

“MODEL POLICIES” FOR WHOM?: CLUSTER CRITICISM OF NCAA
PREGNANCY AND PARENTAL DISCOURSE

by

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“Model Policies” for Whom?: Cluster Criticism of NCAA Pregnancy and Parental
Discourse

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Science at George Mason University

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I dedicate this thesis to my niece, Trista. You are truly everything that is great in this world. I love you beyond words and promise to stay by your side throughout this journey called life. From the moment that I first held you in my arms, I vowed to be someone you can look up to. Hopefully, I'm setting a good example for you to emulate. To my parents, Tamiko and Jeffrey, thank you for your unconditional love and support. Thank you for uprooting your lives in Atlanta to allow me to attend my dream school. You both have allowed me to pursue my passion and blaze my own path while equipping me with everything that I need to be successful. I am forever grateful. Trista, mommy, and daddy, I love the three of you so very much. I hope this makes you proud.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Abbreviations	vii
Abstract	viii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Problem Statement	3
Purpose for Study	4
Research Questions.....	4
Rationale/Significance.....	5
Chapter Preview/Summary	5
Chapter Two: Review of Related literature	7
Integrated Literature Review.....	7
A Brief History of Title IX and Its Relation to Sports	7
NCAA and Gender Equity.....	9
Pregnancy Overview.....	11
Fertility and Birth Rates in Age Groups & Races.....	13
Pregnant and Parenting College Students.....	15
Pregnant and Parenting College Student-Athletes.....	17
Laws and Policies to Protect Pregnant and Parenting Students.....	18
Chapter Three: Methodology	24
Research Design	24
Rhetorical Cluster Criticism	25
Data Analysis	28
Description of Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies.....	28
Chapter Four: Rhetorical Cluster Analysis	30
Theme One: The Secrecy Narrative Surrounding Pregnancy	30
Theme Two: Parenting and Pregnancy are Sole Gender Issues.....	33

Male	34
Female	35
Theme Three: The De-Emphasis on Parenting and Parenthood	37
Chapter Five: Discussion, Limitations, & Recommendations	39
Limitations/Future Research.....	40
Recommendations	42
Appendix A: Cover of Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies.....	45
Appendix B: Selected Excerpts Depicting the Secrecy Narrative Surrounding Pregnancy	46
Appendix C: Selected Excerpts Depicting Parenting and Pregnancy as Sole Gender Issues	47
Appendix D: Selected Excerpts Depicting the De-emphasis on Parenting and Parenthood	48
References	49

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists	ACOG
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	CDC
Cultural Resource Theory	CRT
National Collegiate Athletic Association.....	NCAA
National Center for Health Statistics	NCHS
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.....	NICHD
Office of Civil Rights.....	OCR
Sexually Transmitted Infection	STI
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.....	Title IX
United States Department of Health and Human Services	US DHHS

ABSTRACT

“MODEL POLICIES” FOR WHOM?: CLUSTER CRITICISM OF NCAA PREGNANCY AND PARENTAL DISCOURSE

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George Mason University, 2020

Thesis Director: Dr. R. Pierre Rodgers

Little, if any, research has been conducted on the topics of parenting and pregnancy in the student-athlete population. However, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has produced a *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* manual with the intention of “provid[ing] information and resources to member institutions and their student-athletes to effectively meet the needs of student-athletes dealing with a pregnancy” (Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2008, p. 5). Although the information included in the manual is quite informative, it is also important to note that majority of the discourse is directed towards female student-athletes, even though “male student-athletes are also affected by pregnancy” (p. 8).

A close textual analysis via rhetorical cluster criticism (Foss, 1996, 2004) was performed on the NCAA document. The analysis set out to answer the following two questions: 1) In what ways does the recurring discourse reference parenting student-

athletes and 2) How does the language used in the NCAA's *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* document refer to male student-athletes. Despite the title of the document suggesting equal focus on pregnancy *and* parenting resources, an examination of the discourse reveals that the document is pregnancy-centric and focuses little on parenting. Due to a heavy pregnancy focus, the *Manual* may be interpreted as a document that places greater emphasis on female student-athletes and their related lived experiences. Further, through the analysis of the document's discourse and visual imagery, the following themes emerged: *the secrecy narrative surrounding pregnancy, pregnancy and parenting as sole gender issues, and de-emphasis on parenting.*

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Sexual activity, pregnancy and parenting are not new topics on college campuses. In fact, the American College Health Association (as cited in Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2008) asserts that 74% of college students reported being sexually active and of that 74%, only 10% disclosed using emergency contraception. Additionally, Gault, Reichlin, Reynolds, and Froehner (2014) state that nearly a quarter of undergraduate students are parents or “raising dependent children.” Women are disproportionately represented in this statistic, with 32% of women raising a child as opposed to 18% of men doing the same (Gault et al., 2014). While these statistics may seem alarming, it is important to understand the factors contributing to the prominence of parenting and pregnancy among college students.

Due to the prominence of parenting and pregnancy on college students, a number of studies have been conducted in an effort to further understand the topic of parenting and pregnancy. The first of these studies entitled “The Effects of Unplanned Pregnancy Among College Women” set out to describe the perceptions traditional aged (18-22 years old) women had toward the effects of unplanned pregnancy. Story’s study also examined pregnancy’s effect from conception through the pregnancy’s outcome as well as the long term/on-going effects that these “traditional aged” women experienced following the termination of pregnancy or miscarriage. The findings of Story’s study were categorized

into three groups: immediate effects, intermediate effects and long-term effects. Of these three levels of effects, “feelings of guilt and fear of being stigmatized” became the most prevalent (Story, 1999). Similar findings were found in the 2011 study “It’s Not About Me: College Women and Unplanned Pregnancy” conducted by Jayne Hardy. Hardy’s (2011) research explored the lived experiences of single college women attending a small private four-year university who had an unplanned pregnancy. The study yielded three themes similar to those of Story’s research: an unplanned pregnancy triggers a broad range of emotions; an unplanned pregnancy necessitates access to a variety of support systems; and an unplanned pregnancy involves numerous transitions. Other research related to this topic further explored the resources, policies, and programs available to parenting and pregnant students (Brown & Nichols, 2012) as well as the male viewpoint on parenting and pregnancy (Olmstead et al., 2013).

Given the prevalence of parenting and pregnancy on college campuses, it is logical that these phenomena also exist in the collegiate student-athlete population. In an effort to address this, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) created a *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* guide with the purpose of expanding on the NCAA’s original goal of protecting student-athletes (Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2008). Additionally, similar research was conducted in the collegiate student-athlete population to further examine the phenomena. Similarly to Story’s (1999) findings, student-athletes also reported feeling ostracized by their athletic team and coaches in addition to being perceived as “promiscuous” and “irresponsible” by others (Santovec, 2019). These sentiments were also echoed in a 2017 study that set out

to examine the lived experiences of student-athlete mothers attending and competing athletically for a Division I or Division II institution. On a broader scale, these feelings and perceptions were categorized into five major themes: pregnancy decisions, being a pregnant student-athlete, available support during and after pregnancy, perceived organizational support, and guidance and suggestions around pregnancy (Williams, 2017). When discussing parenting and pregnancy whether in the college student or college student-athlete population, legal implications arise as notions of discrimination and equality are introduced. Sarah McCarthy's 2007 article addresses how the NCAA's pregnancy exception appears discriminatory against male student-athletes on the basis of gender. McCarthy argues that the NCAA's pregnancy exception violates Title IX by not allowing male student-athletes an additional year of eligibility due to childrearing although this option is offered to female student-athletes (McCarthy, 2007). Subsequent articles build upon McCarthy's work and address the need for an NCAA paternity waiver in addition to advocating for its creation (Pahl, 2013).

