention to the identity construct and in particular the need to explore the implications of multiple identities on work-family management. As currently conceptualized and measured, the constructs of work-family conflict and enhancement are primarily focused on role management and the interaction between work and family role responsibilities. While related, we believe identity is a distinct construct as it re-counts how an individual sees themselves and sees the relationship between the multiple identities that comprise their self-construct.

Our research shows during pregnancy professional women are already beginning to reflect upon the centrality and prioritization of their multiple work and non-work identities. They frequently use the term "priority" to talk about how they are and anticipate conceptualizing the relationship between motherhood and professionalism. This conceptualization is influenced by both society and their individual experiences in work and at home. Building off of the research in psychology on multiple identities and identity compatibility (Settles 2006), we believe work-life research would benefit from exploring work and non-work identities in more depth

and from exploring how one's conceptualization of work and non-work identities influences ones management of the work-family interface. This research would enable us to better understand the cognitive interference of the work-family domains which is needed to supplement existing research which has primarily explored this topic by focusing on temporal interference (Ford et al. 2007).

Work-family research can also expand by looking beyond just the interaction of mothering and professional identities to also begin to consider how other identities interact to affect work-family management. Our research shows that age, through its impact on career stage and fertility, strongly influenced this identity transition process. Beyond age, we expect other individual factors such as race, education and cultural background may also influence how pregnant women experience this multiple identity transition process. For example, Cuddy and Baily Wolf (2013) suggest that societal pressures on Black mothers may be reversed such that Black mothers face guilt and perceived selfishness if they do not work compared to White mothers who often face these feelings when they do work. Based on preliminary research, Cuddy and Baily Wolf (2013) suggest that the varied societal norms for White and Black women may mean that race moderates the relationship between gender and working mother biases. With regards to our research, this would suggest that race is an additional identity that needs to be considered in a cross-domain transition. To date, we know of no research that has begun to explored pregnancy and the cross-domain transition process with a focus on the intersection of race, pregnancy, work, and mothering.

Beyond race, there are other individual factors that may also influence this identity transition process. We recognize that our research is focused on a specific population of pregnant working mothers. The women in our sample were all highly educated, older and in committed heterosexual relationships. In addition, all of the women in our study were born and raised in North America. Given the influence that age and career stage had on individual women's experience of the cross-domain identity transition process, we would expect that other individual differences need to be considered further. The experience of single mothers may be vastly different than those in a committed relationship given the career pressures a single mother may experience. Similarly, women who are less well-educated and who are not in professional careers may experience the transition of pregnancy, professional, and mothering identity very differently. Most importantly, countries vary greatly in their support for pregnancy, maternity leave, and working mothers. Powell and colleagues (2009) have discussed the impact that cultural differences may have on women's management of their work-life interface. Similarly, we would expect cultural differences will affect women's evolving self-concept during this transition process. Future research, would benefit from exploring this identity transition process with more diverse populations.

Becoming Pregnant: Expanding the Time Horizon of Work-Family and Identity Research

One of our goals of this research was to expand our understanding of when working mothers begin to manage their work-family interface. Our research highlights that women's understanding of the relationship between their mothering and professional identity begins early in the pregnancy process and that how they eventually integrate their professional and mothering identity into their self-concept is influenced by how they integrated their temporary pregnancy identity into their understanding of themselves. We were not surprised to learn that for some women, their emerging conceptualization of the relationship between their work and non-work identities often begins before conception. This was particularly salient for a few of the women in our study who struggled to become pregnant whose evolving self-concept as mother, professional, and pregnant woman began during the period of infertility.

Unfortunately, women who are experiencing infertility challenges is on the rise in the United States and in the world. In the United States, approximately 11 % of United States women ages 15–44 will struggle with fertility (http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/infertility.html#b). This number increases with age, with almost 1/3 of women who are over 35 facing issues of infertility. As women struggle with the psychological and physical challenges of infertility and the potential accompanying medical interventions, we would expect they are likely to reconsider the choices they have made to date regarding work and life. We believe it would be valuable to understand how women's experiences during the process of becoming pregnant influence how they experience the identity transition process and begin to construct their vision of their future self as a working mother.

Managerial Implications: Empowering the Pregnant Individual

In discussing how to help managers and organizations better support pregnant women and working mothers, most researchers and practitioners focus on the need to train and coach managers in order to alter their mindset regarding the stigmatization of pregnancy (e.g. Fursman 2002; Jones et al. forthcoming; King and Botsford 2009). Beyond individual managers, organizations also need to look at their policies regarding sick and pregnancy leave along with their organizational culture as all these organizational factors can have a significant influence on a pregnant woman's ability to form an elaborate vision of her future self as a working mother. This in turn will affect the organization's ability to retain mothers post-pregnancy. The organizations that have been the most successful at developing, advancing, and retaining working mothers are those that have put in place an integrated support system that

engages both policy changes around maternity leave and work structures along with mentorship and managerial development (Demirdjian 2009).

While organizational-level interventions are central to providing better support for pregnant working women and working mothers, we also believe there are opportunities for the organization to better empower the pregnant woman to manage this identity transition process and her evolving self-concept. From our research, we found there were just a few participants who took a highly proactive approach to this identity transition process and took actions to begin to enact the intersection between their working and professional identities. As a result of the actions they took, these women appeared to have less anxiety about this transition process and a more positive vision of their future self as a working mother. We believe pregnant women would benefit significantly from more coaching and education on the complexity, anxiety, and challenges that surround this transition process and on how to proactively manage this process rather than be managed by it. In our work with professional women's groups on pregnancy in the workplace, we have used our research to educate women on the identity transition process that happens during pregnancy and to discuss strategies they can take to better manage their own uncertainty in this process and to better prepare for their return to work. For some women, these proactive strategies have included networking with other working mothers about both pregnancy and work-life integration, thinking more strategically about their career in order to position themselves for their next opportunity, talking explicitly with their partner and other family members to begin to tackle their own myths around "good" mothering. Pregnant women will all experience an identity transition process. Providing education and support to pregnant women on how to work through the complexities of this transition process can help to empower them to more successfully enact their working mother identities. More importantly, if more pregnant women push against the norms and societal expectations that challenge their ability to simultaneously execute their roles as mothers and as professionals, they can begin to change the deep cultural norms that bias the workplace against mothers (Correll 2013).

Pregnancy is a pivotal time in the career of a working mother when a woman begins to experience the very real competing demands of being a good mother and a good professional. These competing societal pressures do not just impact the pay and promotion experiences of a pregnant women (e.g. Cuddy et al. 2004; Hebl et al. 2007). Rather, they also impact how a woman understands her evolving identity. Within this context, pregnant women must work through how they are changing as professionals, as pregnant individuals, and as emerging mothers. While pregnant women's individual experiences may differ due to both individual and organizational factors, what most pregnant women have in common is the reality that they are re-assessing their existing professional identity in light of their evolving personal identities. During this transition process, pregnant women begin to form visions of themselves as working mothers. Having an elaborate vision of one's future self as working mothers is what will enable pregnant women to manage, rather than be managed by, the competing demands of motherhood and professional.

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