


# THE 'OPT OUT' EXPLANATION IS INSUFFICIENT

Subtle  
Messages  
Push Moms  
Out of Work

Eden King




**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: #RICHPEOPLEPROBLEMS & THE MEN ARE MISSING**



*YOU* are looking  
for a job??!!

Let me handle  
that for you.



A woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a black blazer over a white shirt, is smiling while holding a baby in a blue and white striped onesie. She is sitting at a desk in an office. On the desk is a laptop, a tablet, a blue baby bottle, and some papers. To her left, a man in a white shirt is partially visible, looking at a laptop. To her right, another man in a white shirt is visible, looking at a laptop. In the background, there is a window with blinds and a printer. Three blue speech bubbles are overlaid on the image, containing text.

I know we said  
you could, but...

Breast is best!

You are going  
to do **WHAT** in  
your office??!!



This isn't what  
you really want.



Sorry we [your kid]  
missed you....

**MESSAGES START  
BEFORE THE BABY  
ARRIVES**

# “YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A JOB?”

- Women who did and did not appear to be pregnant applied for jobs or asked for help in retail stores
- When women appeared pregnant and **applied for jobs**, they encountered interpersonal **hostility**
- When women appeared pregnant and **asked for help**, they encountered interpersonal **benevolence**
  - *Reinforcing traditional gender roles*

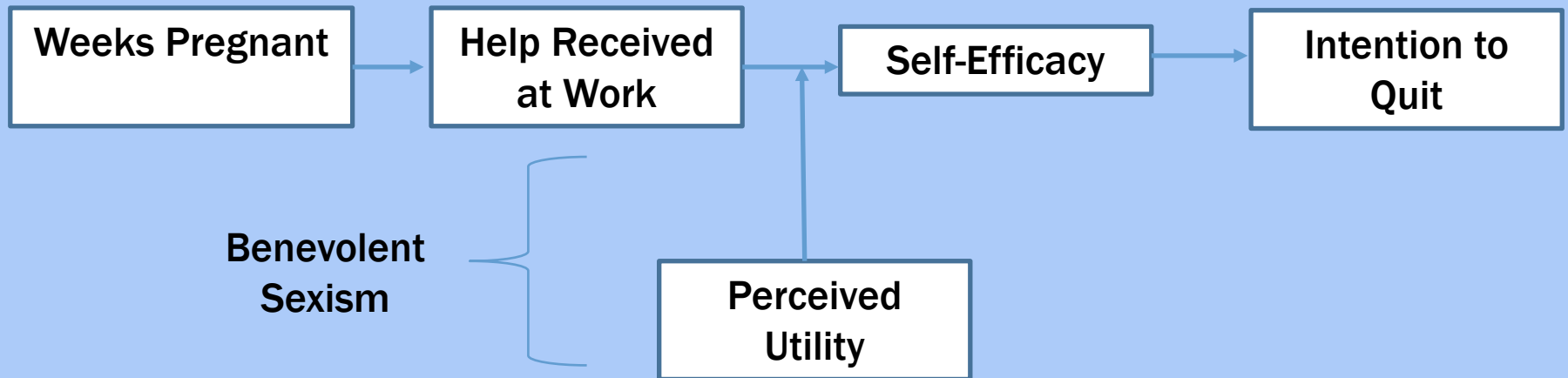


Hebl, M. R., King, E. B., Glick, P., Kazama, S., & Singletary, S. (2007). Hostile and benevolent reactions toward pregnant women: Complementary interpersonal punishments and rewards that maintain traditional roles. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 1499-1511.