Problem Statement

There is an abundance of research for pregnancy in the college student population (e.g. Brown & Nichols, 2012; Gault et al., 2014; Hardy, 2011; Olmstead et al., 2013; Story, 1999). However, the research conducted in the collegiate student-athlete population has a legal focus which creates a lack of research about the implications of pregnancy and parenting in the collegiate student-athlete population. This lack of research creates gaps in the available literature and a knowledge void as it relates to examining the treatment and available resources of parenting and pregnant NCAA

student-athletes. It is imperative that research be conducted that examines the NCAA's conscious and subconscious viewpoint on parenting and pregnancy in the collegiate student-athlete population. By completing this research, the NCAA can gain knowledge about how the organization presents its stance on parenting and pregnancy amongst their student-athletes. This knowledge will enable the NCAA and similar organizations to maintain gender equity as well as equal treatment of male and female parenting and pregnant student-athletes.

Purpose for Study

The purpose of this study was to perform a close textual analysis of the NCAA's *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* document.

While the document's title suggests a treatment of pregnancy and parenting resources, it appears that the discourse centers around pregnancy and little on the parental component. As such, the *Manual* may be read as a document emphasizing *female* student-athletes and related lived experiences. Further, my analysis addresses the role of gender, primarily in print and also via the *Manual*'s visual imagery.

Research Questions

This study is guided by two equally important research questions:

RQ1: In what ways does the recurring discourse reference parenting student-athletes?

RQ2: How does the language used in the NCAA's *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* document refer to male student-athletes?

Rationale/Significance

This study seeks to expand knowledge of the influence of gender on the treatment and available resources for parenting and pregnant student-athletes by examining a primary text supposedly addressing these issues. It will prove to be beneficial to three different entities: the NCAA, athletic administrators, and parenting/pregnant student-athletes. Gathering additional, qualitative knowledge on this topic would be beneficial to the NCAA because it would assist in a re-consideration of how messages of gender equity and equal treatment of parenting/pregnant student-athletes under Title IX and NCAA bylaws are presented. From an athletic administrator's perspective, this study will provide knowledge of available resources that can be used to support parenting/pregnant student-athletes and it will also alert them of how the resources are described. For parenting and pregnant student-athletes, this study proves especially beneficial because it will enlighten this unique population on resources that may be available to them as well as bylaws and rules that provide them with protection against discrimination. Moreover, by a focus on language strategies, the *Manual*'s intended audience might see how gendered messages are identified and presented.

Chapter Preview/Summary

The thesis is comprised of five chapters which highlight different aspects of the study. Chapter One, the introduction, is divided into five subsections: the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose for the study, research question[s], and rationale/significance of the study. Chapter Two is a review of related literature: pregnant and parenting issues for college students; issues of parenting and pregnancy for student-

athletes; and laws and policies to protect pregnant and parenting students. Chapter Three focuses on the rhetorical methodology that was used to construct this study (cluster criticism) as well as the rationale for the methodology used. This chapter also includes methods for collecting and analyzing data from the *Manual* as a means to answer the research questions. In Chapter Four, a cluster analysis will be performed, emphasizing themes and patterns relating to pregnancy, parenting, and gender as found in the discourse. Finally, in Chapter Five, a summary and conclusions are presented.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There is a lack of research that studies parenting and pregnancy in the collegiate student-athlete population. However, research does exist as it relates to parenting and pregnant college students and its outcomes. This proves to be a starting point for researchers to examine parenting and pregnancy amongst college student-athletes. This chapter explores research related to parenting and pregnant college students, pregnant and parenting student-athletes, and laws and policies to protect pregnant and parenting students. When this literature is examined collectively, a thorough understanding of parenting and pregnant student-athletes is created.

Integrated Literature Review

A Brief History of Title IX and Its Relation to Sports

On June 23, 1972, President Richard Nixon signed into law a thirty-seven-word amendment to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This amendment became known as Title IX and sparked change in the American education system by declaring sex-based discrimination illegal (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017). As cited in *Title IX Turns 40: A Brief History and Look Forward*, Title IX states that “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under an education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Buchanan, 2012, p. 91). Essentially two words

should come to mind when discussing Title IX: equity and equality. The two words, often used interchangeably, are the foundation for Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Equity is simply providing everyone with what they need to be successful whereas equality means that everyone starts at the same place and requires the exact same tools to achieve success (Rothenberg, 2015; Bernier, Clow, & Hanson, n.d.; Sun, 2014).

Although Title IX applies to a wide variety of students, the legislation is widely known for the effect that it had on athletic programs across the country. While its original text does not specifically address athletics, in fact it only mandates equality and equity as it relates to education, it quickly became apparent that the legislation would have a major impact on sports (Heuben, 2003; Rothenberg, 2015). Title IX's impact on sports is shaped by its demands for equality. Although not included explicitly, Title IX demands the equal accommodation and treatment for both men and women at the intercollegiate level (Mitten, Davis, Shropshire, Osborne, & Smith, 2013; Rothenberg, 2015). When applied to intercollegiate athletics, Title IX encompasses three main areas. These areas are "equal opportunity," "other program areas" including but not limited to "treatment, benefits, and opportunities" and financial assistance to athletes (Anderson, Cheslock, & Ehrenberg, 2006, p. 228).

Members of Congress who supported the passage of Title IX did not envision Title IX to become a sports law, but Title IX and athletics seemingly go hand in hand, as evidenced by the legislation's history. During Title IX's first decade of existence there was an insurgence in participation opportunities for young women and girls. Title IX also faced amendment attempts in the 1970s by lawmakers who wanted to exclude athletics

entirely. The 1984 *Grove City v. Bell* court case declared that Title IX only applied to divisions of educational institutions that received direct federal funds. During the 1980s, not many athletic departments actually received funds from the federal government so nearly all athletic departments nationwide were exempt from having to comply with the legislation. This remained the standard until Congress passed the Civil Rights Restoration Act years later. The 1990s saw a new interest by the government to enforce Title IX as well as the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act in 1994, which mandates that higher learning institutions provide data about their women's and men's athletics programs annually. When President Bush instructed the Commission on Opportunity in Athletics to study Title IX in 2002, the topics of Title IX and sport were thrust into the spotlight again. In fact, many feared that this was an attempt to weaken the law which was proven false when the Commission reaffirmed the law in 2003. Nearing present day, the ideology of Title IX as just a "sports law" has changed to bring light to the application of Title IX to sexual harassment. The history of Title IX has always been "exemplified by the NCAA's outlook and actions" in regard to the legislation. Ironically enough, despite the NCAA suing in the 1970s to discard the law because it applied to athletics, in the past three decades the NCAA has become a major proponent for Title IX (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017).

NCAA and Gender Equity

Despite the NCAA being a major supporter of Title IX, the organization lacks the authority to enforce it. Because enforcement of Title IX is the responsibility of the Office of Civil Rights, the NCAA is only responsible for "support[ing] its member schools in

their efforts to work toward equity, diversity and inclusion goals in their athletics departments” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017). One tactic used to support these efforts was the formation of the Gender Equity Task Force in 1992. Former NCAA Executive Director, Richard D. Schultz, tasked the 16 members of the Task Force with “defining gender equity, examining and evaluating NCAA policies and recommending changes that would move the Association toward creating gender equity in intercollegiate athletics” (Hosick, 2007). From this Task Force came the NCAA’s definition of gender equity as well as recommendations to NCAA member institutions (Judge, O’Brien, & Morrison, 2010). According to the NCAA Gender Equity Task Force, “an athletics program can be considered gender equitable when the participants in both the men’s and women’s sports programs would accept as fair and equitable the overall program of the other gender” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017). The Task Force’s first recommendation was to include “principles of gender equity as an addition to the NCAA constitution” (Hosick, 2007). The reasoning behind this recommendation was that it required the NCAA’s member institutions to comply with federal and state law in regard to gender equity as well as prevented the NCAA from adopting its own legislation that could potentially conflict with federal/state legislation already in place. The second recommendation was the creation of a resource book that would “include guidelines to assist member institutions in achieving gender equity” (as cited in Rothenberg, 2015, p. 41).