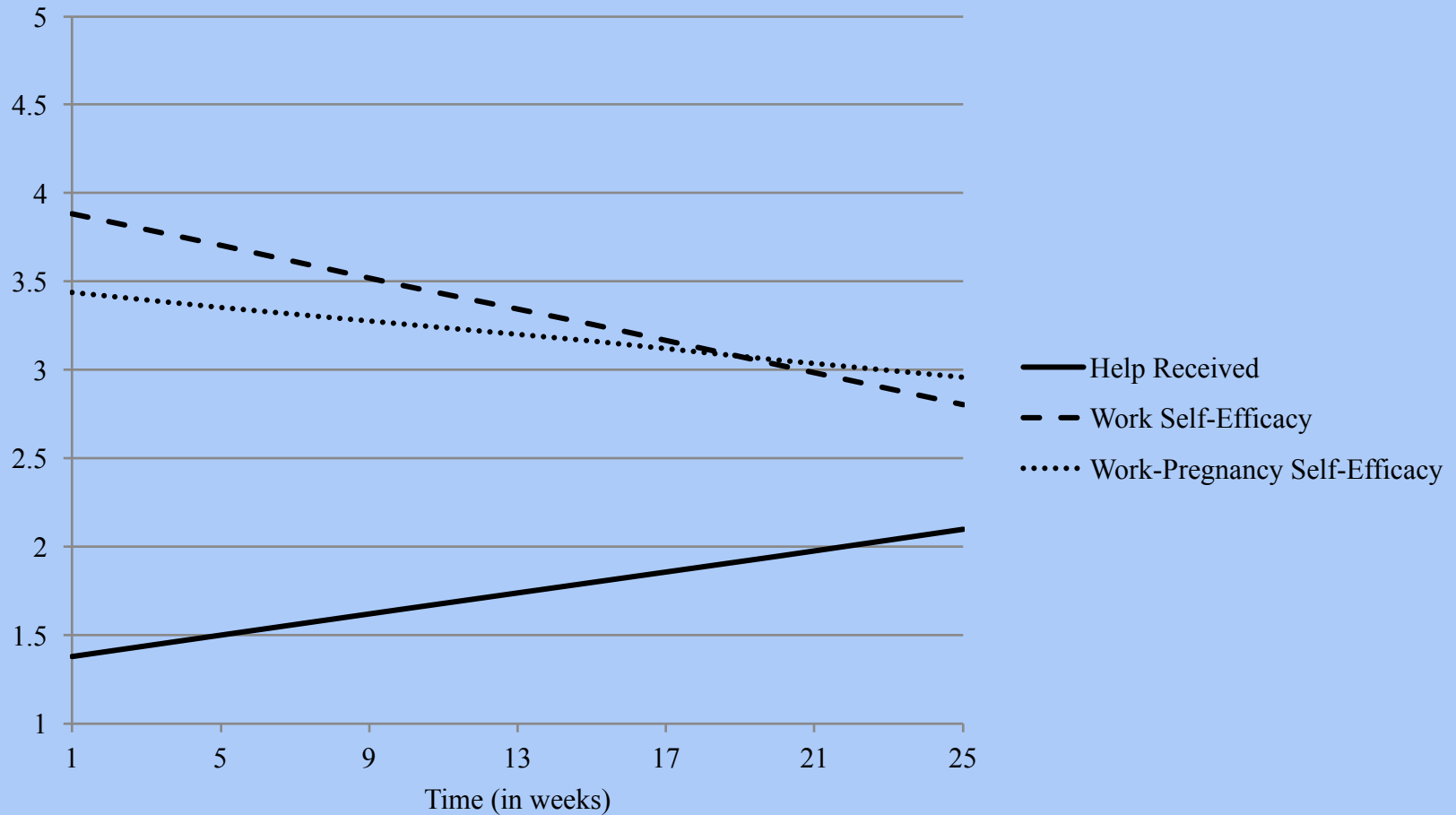


# “LET ME HANDLE THAT FOR YOU.”

- Longitudinal study of 120 women over the course of their pregnancies and 9 months post-partum
  - *Interpersonal experiences can be detrimental to women's self-views and careers*



# HELP INCREASES, EFFICACY DECREASES

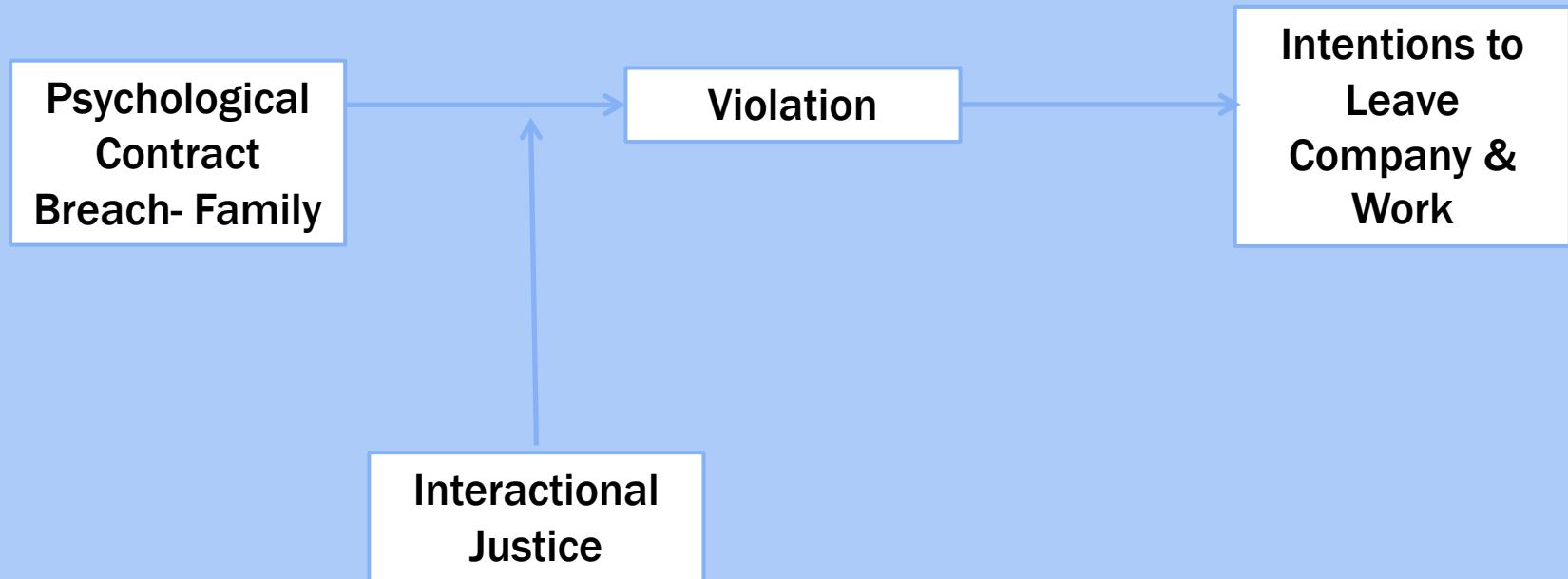



**AND THEN THERE IS  
A BABY**



# “I KNOW WE SAID YOU COULD, BUT...”

- Surveyed 181 first-time moms
  - *Receiving less than promised* (support for family, family-friendly policies, flex hours, flexplace, part-time) contributed to intentions to leave via felt violations





I am **proud** of my ability to stay focused and reach my goal of providing breast milk exclusively for my daughter for her first 12 months