Stemming from the NCAA’s Gender Equity Task Force recommendations comes the addition of principles in the NCAA’s constitution. Principles 2.2. and 2.3 of the

NCAA Constitution were put in place as a guide for member institutions to strive for gender equity. 2.2 of the NCAA Constitution is known as The Principles of Student-Athlete Well-Being, which states that it is the member institution's responsibility to create and maintain an environment that values gender equity amongst its student-athletes and athletics community (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017). The Principle of Gender Equity, Constitution 2.3, "indicates that the activities of the NCAA are to be conducted in a manner free of gender bias, that each member college is to comply with federal and state laws requiring gender equity, and that the association should adopt legislation to enhance member institution compliance with applicable gender equity laws" (Yiamouyiannis & Osborne, 2012, p. 4). The Gender Equity Task Force also recommended a resource book that is now known as the *Gender Equity Manual*.

Pregnancy Overview

According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), pregnancy is the term often used to refer to the period when a fetus develops in a woman's womb (NICHD, 2017). Pregnancy is typically measured by trimester totaling to approximately 40 weeks, when measured from the last menstrual cycle (NICHD, 2017). The first trimester also known as weeks one through twelve begin with conception. During the process of conception, sperm penetrates an egg and that egg is then considered fertilized. This fertilized egg is now referred to as a zygote. The zygote is the culmination of cells that will eventually form the fetus and placenta. The placenta is used to connect the fetus and the mother while also providing oxygen and other necessary nutrients to the fetus (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [ACOG],

2015). The zygote implants itself into the uterine wall after traveling to the uterus via the fallopian tube.

Following trimester one, the second trimester begins lasting from week thirteen until week twenty-eight. The second trimester, usually between weeks eighteen and twenty, is usually the time to check for birth defects via ultrasound as well as discover the sex of the baby. Ultrasounds conducted around this timeframe are ideal considering that most women begin to feel movement at week twenty (Stoll et al., 2010). Research conducted by the NICHD's Neonatal Research Network discovered that babies born at twenty-eight weeks had a 92% survival rate despite the likelihood of experiencing serious health complications such as neurologic and respiratory concerns (Stoll et al, 2010).

Trimester three (weeks twenty-nine to forty) is considered the final stretch. Baby's bones are considered almost fully formed despite being soft at week thirty-two. Most pregnancies conclude during this trimester and thus create different birth classifications such as preterm, late preterm, early term, full term, late term, and post term. These classifications are based on the gestational age at the time of birth. "Preterm" describes births prior to the thirty-seven-week mark. Children born preterm face an increased risk for developmental delays in addition to cerebral palsy and vision and hearing problems (Spong, 2013). Following preterm pregnancies, births occurring between thirty-four and thirty-six weeks are labeled "late preterm" (Spong, 2013). Once considered "term" pregnancies, children born between thirty-seven and thirty-eight weeks are "early term." These children tend to face more health risks when compared to those born thirty-nine weeks and later (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [ACOG], 2013).

Full term births occur at weeks thirty-nine and forty. Children who are born full term tend to have “better health outcomes” compared to children born outside of this full-term gestational window. Due to this fact, it is often recommended to deliver (given no medical issues preventing a full-term pregnancy) around thirty-nine weeks because it allows the brain, liver, and lungs to fully develop (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [ACOG], 2013; NICHD, 2013a; NICHD, 2013b). Additionally, births taking place between forty-one weeks & forty-one weeks and six days are labeled “late term” whereas any birth occurring at forty-two weeks and after are “post term.”

Fertility and Birth Rates in Age Groups & Races

When discussing the topic of pregnancy, there are two key terms to know: fertility rate and birth rate. According to Mathews and Hamilton (2019), the term *fertility rate* is used to describe the expected number of births per 1,000 women (Child Trends, 2019). The fertility rate is based on recent population estimates provided by the Census Bureau. Adding to that, “birth rate” refers to the number of births that occur yearly per 1,000 women who are in a specific age group (Mathews & Hamilton, 2019). While the fertility rates in the United States have seen a sharp decline since the Baby Boom era (1950s to early 1960s), the year 2017 saw the lowest rate in recorded history with 60.3 births per 1,000 women (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, & Drake, 2018; United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1967).

Young women between the ages of 15 and 24 have had a consistent decline in their birth rate for ten consecutive years, as reported in 2017. Women belonging to the 25 to 44

age group also had a decline in their birth rate following a steady increase from 2010 to 2016 (Child Trends, 2019).

The highest birth rate can be found in women who are in their peak childbearing years. Specifically, the birth rate for women between the ages of 30 and 34 was the highest at 100.3 births per 1,000 women in 2017 (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, & Drake, 2018). This is followed by women ages 25 to 29 with a birth rate of 98 births per 1,000 women and 71 births per 1,000 women between the ages of 20 and 24. 2016 marked the first year that the highest birth rate was not for women ages 25 to 29. In fact, the birth rate for this age group only further declined in 2017 (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, & Drake, 2018). Since 2003, the birth rate for women ages 35 to 39 has been higher than the birth rate for teenaged women (ages 15 to 19), which is a change from previous years (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, & Drake, 2018). Between the years 2010 and 2017, the birth rates for women in the following age groups; 30 to 34, 35 to 39, 40 to 44, and 45 to 54 - all saw an increase whereas women in younger age groups had a decrease in birth rate (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, & Drake, 2018). This time period also saw significant declines in women between the ages of 10 and 19 (50% decline in women 10 to 14; 14% decline for ages 15 to 19 respectively) (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, & Drake, 2018). Additionally, women 20 to 24 also had a notable decline of 21 percent between 2010 and 2017.

Hispanic women, in 2017, saw the highest fertility rate at 67.6 births per 1,000 women despite their fertility rate having decreased by 27% in the last decade. This number is followed by non-Hispanic black (63.1), Pacific Islander or Asian (59.3), non-

Hispanic white (57.2), and Alaska Native or American Indian (40.8). Since 2010 to 2017, Asian women had a slight raise in their fertility rate (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, & Drake, 2018). Both non-Hispanic black and white women had a moderate decrease in their fertility rate. The fertility rate for both American Indian women and Hispanic women notably declined by 16.1 and 15.7 percent respectively (United States Department of Health and Human Services [US DHHS], Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], National Center for Health Statistics [NCHS], 2018). Declines were also seen in all teen (15 to 19) age groups (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, & Drake, 2018).

Pregnant and Parenting College Students

In recent years, unplanned pregnancy has become a major issue in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). In fact, 49% of all pregnancies are not planned (Finer & Henshaw, 2006; Finer & Zolna, 2011). In 2003, researchers Nguyen, Akiyoshi, and Neinsten estimated that approximately 3.5% of college students had experienced an unintended pregnancy. This is not surprising because the emerging adult age group also known as “college aged,” classified as individuals ages 18 to 25, are at the highest risk for unplanned pregnancy (Arnett, 2000; Olmstead, Koon, Puhlman, Paslwy, & Fincham, 2013). Over the span of five years, from 2001 until 2006, the percentage of unintended pregnancies rose from 79% to 83% in women ages 18-19 & 59% to 64% in women ages 20-24 respectively (Finer & Zolna, 2011). It is estimated that over 2 million “college-aged” women become pregnant each year. Today, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research reports the statistic of undergraduate students raising children

at 26% equaling 4.8 million students. Of that 4.8 million, 3.4 million (71%) are undergraduate mothers and 1.4 million (29%) are undergraduate fathers (Gault, Reichlin, Reynolds, & Froehner, 2014). It is important to note that less than one in ten undergraduate parenting students complete their bachelor's degree within six years (Don, 2018; Newlon, 2013). To combat this statistic, a number of universities have implemented a number of campus resources to assist parenting and pregnant students.

Many universities have campus resources in place that parenting and pregnant students can utilize. These resources may vary slightly by campus, but all have the same general purpose of assisting pregnant and parenting students. On-campus childcare is one resource that many colleges and universities offer. The Center for Child Care and Family Resources at the University of Utah is a prime example. The Center provides parenting and pregnant students with on-campus childcare as well as drop-in babysitting at night, childcare subsidy grants for off-campus childcare and finals week care (McWhirter, 2019; University of Utah, 2019). Health Services and specific Women's Health Clinics are two other resources available on college campuses for this unique subset of students. For example, The University of California-Berkeley's Health Service Center offers a plethora of resources ranging from adoption and abortion information, information regarding insurance, counseling, and even on-site pregnancy tests. Similarly, the University of Florida's Women's Health Clinic offers STI screening and treatment, information about contraceptives, routine gynecological exams and access to other resources on a case by case basis (McWhirter, 2019; UC Regents, 2019; University of Florida Health, 2019). Graduate/family housing is common at institutions across the

nation. In addition to its two on campus childcare centers, the University of California-San Diego offers an additional four types of specialized housing for parenting and pregnant students who desire to live on campus (McWhirter, 2019; UC San Diego, 2018). Parenting and pregnant student support centers and groups are another one of the many resources made available on college campuses. For instance, Harvard University's Law School organized a Couples and Families Association dedicated to connecting parenting and pregnant students with one another. The organization also regularly hosts events that are designed with both the students and their child in mind. Comparably, Minnesota's Winona State University has established a Student Parent Support Center. There parenting and pregnant students can participate in workshops, parenting classes and even student-parent social events (McWhirter, 2019; "Harvard Law: Couples and Families Association," n.d.; Winona State University, n.d.).

Pregnant and Parenting College Student-Athletes

The notion of parenting and pregnancy amongst college students is not new; therefore, the same can be said for the college student-athlete population. Although there is not an exact statistic on the number of parenting and pregnant student-athletes, it is estimated that the rates of parenting and pregnancy amongst college student-athletes in an athletic department range from 10% to 15% (Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2008). From this estimate, Hogshead-Makar and Sorensen (2008) conclude that in "a sample college athletics department with 300 female and male students, 30-45 of those students may be reasonably affected by pregnancy each year" (p. 7). While the statistics for parenting and pregnancy amongst college students is easily accessible, the statistics of this amongst

college student-athletes is difficult to pinpoint. Often times, athletes do not choose to self-identify their status as a parenting or pregnant student-athlete in order to continue athletic training and competition (Ford, 2004; Potts, 2001; Schonburn, 2007); for fear of forced abortion (Portnoy, 2004; Rovegno, 2007); and fear of alienation.

Laws and Policies to Protect Pregnant and Parenting Students

As it is written Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 states: No person in the United States shall, on the basis of gender, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance (20 U.S.C. §1681).

Title IX's 1975 regulations specify how Title IX applies to athletics programs, which are considered educational programs and activities by definition. Title IX regulation is broken into three individual parts as it applies to athletics: participation, scholarships, and "other" benefits. In regard to participation, it is required by Title IX that women and men both be provided fair and impartial opportunities for sport participation. Institutions, however, are not required by Title IX to provide identical sports but only equal participation opportunities. Under Title IX, both male and female student-athletes are entitled to receive athletic scholarships that are proportionate to their athletic participation (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2014). The National Collegiate Athletic Association's Title IX Frequently Asked Questions webpage (2014) states "Title IX requires the equal treatment of female and male student-athletes in the provisions of: (a) equipment and supplies; (b) scheduling of games and practice times; (c) travel and

daily allowance/per diem; (d) access to tutoring; (e) coaching; (f) locker rooms, practice and competitive facilities; (i) publicity and promotions; (j) support services; and (k) recruitment of student-athletes.”

Title IX does offer support and protection to pregnant student-athletes because it prohibits educational institutions, which includes NCAA member schools, from discrimination on the basis of pregnancy. 34 C.F.R. §106.40(b)(1) of Title IX states “a recipient shall not discriminate against any student, or exclude any student from its education program or activity, on the basis of such student’s pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy or recovery therefrom, unless the student requests voluntarily to participate in a separate portion of the program or activity of the recipient”. Under this same regulation, NCAA institutions can not alter student’s financial assistance on the basis of sex:

Recipients shall not apply any rule or assist in application of any rule concerning eligibility for such assistance which treats persons of one sex differently from persons of the other sex with regard to marital or parental status (34 C.F.R. §106.37(a)(3)).

Stephanie Monroe (2007), Assistant Secretary at the US Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, composed a “Dear Colleague Letter” in 2007 that provided practical implications for pregnant student-athletes. Monroe’s letter reiterated that Title IX “instructs recipients to treat pregnancy or childbirth in the same manner and under the same policies as any temporary physical disability.” In the athletic context, this would enable pregnant and parenting student-athletes to return to their sport in the same

sense of maternity/paternity leave or a medical absence, granting them an additional year of eligibility as outlines in the NCAA bylaws. Athletic scholarships may not be withdrawn on the basis of pregnancy and must be handled in accordance to the institution's treatments of other medical conditions. The Office of Civil Rights' interpretation of Title IX prevents universities from withdrawing a pregnant student-athlete's financial assistance even if this action would take place in the situation of other physically impaired athletes (Brake, 2008). The Title IX regulation mentioned above supports the OCR's interpretation.

The NCAA has two bylaws that are related to student-athlete pregnancy. Bylaw 15.3.4.3 forbids the increase, decrease, or cancellation of any athletic financial aid due to illness, injury, or a medical condition that prevents athletic participation (NCAA, 2017). Pregnancy is considered a medical condition under this bylaw which means that a student-athlete's scholarship will not be affected due to pregnancy-related absences including abortions, miscarriages, or a full-term pregnancy. NCAA Bylaw 14.2.1.3 allows female athletes to request a sixth year of athletic eligibility, assuming a fifth year is taken, in the event of a pregnancy (NCAA, 2017). The NCAA provides all student-athletes with five years or ten semesters to complete four seasons of competitive eligibility. It is important to note that both of these bylaws cater toward female student-athletes who bear the physical responsibility of pregnancy.

A toolkit addressing the NCAA's pregnant and parenting student-athletes was created in 2007 as a response to a NCAA Committee on Women's Athletics initiative. The toolkit, created by Florida Coastal School of Law professor Nancy Hogshead-Makar,

and Faculty Athletics Representative at Wright State University, Elizabeth Sorensen, was distributed to all NCAA member institutions. In her 2008 NCAA presentation, Judy Sweet stated the purpose of the NCAA toolkit was to “explain federal law, NCAA regulations, medical recommendations, and best policy practices” as they relate to student-athlete pregnancy at NCAA member institutions. The toolkit addresses the legal and NCAA requirements as it applies to student-athlete pregnancy as well as provides “model policies” for universities to integrate. Included in the toolkit is information addressing the importance of student-athlete pregnancy; model policies for universities to integrate; and frequently asked questions about student-athletes (Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2008).