...some people make you feel **ashamed**

I feel terrible I can't make enough for my baby

I am **proud** of my ability to nourish my children

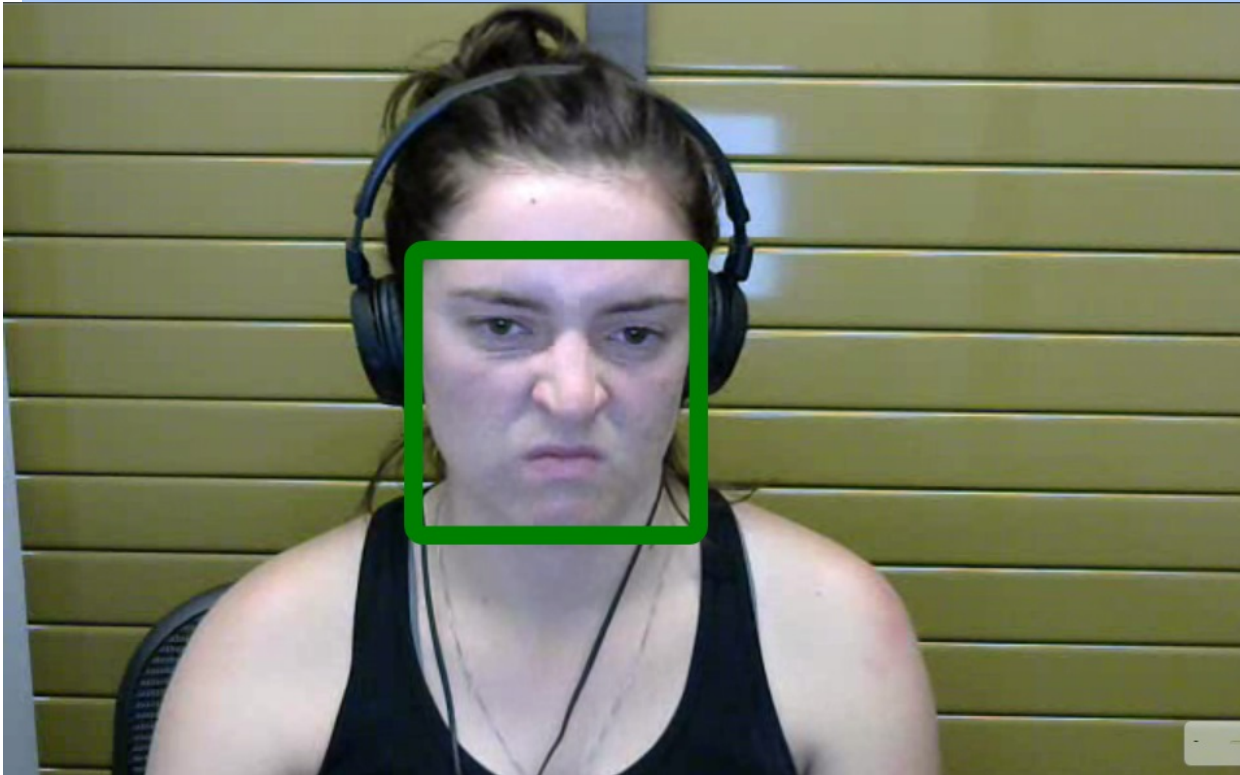
# "BREAST IS BEST."

- *"I was working with a partner on a project running a project plan. We'd been working hard on a deliverable, and we needed to get it to a Sr. Executive asap. When we finished, I had to pump and she got to go deliver the product to the Sr. Executive. **It's amazing how much that deflated me- all of my hard work and I got no glory in the end.** My partner was extremely supportive of me taking my pump breaks throughout the project, and I don't fault her. It was just another point of how breastfeeding while working is not only difficult, but can really hold you back while trying to have a successful career....it's so hard to do something that is already so tough **and demanding on you, but no one seems to get or support it. The pressures really eat at you and make you forget the benefits.**"*



- *“I am just feeling exhausted all the time....I burn the candle at both ends to meet expectations of me as a mom and as a professional and I'm just treading water all the time. So tired.”*

# “YOU ARE GOING TO DO *WHAT* IN YOUR OFFICE??!”



Sitzmann, T., Markell, H., & King, E.. (2017). Facial expressions of disgust toward breastfeeding and pumping. Unpublished manuscript.

**AND THE MESSAGES  
KEEP COMING**

# “THIS ISN’T WHAT YOU REALLY WANT.”

- Surveyed mothers, fathers, and their supervisors
- Mothers and fathers reported equal levels of commitment, flexibility, and desire for advancement
- Their supervisors believed that mothers’ levels were lower than fathers
  - *Supervisors’ beliefs may drive lower opportunities for mothers*