Faculty Athletics Representative and Professor of Nursing at Wright State University, Elizabeth Sorensen, has also been influential in the promotion of pregnancy policies for NCAA member institutions. Through her creation of a pregnancy policy at Wright State, other universities including Ohio University in 1999, Sacred Heart (Connecticut) in 2003, SUNY at Binghamton, University of Detroit Mercy, and the University of Illinois at Chicago all in 2005 began to establish policies that mirrored Sorensen’s (Rainey, 2006). As of 2007, Sorensen claimed that approximately seventy schools had created policies that outline student-athlete pregnancy (“Tragedy Revisited,” 2007). The original policy that Sorensen created and subsequently those that mirror Wright State delineate a suggested course of action for addressing the topic of pregnant female student-athletes. Sorensen (2004) stated that an effective pregnant student-athlete policy should 1) encourage the continued healthy participation of the athlete with medical

approval, 2) protect scholarships while providing time for student-athletes to make decisions, 3) plan for continued academic success, 4) encourage pregnant student-athletes not to automatically withdraw from their sport, 5) provide information on all pregnancy options, and 6) plan for the student-athlete's return to her sport following her decision. Since the creation and implementation of student-athlete pregnancy policies at Wright State by Sorensen, other universities such as Missouri State, University of Nevada Las Vegas, University of Texas Dallas, and Virginia Commonwealth University have created their own policies in recent years. Aside from the NCAA member institutions that have created student-athlete pregnancy policies, the NCAA as whole does not have a specific "pregnancy policy."

Summary

In the year 2003, nearly 3.5% of college students reported that they had experienced an unintended pregnancy (Nguyen, Akiyoshi, & Neinsten). Nguyen, Akiyoshi, and Neinstein conducted a study and discovered that the average age for pregnant college women is twenty-four. In this same study, it was found that seventy-three percent of the women were not married to their partners and seventy-five percent labeled their pregnancy as being unplanned. While this information addresses the notion of parenting and pregnant college students, it neglects the student-athlete sector. An exact statistic regarding the number of parenting and pregnant student-athletes is hard to pinpoint. However, there are estimates that the rate is between ten and fifteen percent (Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2008). As mentioned earlier, statistics about parenting and pregnancy are easily accessible whereas statistics specific to student-athletes are

difficult to pinpoint. In this case, it may be instructive to perform a qualitative, close textual analysis of the NCAA's discourse directed to pregnant and parenting student-athletes. Using the tools of rhetorical analysis, intentional and implied language offers a clue about gender and how parenting and pregnancy discourse is presented to potential and actual student-athletes.

There are laws such as Title IX in existence that support and protect pregnant student-athletes from discrimination on the basis of pregnancy. While these laws are helpful, they often neglect males as well as individuals post-pregnancy. Stephanie Monroe's 2007 "Dear Colleague Letter" provided practical implications for pregnant student-athletes. However, the letter failed to provide solutions for how to address the issue aside from the physical aspect. Also, in 2007, the NCAA created a pregnant and parenting student-athletes toolkit. This toolkit provides explanations on federal laws, NCAA regulations, medical recommendations and best policy practices (Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2008). It also stresses the importance of model pregnancy policies for universities. The NCAA's toolkit does address pregnancy, but it fails to provide any information on life after pregnancy.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design for this study is qualitative design. Qualitative research design aims to explore and understand the meaning that individuals and/or groups ascribe to the social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research designs as case studies, which enable the researcher to analyze cases more in depth, aim to not only understand but also interpret social institutions. According to Yin (2003), a qualitative case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p. 18). Creswell offers the following information about conducting a case study. Prior to conducting a case study, the researcher must first determine if a case study would be beneficial and/or appropriate to the research problem. A general rule of thumb to determine if a case study is appropriate is when the researcher can clearly identify their cases and boundaries as well as seek a more in-depth understanding of the case (Creswell, 2007). After deciding that a case study is appropriate, the researcher should then identify their case(s). Cases may involve an event, a problem, an individual, several individuals, or an activity. Once the case has been identified, the type of case study that will be used should be selected. Baxter and Jack (2008) explain the different types of case studies including explanatory, exploratory, descriptive, intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995). For the

purpose of this study, an instrumental case study will be used. During single instrumental case studies, an issue is the main focus and the researcher chooses a bounded case to demonstrate this issue (Stake, 1995). According to Baxter and Jack (2008), instrumental case studies are “used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation” and provide “insight into an issue” (p. 549). A qualitative research method, more specifically an instrumental case study, would be ideal for this study because it studies a particular document dealing with pregnancy and parenting concerns. This qualitative research design will allow for a single document to be analyzed so that patterns, features, and themes can be identified in regard to how gender affects the treatment of parenting student-athletes.

Rhetorical Cluster Criticism

For the purpose of this research, rhetorical cluster criticism is used to analyze the recurring themes in the NCAA’s *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* guide. Rhetorical cluster analysis requires that the critic examine the intensity and frequency of terms. The frequency of terms was determined based simply on the number of times a term appeared, and the intensity of terms was determined based on the context surrounding terms. The cluster analysis process is comprised of four steps: 1) select an artifact, 2) analyze the artifact, 3) formulate a research question and 4) write the essay.

Rhetorical criticism, as defined by Sonja Foss (1996), is “a process of thinking about symbols discovering how they work, why they affect us, and choosing to communicate in particular ways as a result of the options they present” (p. 3). Often,

critics use rhetorical cluster criticism as a means to “discover a rhetor’s worldview” which is also referred to as “terministic screens,” a term coined by rhetorical theorist and critic, Kenneth Burke (Foss, 2004, p. 71). Rhetoric, according to Burke (as cited in Foss, 2004, p. 64), is “the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents” (Foss, 2004, p. 69; Burke, 1969, p. 41). There are an infinite number of terms that can be used by a rhetor. Foss (2004) explains that rhetors “put together components of rhetoric in a way that reflects who they are, the subjects about which they are engrossed, and the meanings they have for those subjects” (p. 71). By analyzing the terministic screens present, rhetorical critics are able to gain insight into rhetors. The rhetor’s chosen terminology, whether “deliberate or spontaneous” will also provide insight (Burke, as cited in Foss, 2004, p. 71). Often times, indications of the rhetor’s worldviews and meaning can be discovered by charting the most important elements found in the terministic screen and “noting what follows what” (Burke, 1984, p. 191).

Burke suggests a number of critical approaches that can be used to assist a critic in discovering a rhetor’s worldview during an analysis of their rhetoric. Rhetorical cluster criticism is one of these approaches. When completing a rhetorical cluster criticism, “the meanings that key symbols have for a rhetor are discovered by charting the symbols that cluster around those key symbols in an artifact” (Foss, 2004, p. 71). Most times, the clusters that are discovered are not known to the rhetor, although the act of writing is conscious (Foss, 2004, p. 72; Burke, 1973, p. 20). As a result of the rhetor not being aware of these clusters, the critic is able to look beyond the rhetor’s “official front” (what

the rhetor consciously wants to present) and examine a level on which the rhetor cannot lie (Foss, 2004, p. 72; Burke, 1984, p. 233).

As a complementary tool to Foss's rhetorical cluster analysis, a Critical Discourse Analysis method created by American researcher and linguist James Gee is employed. While there are a number of methods, created by numerous researchers, that classify as Critical Discourse Analysis, the method that is most closely related to Foss's rhetorical cluster criticism and Burke's notion of "noting what follows what" is *cohesion* (Burke, 1984, p. 191). Many researchers have utilized the cohesion method in their writing (e.g. Easy, 2012; Gee, 2015). Cohesion, as Gee (2015) describes the method, "covers all the multifarious linguistic ways in which sentences are connected or linked to each other" (p. 134). Simply put, cohesion is considered "the glue, that holds text together" (p. 134).

As with any research design, there will be strengths and weaknesses that the researcher must consider prior to conducting the study. Qualitative research design was deemed best for this study because of its flexibility and ability to evolve as it was being conducted. Another reason qualitative research design was used was because of its holistic focus. Qualitative research enables the "big picture" to be the focus of the study while multiple sources assist in the understandings of complex situations (Madrigal & McClain, 2012). While triangulation will strengthen the validity of the study's findings, these findings will not be able to be generalized based on the multiple sources that were utilized. By presenting these multiple perspectives, the researcher will experience some difficulty in reaching a clear-cut consensus of the social problem. Another potential

weakness of qualitative research design may be that by interpreting the data collected, the study may appear overly subjective.