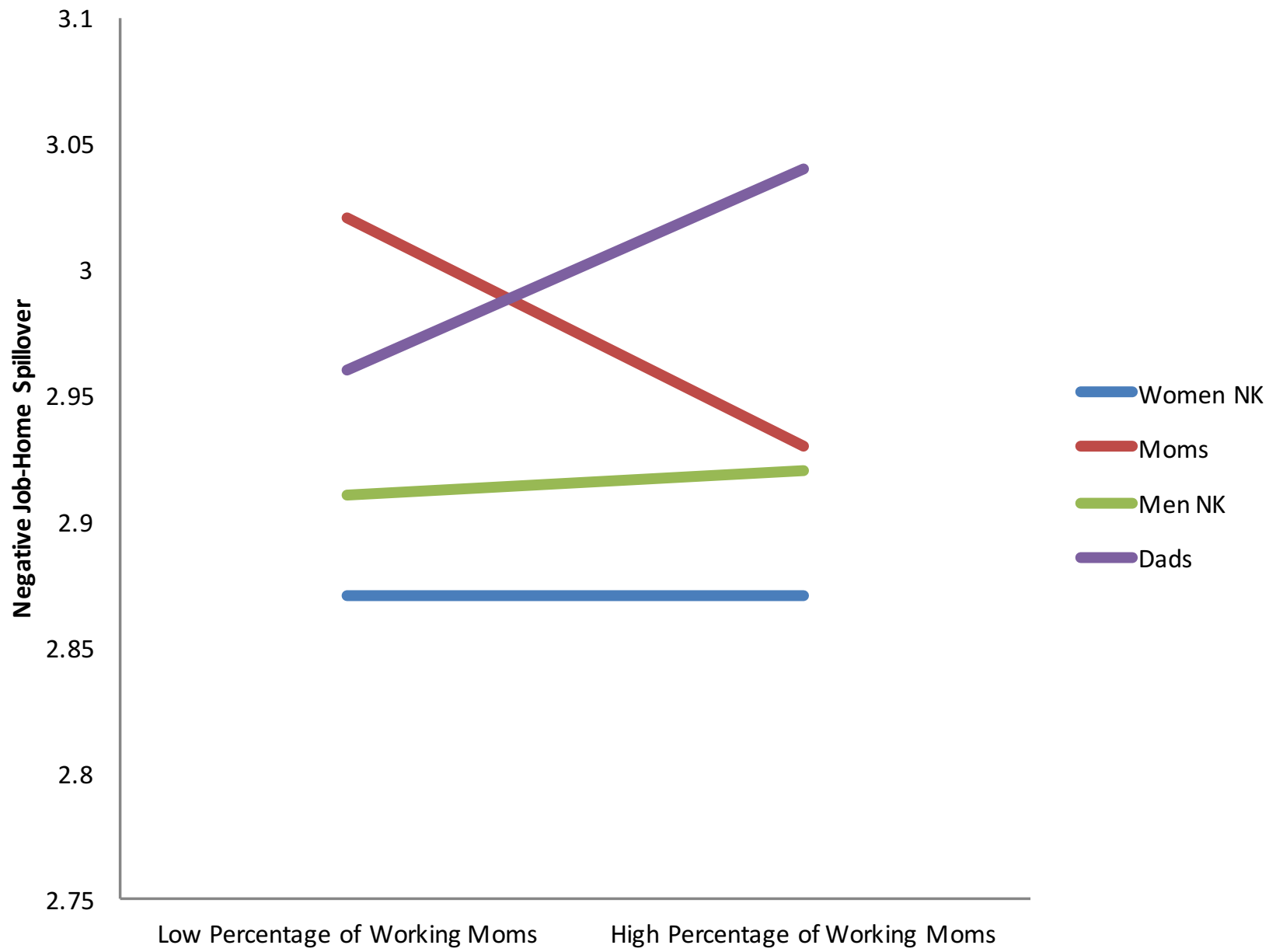


# “SORRY WE [YOUR KID] MISSED YOU...”



King, E. B., Clair, J., Hebl, M. R., & Jones, K. (2017). Neighborhood composition influences mothers' work-life conflict. Unpublished manuscript.





**LET'S SEND NEW  
MESSAGES**

I'm competent.

I'm committed.

I'm flexible.



How can we work  
together to get what  
you want?



Dads are parents, too.







# Finding Balance: Fathers at Work Part 1

Our company cares about more  
than just your productivity.

patagonia



# Mothers at Work

patagonia

# THIS MOM AT WORK





# THANKS!