Data Analysis

An inductive content analysis was completed for this study. This inductive content analysis enabled the researcher to explore the ways the NCAA presents its message regarding information and resources and how that message is gendered in the discourse. This inductive approach allowed the researcher to analyze research findings that emerged from the “frequent, dominant or significant themes” in the raw data without the constraint of structured methodology (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). Inductive content analysis also has additional purposes that include: condensing the raw text data into a more summarized format; establishing links between the objectives set by the researcher and the study’s findings and ensuring that those links are both transparent and defensible; and developing a theory about the structure of experiences that were apparent in the text/raw data.

Description of Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies

The artifact selected for examination for this study was the NCAA’s *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* guide. The guide, created in 2008, is the result of the collaborative efforts of authors Nancy Hogshead-Makar, J.D., Professor of Law at Florida Coastal School of Law and Elizabeth A. Sorensen, PhD, RN, CNOR, Assistant Professor in the College of Nursing and Health and Faculty Athletics Representative at Wright State University as well as contributors Kimberly G. Harmon, M.D., Team Physician & Associate Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and

Orthopedics and Sports Medicine at University of Washington; David Klossner, PhD, NCAA Director of Health and Safety; and Karen Morrison, J.D., NCAA Director of Gender Initiatives. Upon its completion, the guide became seen as a “handbook of best practices” that was to be utilized when addressing the topics of parenting and pregnancy in the collegiate student-athlete population at NCAA member institutions (Sorensen, Sincoff, & Siebeneck, 2009, p. 27).

The guide is available electronically as a pdf file through NCAA.org as well as NCAAPublications.com. While neither of these websites provide information on the accessibility of hard copies, NCAA.org does make a mention of an edit in the hard copy. Due to the guide being created in 2008, it can be hypothesized that it was originally intended to be printed and distributed; however, the lack of revised copies could potentially be why the document is only available electronically a decade later. The guide is intended to assist and inform athletic administrators, coaches, athletic trainers, parents, and student-athletes of best practices to address parenting and pregnancy. These topics can be quite sensitive so the notion of accessing the document electronically provides more accessibility as well as privacy as opposed to hard copies being provided. Visually, the approximately 57-page e-document has an interesting layout. Of the 57 pages, the 55 content pages have information on both the left and right side of the page. This gives the illusion that the pages are meant to be folded into a booklet which is contradictory to the front and back cover pages, which function as single pages. The guide’s content is divided into four chapters: background, best practices, sports medicine resources, and case studies and media stories.

CHAPTER FOUR: RHETORICAL CLUSTER ANALYSIS

Theme One: The Secrecy Narrative Surrounding Pregnancy

The first area of focus that proved to be significant through a cluster analysis of the NCAA's *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* guide is *pregnancy*. This comes as no surprise, given the artifact's title. When discussing the topic of pregnancy amongst the student-athlete population, the terms "*pregnant*" and "*pregnancy*" can be utilized somewhat interchangeably. In fact, the term "*pregnant*" was utilized 143 times throughout the artifact while "*pregnancy*" was utilized 412 times. Given the frequency of these terms in the artifact, one would assume that healthy, open, and honest communication exists surrounding pregnancy in the collegiate student-athlete population. However, as uncovered through the cluster analysis, this is simply not the case. In fact, there have been countless stories/occurrences about both college students as well as student-athletes discarding of their [unborn] fetus/children in inhumane ways. This is highlighted in Section C "worst case scenarios" on page 16 through "Melissa's Story," in which a young student-athlete feared expulsion because of her pregnancy and ultimately decided to have an abortion. This section also includes the story of Larissa Bellamy, who was encouraged to get an abortion by her coach. The motivation for these acts/actions often lie in fear and secrecy: fear of being judged; fear of losing scholarships and/or playing time; or just not knowing who to turn to or how to navigate this

experience. While these attitudes of fear and secrecy can consume any young person experiencing pregnancy on a college campus, it is important to note that this fear and secrecy is created from the top down; and in this particular case, it starts with the NCAA and language used in their guide to address student-athlete pregnancy and is then being subconsciously enforced at individual athletic departments. The NCAA's language plays a role in shaping the secrecy narrative that it has towards pregnancy in/amongst the student-athlete population as well as pregnant student-athletes.

The *secrecy* narrative is exemplified by a number of terms that cluster around the selected key terms "*pregnant*" and "*pregnancy*." These terms including "*conceal*," "*hiding*," "*terminate*," and "*confront*" all depict the topic of pregnancy in a negative light. The authors utilized these "devil terms" to not only "represent the ultimate negative" but to also push the secrecy and anti-pregnancy narrative (Foss, 2004, p. 73). When these words are used in conjunction with the key terms "*pregnant*" and "*pregnancy*," negativity is attached and a dark ominous cloud overshadows the topic, leaving it to be a taboo topic that is not discussed openly or freely. Throughout the artifact, the term "*conceal*" is clustered around the term "*pregnancy*" approximately six times. Often the term "*conceal*" is utilized in the phrase "conceal her pregnancy or "conceal their pregnancy." Similarly, "*hiding*" appears in close proximity twice to "*pregnancy*" in phrases such as "hiding a pregnancy" and "hiding her pregnancy." Most notably, the term "*terminate*" appears fourteen times through the artifact. "*Terminate*" is frequently utilized in phrases such as "terminate the pregnancy" and "terminate her pregnancy." The use of words such as "*conceal*," "*hiding*," and "*terminate*" suggest that

the topic of pregnancy amongst college student-athletes should be treated as a secret. The NCAA's use of these "devil terms" throughout an artifact that is designed to support student-athletes who may be navigating a pregnancy experience does not help foster that open, honest and healthy communication that is needed to address this situation.

Additionally, the NCAA addressed environments and policies that may be considered "*hostile*" for student-athletes experiencing a pregnancy. The term "*hostile*," although only appearing six times in the artifact, is *strategically* placed. The notion that there are "*hostile*" environments and policies in place to address student-athlete pregnancy further aides to the secrecy narrative because it only discourages student-athletes from disclosing this information until it is too late. This code of secrecy surrounding this topic is further perpetuated by the lack of available research about pregnancy in this population. On page 7 of the artifact, the estimated pregnancy rate for college student-athletes is between 10% and 15%. It is important to note that earlier on that page, a solid number (15%) not an estimate was provided for pregnancy in the college student population. This is one example that can lead others to question if the secrecy that surrounds the topic of pregnant student-athletes and pregnancy can be a cause for the lack of abundant research about these topics. As the governing body for collegiate student-athletes, the NCAA prides itself on being dedicated to the overall "well-being and lifelong success" of its college athletes (NCAA, 2019). To truly do that, the NCAA must provide support for all of its athletes including those experiencing pregnancy in a manner that is open and free of hostility.

Theme Two: Parenting and Pregnancy are Sole Gender Issues

Another significant topic in the artifact was *gender*. With the creation of the *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* guide, the NCAA strived to provide gender neutral policies and procedures regarding pregnancy, parenting, and its collegiate student-athletes to satisfy their fairness and integrity tenet through gender equity. Throughout the artifact, language that is classified to be “gendered” is used. The use of this “gendered” language is represented by the frequency of gender-referencing terms such as *female* and *male*. Through a close cluster analysis, “*female*” emerged as a dominant term, being referenced 63 times. When including substitutes such as “*woman*” and “*women*,” the references to this specific gender increased to 151. During this same analysis, it was discovered that “*male*” also emerged after being referenced 25 times. Similarly, to its counterpart “*female*,” substitutes were also used including “*man*” and “*men*.” Throughout the artifact, “*female*,” “*male*,” and their gender substitutes were often found in close proximity to terms depicting the opposite gender. According to Foss (2004), the “linkage” between the terms “suggests that the key term’s meaning for the rhetor is modified or influenced by that associated term” (p. 74). A number of phrases throughout the artifact demonstrate the linkage between the two gender terms. The first of these linkages is found on page six of the artifact:

The Model Policy is fully in accord with the NCAA’s purpose. It is based on an ethic of care, to ensure that pregnancy is treated consistently with the broad goals that all student-athletes work toward graduation, that physical and mental health

issues be managed appropriately, and that all policies are fair to both men and women. (Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2006, p. 6)

This short passage not only shows the link between the words “*men*” and “*women*,” substitutes for the gender-referencing terms “*male*” and “*female*”; but also shows how terms such as “*all*” and “*both*” are meant to be inclusive of both genders. Through the conjunction of these gender-referencing words as well as inclusive terms like “*all*” and “*both*,” the authors assert that both the topics of parenting and pregnancy are issues equally experienced by both genders.

Male

While the belief that both genders equally experience parenting and pregnancy is ideal, the reality is that this is not necessarily the case. The way in which the authors consciously and subconsciously utilized gender-referencing terms illustrates the belief that parenting, and pregnancy are sole gender issues. This can be seen in the section titled “What if you’re a male student-athlete whose partner becomes pregnant” on page 70 of the artifact:

Obviously, you won’t be affected by physical changes associated with pregnancy. However, you may suffer psychological stress, have concern about the health of your pregnant partner and her pregnancy, and question your readiness for fatherhood and the personal and financial obligations you face. You may disagree with your partner about the pregnancy, whether to carry the pregnancy to term or to terminate the pregnancy. We encourage you to take advantage of our psychological counseling services and join in any decision-support team your

partner may have formed. You should also know that Title IX also protects you from being discriminated against because of your partner's pregnancy or your status as a parent.

This is the first mention specifically of males without the use of an opposing gender-referencing term such as "*female*." It is important to note that this section is only approximately eight lines long; and although gender-referencing terms related to males are not explicitly used in this particular passage, the lack thereof speaks volumes and contradicts the notion of parenting and pregnancy being issues that both genders experience as previously asserted while further proving the narrative that the rhetors subconsciously believe that parenting and pregnancy are sole gender issues. A number of phrases in the above passage support this narrative. For example, phrases such as "male student-athlete whose partner becomes pregnant," "your pregnant partner," "her pregnancy," and "your partner's pregnancy" distance the male from the topics of parenting and pregnancy in such a way that further supports the narrative of parenting and pregnancy as sole gender issues as opposed to universal issues experienced by both genders equally.

Female

A good majority of the NCAA's *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* guide focuses on female student-athletes as it pertains to the topics of pregnancy and parenting. In fact, the artifact's cover image sends quite a message whether the rhetor's intended to do so or not. The cover image depicts former University of Minnesota – Duluth student-athlete Jenny Schmidgall-Potter with her then

two-year old daughter, Madison, circling the ice rink following a 2003 NCAA national championship win. While to some the photo represents the strength and determination that many female student-athletes must tap into once they return to their sport, it also symbolizes something else. By solely depicting a woman and her child on the cover of this guide, as opposed to what some may call a “traditional” family, it asserts from the very beginning the subconscious belief that pregnancy is a sole gender issue that belongs to women and women only.

The imagery seen on the cover is not the only instance of the subconscious belief of pregnancy being a sole gender women’s issue. In fact, there are seven other times that women were featured solely compared to the one time that a photo of a man was included. This belief extends into the verbiage that is used. For example, the key term “*female*” is found surrounded by many other terms. One of these examples is found on page fourteen: “All student-athletes –male and female – bear responsibility for preventing pregnancy if they are sexually active and do not desire to have children.” This statement holds truth to it; however, it is also contradictory in the fact that majority of the information that the NCAA provides in this guide is geared towards women. By having the information skewed towards one gender, in this case women, it gives the illusion that (a) only women bear the responsibility mentioned above and (b) women are solely responsible for pregnancy and parenting. It is evident that the artifact places a heavy focus on gender however, this focus is skewed to depict parenting and pregnancy as not only single gender issues but often women’s issues. The notion on page fifteen that

“pregnancy is frequently viewed as the female student-athlete’s ‘fault’” is just another example of how the responsibility and, in this case, the blame falls on the woman.

Theme Three: The De-Emphasis on Parenting and Parenthood

The final significant topic in the *Pregnant and Parenting Resources and Model Policies* guide is parenting. With a simple scan of the artifact, it quickly becomes clear that the guide makes little mention of parenting which is a stark contrast from the pregnancy mentions. Despite being an integral part of the artifact’s title, the lack of parenting references is alarming. Parenting references include use of the selected key terms “*parenting*,” “*parent[s]*,” “*parental*,” and “*parenthood*.” The selected key term “*parenting*” appears seventy-four times throughout the artifact while “*parental*,” “*parent*,” “*parents*,” and “*parenthood*” appear seventeen, seven, four, and three times, respectively. Although the topic of parenting was not mentioned frequently in the artifact, it is important to note that the terms “*pregnant*” and “*pregnancy*” tend to surround the selected key terms. In fact, there were very few times that the term “*parenting*” stood alone; it was found connected in the phrase “*pregnant and parenting*” approximately thirteen times. While it is logical for parenting and pregnancy to be mentioned together, the imbalance that the rhetors created illustrates a clear de-emphasis on parenting and parenthood.

This de-emphasis on parenting and parenthood in the collegiate student-athlete population should come as no surprise given the secrecy narrative that the NCAA has towards pregnancy in this same population. The de-emphasis is only further depicted

through the “model policies” or lack thereof. The phrase “model policies” surrounds the key term “*parenting*” quite frequently in the artifact, even appearing in the artifact’s title. For this reason alone, one would hypothesize that the guide would include “model policies” and resources that could (a) help students make the transition from student or student-athlete to parent or (b) assist students with locating on-campus resources that they may have readily available. However, the “model policies” that were provided through this artifact did neither of the two. Instead, the “model policies” tended to favor “*pregnancy*” over “*parenthood*” by providing more information on how to navigate a pregnancy as well as potential resources available in the college athlete department and around campus.

The lack of references to “parenting” and “parenthood” further echoes the notion of theme 2: parenting and pregnancy are sole gender issues. The *Manual* operates from a standpoint that males can not physically experience pregnancy (and while this has seen been proven untrue), it fails to recognize the shared issue of parenting. Based on the *Manual*’s assertion of pregnancy seemingly being a physical burden on women only, it would seem as though the topic of parenting would be framed to include male student-athletes. However, the *Manual* also failed to do this by completely disregarding the topic of parenting and parenthood for collegiate student-athletes.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to conduct a detailed analysis of the NCAA's *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* (Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2008) guide. Using rhetorical cluster criticism, an analysis of the *Manual*'s text was conducted and three major findings surrounding gender, pregnancy, and parenting became evident. These main findings, also referred to as the main themes, assert the following three ideas: there is a secrecy narrative surrounding pregnancy; parenting and pregnancy are sole gender issues, and there is a de-emphasis on parenting and parenthood.

The main findings were closely linked to the answers of the study's guiding research questions. Research question one asks, "In what ways does the recurring discourse reference parenting student-athletes?" while research question two asks "how does the language used in the NCAA's *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* (Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2008) document refer to student-athletes?" The theme of de-emphasis on parenting and parenthood addresses research question number one. The *Manual* provides very little information in regard to the after-effects of pregnancy, which is often times parenting. Although the term "parenting" appeared in the *Manual*'s title, it seemingly held less importance when compared to pregnancy. This lack of information addresses research question one by

illustrating the minimal references to parenting student-athletes. To answer research question number two, the theme of parenting and pregnancy being sole gender issues must be examined. This theme focuses on the notion that parenting and pregnancy are sole gender issues. Based on the frequency of key terms such as “*male*,” “*female*,” and their synonyms, it can be concluded that although the language addresses both male and female student-athletes, there is an unequal amount of information provided for women as it relates to parenting and pregnancy in the collegiate student-athlete population. This unequal amount of information leads one to draw the conclusion that the language used in the NCAA’s *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* document refers to both genders; however, it unequally favors females and offers them more information. While the theme of a secrecy narrative surrounding pregnancy does not directly address a research question, it is important to note that this theme illustrates the framework in which the other two themes exist. The theme provided real life examples from the text including a “worst case scenarios” section that detailed the fear, abandonment, and judgement that student-athletes often face while experiencing a pregnancy in any capacity. The strategic placement of words such as “*conceal*” and “*terminate*” in close proximity to words associated with pregnancy lend a hand in proving and concluding that there is a secrecy narrative that exists surrounding pregnancy.

Limitations/Future Research

While completing this study, there were a number of limitations that were discovered. Limitation number one stems from the methodology that was utilized. The

researcher opted to conduct an instrumental case study. Although the usage of an instrumental case study enabled the researcher to focus on one document, in this case the NCAA's *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* (Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2008) guide, it provided a very limited view of the topics of parenting and pregnancy amongst collegiate student-athletes. To correct this, it is recommended that future research be conducted consisting of multiple case studies to adequately examine parenting and pregnancy from a male student-athlete's point of view. Doing so will enable the NCAA and its member institutions to holistically understand the existence of parenting and pregnancy in the collegiate student-athlete population through the eyes of both male and female student-athletes. The second limitation is a result of the research design: qualitative research design. Qualitative research design tends to focus on the "big picture" (Madrigal & McClain, 2012) and because of this, it is harder for the findings to be generalized. As previously discussed, three major themes emerged from this study. In an effort to better understand these themes and their implications as well as draw generalizations, it is recommended that future research seek to explore the lived experiences of college student-athletes who are either pregnant, experiencing a pregnancy, or are parenting. During these studies, it is also recommended that the experiences of trans-men and trans-women be examined to discover how the 2008 *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* guide may affect their lived experiences as parents and/or pregnant student-athletes.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion above as well as the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations have been made with the belief that the implementation of two or more will have a positive impact on how the NCAA and its member institutions address the topics of parenting and pregnancy in the collegiate student-athlete population. The recommendations made were based on the information gathered through the integrated literature review as well as the close textual analysis conducted via rhetorical cluster criticism. These recommendations are as follows:

1. Updating the NCAA's *Pregnant and Parenting Student-Athletes Resources and Model Policies* (Hogshead-Makar & Sorensen, 2008) guide.
 - a. The *Manual* was first created in 2008 and is currently only available online as a portable document format (pdf). This document is now outdated, making some of its content and suggestions irrelevant. It would be beneficial to the NCAA and its member institutions to update the *Manual*. Updating the *Manual* will enable changes made in society regarding parenting and pregnancy to be reflected as well as current and relevant information be distributed to its members.
2. Creating a NCAA pregnancy policy that all member institutions can turn to during the creation of an individual institutional pregnancy policy.
 - a. Elizabeth Sorensen indicated that a standard pregnancy policy for the NCAA does not exist, and while this could be seen as a detriment to the NCAA, it does leave room for institutional control as well as provides the

autonomy of each individual member institution to adapt the sample pregnancy policy to the needs of that specific institution. The creation of a sample NCAA pregnancy policy will truly provide member institutions with up-to-date information and guidelines, taken from the *Manual*, that address the topics of parenting and pregnant student-athletes on that individual campus.

3. Organizing LifeSkills workshops that address the topics of sexual education, parenting and pregnancy as it relates to this unique subset of the college student population.
 - a. Currently, the NCAA LifeSkills program provides workshops that focus on a range of topics including leadership styles, community service and mental health. Given the secrecy surrounding the topics of parenting and pregnancy, as evidenced by this study's findings, it would behoove the NCAA to implement LifeSkills workshops that focus on these topics in an effort to assist in the destigmatization of parenting and pregnancy for both male and female student-athletes.
4. Forming stronger partnerships with available campus resources that specialize in assisting parenting and pregnant students.
 - a. The formation of partnerships with these campus resources creates alliances across multiple university departments as well as acts as support and advocacy systems for pregnant and/or parenting student-athletes.

Through the implementation of a combination of the above recommendations, it is believed that the topics of parenting and pregnancy in the collegiate student-athlete population would not be as taboo and there would be more safe spaces available for student-athletes to speak more open and honestly about their experiences.

APPENDIX A: COVER OF PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENT-ATHLETES RESOURCES AND MODEL POLICIES



APPENDIX B: SELECTED EXCERPTS DEPICTING THE SECRECY NARRATIVE SURROUNDING PREGNANCY

“Wading through these decisions in an unsupportive environment, the female student-athlete legitimately fears abandonment by her primary support system; her boyfriend, her coach and her teammates when they learn of her pregnancy.” (p. 15)

“If these shifts are coupled with negative views expressed by her coaches and campus community, fear of abandonment may consciously or unconsciously motivate the pregnant student-athlete to either conceal her pregnancy, feel pressured to choose abortion, or worse.” (p.15)

“In “Melissa’s Story,” a popular young female student-athlete at a Christian college believed she would be expelled if she told anyone, and hid her pregnancy and ultimately chose an abortion.” (p. 16)

“Larissa Bellamy, a Lafayette College discus and shot put student-athlete, felt intimidated and shocked when her coach suggested she “make the mature decision” to select abortion.” (p. 16)

“In two separate incidents during 2007, two freshmen student-athletes killed their full-term infants in their college dorm rooms after concealing their entire pregnancies. These student-athletes, one of whom reportedly had a sports physical two days before her delivery, did not seek out medical care or emotional counseling.” (p. 17)

APPENDIX C: SELECTED EXCERPTS DEPICTING PARENTING AND PREGNANCY AS SOLE GENDER ISSUES

“Male student-athletes are also affected by pregnancy. Experts suggest that a reasonable estimate for pregnancy rates for female student-athletes and partners of male student-athletes for an athletics department is between 10% to 15%.” (p. 7)

“When a male student-athlete’s partner becomes pregnant, in most cases his team membership, playing time, health benefits and scholarship are not in jeopardy.” (p. 8)

“Pregnancy is an emotion-laden process for all women and is especially so for a student-athlete.” (p. 14)

“Pregnancy is frequently viewed as the female student-athlete’s “fault”, getting caught having unprotected premarital sex or other forms of moral turpitude.” (p. 15)

“Obviously, you won’t be affected by physical changes associated with pregnancy. However, you may suffer psychological stress, have concern about the health of your pregnant partner and her pregnancy and question your readiness for fatherhood and the personal and financial obligations you face. You may disagree with your partner about the pregnancy, whether to carry the pregnancy to term or to terminate the pregnancy.” (p. 70)

APPENDIX D: SELECTED EXCERPTS DEPICTING THE DE-EMPHASIS ON PARENTING AND PARENTHOOD

“For those who decide to carry the pregnancy to term, impending role changes include a shift from student-athlete to parent, from physically fit individual to the realities of weight gain and body image changes, from high level athletic performance to temporarily reduced performance, from “body as self” to “body as host to another.”” (p. 15)

“The NCAA Model Pregnancy and Parenting Policy provides a set of guidelines to enhance the educational experience for college student-athletes who become pregnant or experience pregnancy-related conditions.” (p. 29)

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